

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL

Webinar

October 19-21, 2021

Transcript

Advisory Panel Members

Jimmy Hull, Jr., Chair
Vincent Bonura
Tony Constant
Andrew Fish
Richard Gomez
Rusty Hudson
Randy McKinley
Harry Morales
James Paskiewicz
Cameron Sebastian
Dr. Todd Kellison

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Dick Brame
Jack Cox, Jr.
Robert Freeman
Lawton Howard
Andrew Mahoney
Chris Militello
David Moss
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Kim Iverson
Dr. Mike Schmidtke
Suz Thomas

Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVictor

Other attendees and invited participants attached

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on October 19, 2021 and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: I think it's probably time to get going. We have so much to go through, and so I would like to welcome everyone to this October 2021 Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. I hope that everyone is healthy and that you're well prepared. Our snapper grouper fisheries are facing extreme challenges in management, and the council members are asking for our expert opinions and input in order for them to make their decisions on what to do. I ask that everyone fully participate, so that the council and the agency can hear your input and know how you really feel. With that, Mike, I would like to have the AP introductions, before we go to Approval of the Agenda, if that's okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and we can just go straight down the line, if folks can see the list of the names there on the side, and we can go straight down, and people can introduce themselves and provide your state and your affiliation with the snapper grouper fishery.

MR. HULL: Okay. Good enough. I will start. My name is Jimmy Hull, and I am a commercial fisherman, and I am out of Ponce Inlet, Florida.

MR. LORENZ: I'm Bob Lorenz, and I'm in Wilmington, North Carolina, and I am the Vice Chairman, and I'm on the recreational side, representing the recreational fishery, private boat anglers.

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

MR. BRAME: Good afternoon. I'm Dick Brame, and I'm the Atlantic States Fisheries Director for the Coastal Conservation Association in Wilmington, North Carolina.

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

MR. COX: This is Jack Cox from Morehead City, North Carolina, commercial fisherman. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Andrew, are you there, Andrew Fish?

MR. FISH: Sorry. I guess I don't see the wait list, but, yes, my name is Andy Fish, and I'm a commercial fisherman, and I'm mostly out of Cape Canaveral, but I also summer in North Carolina.

MR. HULL: Robert Freeman.

MS. IBERLE: I think we're still working on his audio, if you want to skip past him and come back.

MR. GOMEZ: This is Richard Gomez out of Key West, Florida, charter boat fisherman.

MR. HULL: Lawton, are you there?

MR. HOWARD: I'm here. This is Lawton Howard, and I'm a recreational fisherman from St. Simons Island, Georgia.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Lawton. Rusty advised me that he will be fifteen minutes late. Andrew Mahoney.

MR. MAHONEY: Commercial sector, Bluffton, South Carolina.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andrew. Randy McKinley.

MR. MCKINLEY: I'm a commercial fisherman out of Topsail Beach, North Carolina, and I'm also a wholesale dealer, and, effective this past May, I've taken over a retail seafood market at this location.

MR. HULL: Fantastic. Thank you, Randy. Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: I'm Chris Militello out of Palm Beach County, and I'm a marine insurance agent and recreational fisherman.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris. Harry Morales.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir. I'm out of Hilton Head, and I'm a recreational fisherman.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. David Moss.

MR. MOSS: David Moss, recreational fisherman out of south Florida.

MR. HULL: And I see Andy Piland. Are you there yet? He just showed up, and so his sound may not have come on yet.

MS. IBERLE: You should be able to talk when you're ready, Andy.

MR. HULL: Dr. Todd Kellison, are you there?

MS. IBERLE: We're still working on Todd's audio. For some reason, we don't have an option to unmute him at this time. Sorry.

MR. HULL: Right on. Well, I think that, other than Andy, everyone spoke up that I see on the list.

MS. IBERLE: Andy, I see you have your hand raised.

MR. PILAND: Did I unmute myself then?

MS. IBERLE: Perfect.

MR. HULL: I don't see -- I can't see the full screen, but I think that's everybody that has an X next to their name, and so it looks like the next item on the agenda, Mike, would be the Approval of the Agenda. Has everyone read the agenda, and, if you approve of the agenda, please raise your hand.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, it might be easier to go with if anyone objects. That way, folks don't all have to raise their hand.

MR. HULL: Right on. Thank you for reminding me of that. Let's change that up, AP. If you object to the agenda, raise your hand. I do not see any raised hands, Mike, and so the agenda is approved. I would like to move on to the Approval of the September 2020 and April 2021 AP Minutes, and we'll use the same -- I do see an AP member hand up here, Richard Gomez, and I'm assuming that may be prior to the agenda, approval of the agenda?

MR. GOMEZ: My hand is down now, isn't it? I messed up, and I didn't mean to have my hand up.

MR. HULL: Well, it was confusing, but we've got it now. Okay. We'll take your hand down. Thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay.

MR. HULL: So we're on to the approval of the September 2020 and the April 2021 advisory panel minutes. Is there anyone that is opposed to the approval of the prior minutes of our meeting on September 2020 and April 2021? Raise your hand? Andrew Fish, I see your hand raised, and is that --

MR. FISH: That was an error. Sorry.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it looks like we have approval of the prior minutes. At this time, Mike, I would welcome public comment. Thank you for sending out the link to the written public comment, and there is two written comments for you all to read, and we also have a request from a prior chair of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, Robert Johnson, to give oral public comment, and so, if we could do at this time, if Robert is ready, if that's okay with you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am just checking for Robert Johnson, to see -- We don't have an audio option for you, Robert, right now. I guess, Suzanna, would you be able to reach out to Robert, or Allie?

MS. IBERLE: Suzanna, I thought you had gotten ahold of him, but I can if you want me to.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not Robert Freeman. Robert Johnson.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry. Let me work on that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Mike, while you're working on trying to connect with Robert Johnson, could we go to Jessica McCawley, possibly, because I know she is on the side of the road.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes. We can go ahead through Jessica's remarks and then circle back. We'll make a note to circle back to public comment once those are done.

MR. HULL: That sounds really good, and so it's off to you, Mike and Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Thank you so much for having me. I know you guys are going to have basically two full days of good work. You've got a half-day today, a full day tomorrow, and then another half-day, and we struggled with a number of really difficult issues at the last council meeting, and so we're going to be asking for some comments from you guys on some really challenging topics.

Mike has a little presentation of some items that we covered at the last council meeting. This is for June and September, and so we got some stock assessments. We got some information on gag grouper that wasn't very good, and we got some golden tilefish information, and we really didn't get to dig way down into the information yet, and there's more on that coming at the December meeting, and we had lengthy discussions on red snapper at both of these council meetings, and I'm sure you're going to hear about it more. We have lots of questions for you guys relative to red snapper.

We have a number of amendments that are ongoing that we've done some work on, and we have some questions back for you guys, and that includes yellowtail snapper, wreckfish, greater amberjack, red porgy, snowy grouper, golden tile that I said is coming back to us later this year, and gag grouper. I look forward to hearing those discussions that you guys are going to have on these topics.

We talked a lot about trying to find ways to reduce discards in the snapper grouper fishery and kind of look at the entire snapper grouper fishery as a whole, since there are a number of stocks that aren't doing very well and since our largest source of mortality in the red snapper fishery is from dead discards, and so the committee and the council is moving forward with a couple of different items, some short-term items that are looking at a framework amendment and looking at some items that actually the AP had come up with, that you guys sent to us in the past, as ways to possibly reduce discards, and so things like single-hook rigs was one of the items that you guys had on the list.

You guys have also suggested a slot limit for red snapper, and so those type things we're going to look at in this framework amendment on the short-term, and then, on the long-term, we are going to work on a management strategy evaluation, followed by a much longer plan amendment, that would be trying to look at this fishery as a whole, taking input from you guys and taking input from the public to try to figure out how to get past some of these really difficult challenges that you guys know we're facing in the snapper grouper fishery.

That also brings me to another discussion that we had, which was the commercial snapper grouper permit, and so we had some discussions on the two-for-one, and we felt like we needed some more information, and I know you guys have talked about the two-for-one in the past, and we were hoping for some more information from you guys. We're seeking a white paper, to try to get some

additional information on this topic, but I think we have some questions for you guys before we see this back at the December council meeting.

Jimmy, unfortunately, I am traveling, to try to work on the cobia, the South Atlantic Council cobia workshops, this week, and I will try to listen from the car, but I won't be available to answer questions in real-time like I normally am, and so I thank you guys for having me, and I look forward to the great work and the challenging discussions that you guys are going to have, and I thank everybody for taking the time out of their busy schedules to be here to offer this valuable insight for the council.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jessica. I appreciate you speaking to us and bringing us up-to-speed on what we really need to tackle, is to address what the council needs to hear, and so thank you very much, Jessica. Okay, and so the next item on the agenda is an Update on Recent Regulations and the Status of the Amendments, and so I'm sending it back to you, Mike. We could go to public comment, if we have Robert Johnson.

MS. IBERLE: I sent him an email, and I can call as well, but I still am unable to unmute him at this time.

MR. HULL: Okay. Maybe we can get back to him later, if he shows up.

MR. MORALES: I can easily call him and conference him on my line.

MR. HULL: Allie or Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Could you say that one more time, Harry?

MR. MORALES: Give me his number, and I can call him and conference bridge him on my line.

MS. IBERLE: I can do that, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Allie, can you continue working on that as the option?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and, Harry, I will send you his number.

MR. MORALES: Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thanks. I will pull up the amendment update document, if you're ready for that, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: Yes, sir.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so this is included in your briefing materials, and there's an update on the snapper grouper amendments that won't really be addressed in-depth in this meeting, and the first update is we're going to go to Myra for an update on the red porgy amendment.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Mike. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm just going to give you a very quick overview of where we are with Amendment 50, and you guys have talked about this

amendment for a few meetings now, and so I just wanted to bring you up-to-speed. What you have in your briefing book is basically the actions with the council's preferred alternatives for each of them.

This amendment currently has six actions. As you know, red pogy is overfished and undergoing overfishing, based on the results of the latest assessment, SEDAR 60, which was completed last year, and so the council has to establish a rebuilding timeframe, and their preferred alternative, at the moment, would establish a twenty-six-year rebuilding plan, and so that would end in 2047, and 2022 would be year-one.

Action 2 would adjust the total ACL and the annual optimum yield, and, currently, the council's preferred is to revise the total ACL and annual OY and set that equal to the updated ABC, the one that has been recommended by the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, and so you can see that table on your screen. It shows you what the total ACL would be for each of the years 2022 through 2026, which would be the level at which it would remain until the council adjusts it in the future. You have those poundages in pounds whole weight as well as in gutted weight.

Action 3 addresses the sector allocations and the sector ACLs, and the council's preferred is to currently allocate 51.43 percent of the total ACL to the commercial sector and 48.57 percent to the recreational, and so this is just a little bit different than what is currently in place. Right now, the total ACL is split evenly between the sectors, and these percentages are based on an allocation formula that the council adopted for most of their unassessed snapper grouper species back in 2012, in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and you can see what that formula is on your screen. It uses half of a historical timeframe and half of more current landings and calculates the sector allocations based on that.

The table shows you what those total ACLs would be, or sector ACLs, rather, and then, as you know, Regulatory Amendment 27 split the commercial ACL into two seasons, and so you have what the Season 1 quota would be and the Season 2 quota would be, and this is in pounds gutted weight.

Action 4 addresses commercial management measures, and so, right now, the council's preferred is to lower the commercial trip limit to fifteen fish during both of those two seasons, and so that's the lowest trip limit that they've considered. Action 5 is split into two sub-actions. One of them addresses the bag limit, and their preferred would reduce the recreational bag limit, which is currently three per person, down to one, and you can see the wording there.

If you scroll down just a little bit, the wording -- Here is where I guess I'm going to pause a little bit and ask you guys a question. Currently, the bag limit is worded three fish per person per day or three per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and the council asked, when we talked about this in September, whether we could potentially consider getting rid of that last bit, the per trip portion of that regulation, and so my question to the AP would be, for those of you who live in areas where -- My understanding is this regulation was mainly to address headboats and the trip limit for larger vessels.

Whether this is something that you feel, in your area, is important, and are there headboats in your area that are utilizing this part of the regulation, or is this something that could easily be removed

without much impact, and so that's my question, and I guess, since I'm so close to the end, I'm just going to keep updating you on the rest, and then we can circle back around, if that's okay.

The second part of Action 5 addresses the recreational fishing season, and so the council's preferred is to establish a season for red porgy from May through June, and so it's just a two-month season, and your update here has a link to the decision tool, and so this is an interactive, online tool that I have shown you before, and so I'm not going to bring it up right now, in the interest of time, but it's available for you guys to see what the various catch levels would be under the different alternatives, and the council has been using this tool in their discussions for this amendment.

Finally, the last action revises the recreational accountability measure, and you can see what that is on the screen. Basically, it removes the post-season being tied to the total ACL before it's triggered, and so it gets triggered if the recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and, if that happens, the fishing season the following year is reduced by the amount necessary to prevent that ACL from being exceeded the following year.

The timing, at the bottom, is, basically, we are -- We did a public hearing during the September council meeting, and we did not have a lot of comment, and so the council is going to come back around and approve all the actions and make any necessary modifications in December, and they are looking to recommend it for approval at their March 2022 meeting. I will pause there and let you guys give me some feedback. Thanks.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Myra. I do see a hand raised. Andrew Fish.

MR. FISH: I apologize again. A couple of times I have looked up, and my hand is raised, and it does not mean to be. Sorry.

MR. HULL: Okay, Andy. Any questions or comments or concerns about this action and what was just before you? Harry.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I guess I struggle with the red porgy management and/or mismanagement. If we're talking about over twenty-five years, and this fishery has been overfished and overfishing, and, if you scroll further up, to the five-year plan, I guess I would question why are we going from 75,000 to 95,000, an automatic increase that ends up at 26 percent, when nothing that we have done has ever successfully brought this fishery back, and so why not just take 75,000 and hold it there?

I understand that nobody wants this fishery completely shut down on the commercial side, and that makes sense. I mean, my god, the red snapper, for me, is a fiasco, and so why not take a number and hold it, the same way we talked about via the amberjack, and why are we automatically taking it up? The science, in my opinion, does not -- It doesn't work, whereas, if you have a solid number, and you reevaluate it after five years and look at making a change then, a more cautious approach, in my opinion, is maybe a chance to build this fishery back up. That's it.

MR. HULL: Myra, do you want to respond to Harry?

MS. BROUWER: Sure, Jimmy. Thanks, Harry, for that comment. I'm not quite sure that you had a question, other than I guess suggesting that the council perhaps consider a constant catch fishing level for this species, which, as you point out, they are considering for other species, and they have requested that there be an alternative for a constant catch for yellowtail snapper as well as amberjack, and so that is definitely something that the AP, or you as an individual, can suggest to the council that they consider.

I will say that these catch levels are based on projections, right, and so it's a model that assumes that, if you do drop catch to that 75,000 pounds in 2022, over time, there should be some increase in the population, and that's why the catch levels go up a little bit in subsequent years, but that, of course, is based on the model, right, and we don't know if that's what is going to happen, and, as you do point out, recruitment for this stock has been pretty sluggish, I should say, for about thirty years, and we're not quite sure why, and so I will leave it at that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Myra. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: My concern, and I have said this before, is that a closed season represents a management failure, and we all recognize that, and we're trying to use this tool, but, currently, with red pogy, we've got an open season with a three-bag limit and a fourteen-inch minimum size, and we're taking that all the way to a ten-month closed season. That seems awfully strong, and, from the last session that I remember talking about these, it seemed to be the overwhelming thought from fishermen that these fish are getting eaten alive by red snapper.

We seem to think, in general terms, that our snapper is in a better position than the board does, but, if we're getting -- It seems like we're regulating a lot of other species that could -- If we would allow a little bit more of an open season on snapper, they wouldn't be devastating the red pogy like they are, but, even without that variable, it seems like going from twelve months a year to two months a year, a ten-month closed season, is very strong. The numbers on your five years here, I kind of -- I can see that, but a ten-month closure is just a big step. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Jack Cox, you're up.

MR. COX: Myra, I've got a quick question. Can you tell me how much recreational effort there is on this species?

MS. BROUWER: I guess I'm not quite sure how I could represent that. Do you mean what the landings level is relative to the ACL in recent years? Is that what you're asking, Jack?

MR. COX: Well, I would just like to know how many recreational anglers are participating in the fishery. If you're going to reduce it to one fish, do a reduction here, it would be interesting to have a little data and know exactly how much effort there is on the fishery from that sector. I didn't know if you had any idea.

MS. BROUWER: The decision tool that is linked in this update can give you some insight into that. You can play around with that, and, if you switch the bag limits, it projects what the catch will be under those various limits, and so, in that sense, it reflects, based on current data and those catch rates, where those levels would be, and, also, you can play around with opening and closing the various waves, and so I will say that, ultimately, the council needs to end overfishing, and

ending overfishing for this species is going to require some pretty restrictive measures, given that the catch levels are going down so much.

MR. COX: Okay, Myra. As we talk about discards being the biggest problem in the fishery, I always like to know how much participation is though, the effort. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, just a quick comment, and I believe it was Action 5, where you were looking at the limits per day or per trip of the bag limits, and I noted, in there, that you did say that, in order to simplify it, to eliminate the one fish per person per trip, but that may have been asked as a concession towards the headboat community, and so I would like to say -- I mean, it would make it more simple at one fish per person per day, but most of these -- It's not just this council, but other councils, or the Atlantic States Commission, and I am constantly hearing that the headboat people are almost dealing with everything imaginable, and so maybe, as a suggestion, and it doesn't really make it any simpler, but that there be one fish per person per day, and that's the recreational limit for most of us, and maybe there could be an exception for the headboats, where that is a one person per trip limit that would be allowed, I guess in case there are people that would go on multiple trips in a day, and that would probably help those people.

Getting back to what Jack said, we do know that the fish caught on the headboats are fairly well documented, and we know what they're doing, versus some of the rest of us, and so I will possibly put that in as a suggestion to help those folks out, what tiny bit it might be.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Bob, and I think -- So, currently, the way this alternative is worded, it would limit the headboats as well, and that's why we have this "or one fish per trip, whichever is more restrictive", and so I guess what the council wanted to know is, is this restriction going to have a really big impact or not, and like how much is the headboat sector of the recreational, the headboat component of the recreational sector, utilizing this allowance, so to speak, because it is not -- This is the only species for which we have this in the regulations, as far as snapper grouper goes, and so the council wanted to know if we can just simplify it and leave it one fish per person per day and not put this trip limit restriction and whether that would be okay.

MR. HULL: Myra, that was a good explanation of it, but I can tell you that, out of my inlet, there is multiple half-day headboats, and so, the way it's written, the same people don't go out again on the second trip, I mean, in general. They go out for the morning half, and so it would be their one person per day limit, and then, when they next trip goes -- Because the limit is not on the boat, and it's on the people.

When the boat leaves again for the afternoon, it's a new load of persons, and so then it would just be, again, the one per person per day, and so I think you kind of could take the trip out of there, from the way I see it, but they do run multiple trips with different people, and the regulation isn't for the boat. It's for the people. With that, Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: Along the trip line, I agree with you, and I think that we could take the per trip out. Also, if you were to make an exception for headboats, I don't see how you could get that over without considering the same thing for charter/for-hire, because they're doing the same thing in a smaller version. They can take two trips out each day.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Exactly, and, if we're going to start doing those exceptions, then maybe you guys want to consider sector separation, which that would kind of lead to. Myra, I don't see any other -- Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: Well, listening to this conversation, I think supporting what the council wants and just take out the per-trip is really the easier way to go, and slicing and dicing for this exception and that exception really doesn't make a whole lot of sense, especially since most people don't go on two half-day trips. If you're going to go all day, then you're going to charter something, and you're going to go all day, all eight or ten hours, and not two half trips. Whoever did it, it would be a very small population, in my opinion.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. I see that Chip has raised his hand.

DR. COLLIER: In looking at some of the data for this, what we're really looking at are overnight trips common in your area? Those seem to be the ones that would have these multiple days, and we're seeing some of these overnight trips being reported both in Florida and in North Carolina, and so, if you guys can comment whether or not that's likely to occur, that would be great.

MR. HULL: Well, Chip, that does bring into the overnight trips, which I didn't even think about, and so let's hear it. Does anybody have some more thoughts on this? It's only four or five little words here.

AP MEMBER: I would leave it per day.

MR. HULL: Okay. Jack Cox, you're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, we have several headboats that do many overnight trips in my area of Morehead City, and it seems to me that you've got to take that into consideration when you talk about it.

MR. HULL: Well, and with that said, what's -- If somebody is going to make the effort to go on an overnight trip and spend two days fishing, maybe they should be allowed to catch a two-day limit. I mean, they're out there for two days, and so the day part comes in. If you take out the per trip, you're giving them consideration for being out there on an overnight trip and paying the money on an overnight boat to be there for two days, but I don't know how that fits in with our other snapper grouper recreational limits, on a daily limit, and can they catch on a multi overnight trip? Are they allowed two days of any other snapper grouper species? I am not sure.

It gets a little more where you have to think about what's going on with the other fisheries along with this, and this should probably mirror the other snapper grouper regulations for recreational, and is it per day or is it per trip for all of them? Jack.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I don't know. I mean, they're out there for two days, and they leave -- They are out there every bit of twenty-four hours, and you open up a can of worms though if you have a recreational guy that says, well, I'm going to spend the night and stay out there for two days, and how does that fit in, but you've got the headboats that are doing it, but they are reporting. They are held more accountable than the private recreational sector.

MR. HULL: I appreciate that, Jack. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy, and thank you for that. I guess that was a very important clarification, that this was mainly put in place to make that allowance, or that restriction rather, for headboats that stay out overnight to not have to -- To not have two daily bag limits, but that is, as I said, how it is for other snapper grouper species. My understanding is that you need to have some kind of a documentation that shows that you are taking an overnight trip, and, if that's the case, if the trip is going to be longer than forty-eight hours, you're allowed to have -- To keep multiple bag limits, but, for red pogy, that is not the case, and so I guess the question is, can we make it consistent, as you guys were saying, as it is for other snapper grouper species?

MR. HULL: Well, from my point of view, that's what I was saying, that it should be consistent with the other snapper grouper species. How about someone else chiming in about the consistency and should it be the same as the others?

MS. IBERLE: David Moss had his hand up. For some reason, the Google Doc isn't refreshing, and Chip had his hand up at one point too, and so we've got those two.

MS. THOMAS: Mike Schmidtke is actually having an issue, because he is who is displaying right now, and his audio isn't working, and so I don't know if we should have somebody else take over presenting, if that's possible.

MS. BROUWER: Jimmy, Mike Schmidtke said the internet at the office is giving him some issues, and so, if you don't mind, I could definitely -- Are you there, Mike?

DR. COLLIER: We're working on it. Give me just a few minutes.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. We will keep working on getting the documents back up.

MR. HULL: I can see the document now in front of me okay, on Action 5, and I assume that everyone else can. I don't see the hands being raised though, other than Jack's hand is still up there, but he's already talked, and we've talked to Chip twice, but I didn't see Mike's hand.

MS. IBERLE: We've got David Moss is next in line, and then Jack raised his hand again, and then we've got Chris and Rusty, and so if you want to start with David.

MR. HULL: Yes, ma'am. David, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, sir. I was just going to throw out, and Myra kind of already hit on it already, but I know like a lot of the Tortugas fishermen are permitted two-day limits when they go out fishing out of -- Whether it's Key West or the west coast of Florida, fishing out in the Tortugas, and it's a two-day limit for them when they're out for multiple-day trips, and I think it's a two-day limit max, if I'm not mistaken, and so, even if they're out for three days, it's still a two-day limit max, and, I mean, I don't really have a stake in this particular fishery, but I think that that makes the most sense for these overnight boats.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David. I agree, and so, if they're already allowing it, it sounded like they have to apply and tell them that they're going overnight, so that they can obtain permission to -- They have to declare what they're doing, so that they can get the two-day, and so it does throw into question -- Someone raised the point of, okay, well, what about the average private recreational fisherman that's going off the Tortugas for a couple of days? Can he apply for the same thing? I mean, those are some things to think about.

MR. MOSS: Jimmy, just to respond to that, and I'm not 100 percent sure on this, but I don't think there's any kind of applying or anything, and I think they're there overnight. Like the regular recreational guys can go and camp at the fort, for instance, and keep a two-day limit. I'm sure, if they get stopped, they might have to show, like on their GPS or something, that they've been out there for twenty-four hours, but, to my knowledge, there is no application or a hail-in or hail-out or anything like that. For just the private recreational, you can just go, and, if you're going to stay there overnight, you can keep a two-day limit.

MR. HULL: Okay. Awesome.

MR. MOSS: I could be wrong, but I believe that that's the way it works.

MR. HULL: Okay. I am starting to see some names now, and it looks like Mike is back up. I don't want to skip anybody that I didn't see, but I do see Chris up next.

MR. MILITELLO: I just think everything should be more consistent. The more consistent we can be, then the less questions that are asked of, oh, I didn't know, or stuff like that. If it's consistent, I just think it's easier and there is less questions about the way it should be. That was it.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: I remember, in the 1970s, the vessels, headboats, that used to go in the wintertime, go down to the Tortugas and then be a day each way, doing all their fishing, and, up our way, Jimmy, we used to have early-bird trips, and it was a snapper grouper day, and, of course, porgy was part of that catch.

Since we've done the Oculina, it's created a scenario where that cryptic population of big red porgies out there are hard to catch, because you have to motor fish, and you can't anchor, and it's not always easy to find the current running, but, as far as the early-bird trip, as you remember, there is a Coast Guard rule about two captains and stuff like that, because it goes in excess of a normal day, and I'm assuming that the captains are rotating sleeping and doing whatever, if it two days or two nights or whatever, so that they're getting the advantage of various kinds of fishing.

With this red porgy thing, it should be easy to flesh out the headboats, at a minimum, that actually are taking what's called an extended trip, with two captains onboard, versus just the single captain and doing his thing with his thirty to ninety people on a regular day trip, or a half-day trip, and the half-trip is going to be just like the gentleman said earlier, and usually you don't find folks going on the second-half of the day after they have already done the first half of the day. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Rusty. Myra, I don't see any more hands. We may have raised more questions than answers on the sixty-day probable season here, and so I guess I will see if you have anything else specifically to ask the AP on this.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy. I think we're good. Thank you all for your comments, and I will summarize them and bring those back to the council, and I will let you guys know how things progress with this amendment. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Myra.

MS. IBERLE: Jimmy, sorry to interrupt, but we have Robert Johnson unmuted, if you want to flip back to public comment really quick.

MR. HULL: Yes, ma'am. Please do. Let's hear from Robert Johnson.

MS. IBERLE: The audio just switched from computer to phone. My apologies, Jimmy. You guys can keep going if you want to, and we can circle back.

MR. HULL: Roger. Apologies are not necessary. I understand technology, and I have a lot of trouble with it often. We talked about Amendment 50, and we tried to answer some specific questions and provide comment, and I don't know how much help we were there, but it seems like there is still some questions to be answered and some clarification as to the recreational part of it, and it's pretty simple on the commercial part. The next is Amendment 49, Greater Amberjack and Recreational Annual Catch Targets. Before we jump right into that, let's go back and see, and did Robert ever show up?

MS. IBERLE: It looks like he did, and so, Robert, you should be able to unmute now.

MR. JOHNSON: Just real quick, thank you, Jimmy, for giving me an opportunity, and I will try to be pretty brief, and I know how these meetings are, but, on the red porgy, I looked at what you've got proposed here, and I guess we're left with no choice but to support Alternative 2a and 3a for the commercial sector and Alternative 2a for the recreational sector.

As a fisherman here in northeast Florida, it's pretty frustrating, because I haven't seen any noticeable decline in the stock. Red porgy are a species of fish that don't live on the -- Well, they live on hard bottom, but they don't live right on the ledge, so to speak, and so I typically catch them when I miss my spot, when I swing off, and so it's not a fish that I target, but I do have some people that like to retain them, but it doesn't seem to be a huge change in the population, and I am just really curious as to what's driving the science to say they're in such dire straits.

This is not necessarily in order of what you all are talking about, but I will go real quick. Red snapper, I don't even know what to say about the SEDAR 73, and the fact that it's not rebuilt and experiencing overfishing is -- To me, this is my forty-first season, and that's pretty unrealistic, and I don't know how it's supported by what -- I know it's not supported by what fishermen see, and I guess the big issue here is that 90 percent mortality is discards, and what in the world are we doing?

Why aren't we retaining those fish? I mean, I would support not a slot limit, but maybe a minimum size limit, and we don't even have one in the mini-seasons, but, if the fishery was reopened at some point, I think a twenty-four-inch -- Moving it up a few inches would not hurt anything. Those big fish, barotrauma really affects them more than the smaller fish, and so that's why I don't support a slot limit for red snapper.

As far as amberjack, if it isn't broke, just leave it alone. I mean, do we really need to do anything there? Snowy grouper is another frustrating fish for me, and I used to target them, and I don't target them on charters at all, because I'm not going to go out there and try to catch one fish, and we do catch them commercially, but it's predominantly a commercial fishery, and enforcement is a real issue. You can go online at any time and see pictures of stringers, or snowy grouper, especially in south Florida, and, obviously, that's not within the regulations.

I thought it was funny to see a deepwater species stamp being talked about by this group, and that's something that we advocated ten years ago when I was involved, and so I hope it goes someplace. I have serious doubts about it, but I do support that.

I don't -- Gag grouper are something that there's a lot of wiggle room between a completely closed fishery and what we're doing, and so, I mean, you could do trip limits on the commercial sector, and the ten boxes, or 1,000 pounds, right now could be a lot less and still be profitable for those guys. Recreationally, I mean, there's not many times that we catch a recreational limit of gag grouper, and so go to a boat limit, much like we did with African pompano. In the state regulations in Florida, it's two per boat, and you could do a two or three fish per boat limit, anything that keeps us fishing. When we start talking about closing species down completely, the science goes away, and we have no way to know what's going on, other than just independent research, and I just think it's the wrong way to go. I think red snapper is a case in point there.

As far as vermilion snapper, I support current management, and, again, it's another thing that, if it's not broke, do we really need to mess with it, and then, five years down the road, somebody comes and says, oh, we're going to have to close this fishery.

Another thing to consider, for the council to consider, when they start making these regulations is I went to an FWC redfish meeting last week, here in St. Augustine, and no one was talking -- They were talking about all this increased pressure on the resource.

Well, you all know what effort shift is, and, when you start closing down fisheries, you create effort shift to other species or other waters, so to speak, and so that's something to really consider when we start managing these fish. If you close one thing, then people are going to pound on the other one, and it won't be long until you're going to have to address that. You know, weight carried evenly across something always seems to do better, and I think that's the kind of approach that I would like to see for fisheries management, and that's all I've got.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert, and it's sure good to hear from you. I appreciate all your efforts that you've put forth to fisheries management in the past on the AP. Thank you for your comments.

MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you.

MR. HULL: With that, we're getting ready to just jump into Amendment 49, Greater Amberjack and Recreational Annual Catch Targets, and so it's back to the staff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, I'm back on. Sorry for the technical difficulties, but I will give the update for greater amberjack. This update is going to be a bit shorter, and we don't really have direct questions, but just more letting the AP know what's happening with this amendment. The AP commented on it in April and provided some recommendations for additional actions to go into the amendment.

The council has directed staff and the IPT to add those additional actions in, and so, in addition to what you saw in April, where we had the total ACL and the allocations and the recreational annual catch targets, this amendment will also be considering changes to the recreational and commercial minimum size limits, the Season 2 commercial trip limit, and the April spawning closure. Those are the additional things that were recommended and are being put in. The next step for this amendment is for it to go to the council, for a full draft amendment to go to the council, in December, and they will review it and consider it to go out for public hearings, but that's the update, and I will take any questions on that amendment.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. I see a hand already. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: I would like to make sure that the document has an alternative that eliminates a minimum size for both sectors for amberjack. It just seems like you get a better quality animal, and not a lot of people are fishing on something so small that it's like a baby, and most of these animals are around the -- I guess it's the low thirties, or thereabouts, and it's a quality animal, as far as inches, and that's all I've got to say. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty, and, you know, we did make some recommendations on this amendment already. I know the council is considering these things, and is there any other comment or questions or concerns on Amendment 49, greater amberjack catch levels or allocations or -- Go ahead. Yes, sir.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, Jimmy, but, if I could, just in response to Rusty's comment, right now, what the IPT has been working on, what we've been directed to work on from the council, was the range that was put forward by the AP in April, which was considering limits between the current levels right now, and so we have a thirty-six-inch minimum for the commercial and a twenty-eight-inch minimum for the recreational, and the direction that we have right now is to consider limits for each of those within that range, between twenty-eight and thirty-six.

We can certainly provide that, if it's a recommendation from the AP to eliminate the minimum size limit, and that's something that can be provided to the council when the AP report comes, but that's not within the range of alternatives that are being considered right now that is going to go to the council in the draft amendment.

MR. HULL: Mike, thank you for further explanation on what we're dealing with here, because that would change what we've already recommended, and so let's dig into this further. I do see Jack Cox. You're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I was just going to say, on the commercial aspect of amberjack, on greater amberjack, that I think what we have ironed out for the commercial sector is pretty much perfect at thirty-six inches, and we've got a 1,200 start for the season, and we can taper down to 1,000, and I think we're doing a really nice job of managing our amberjack, and we will have to throw this in there, but we are seeing a lot more commercial effort on the jacks, because the price is going up per pound to the boat, and, as we start to remove species, like gag, from the fishery, we'll see more and more effort on this species.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. With that I see written on here, and this would be from the total advisory panel, is Rusty's recommendation of eliminating the minimum size limit, because it's not within the current range of alternatives, and I think Rusty said that he wanted to see an option for that in there for them to consider, I thought he said, but let's go back to Rusty. Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. That's why I just threw the thirty-two out there, because it's four inches higher than the rec and four inches lower than the commercial, and it gets it in a range that our guys -- The minimum size elimination had to do with shark depredation issue that we had down here on our reefs, and it's the idea that you can get the smaller animal up and in, and maybe, if you want to do live releases, but the bigger animals are just simply -- The sandbar shark depredation, in particular, and as well as a few other animals. The commercial fishermen down this way are wanting a solution to try to be able to not just keep feeding sharks. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Rusty. Vincent, you're up.

MR. BONURA: Jimmy, I just wanted to add that I would like to have the commercial and the recreational equal on their requirements, and I would be for, I guess, reducing to twenty-eight inches on the commercial end.

MR. HULL: All right, Vincent. Mike, is there any way that we could look at what we have already recommended at the prior meeting? Is there any way that we could pull that up, or would that be worthwhile doing in this exercise, because now we're just throwing more stuff, which is fine, if that's what everybody wants to do, and I'm good with it, but we may have already -- I think we talked about this, and I can't remember if we made that as a recommendation.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The equal minimum size limits, that was included in the previous recommendations, and so that's something that the council has, and that's something that they could do with the current list of alternatives. They could -- Right now, we have two actions. One would set the recreational minimum size, and one would set the commercial, and they are considering the same range of options, and so they could pick the same size for both.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so that's in there. We have already hashed that out. Thank you for that. I see that Rusty's hand is up again and then Vincent and then Harry.

MR. HUDSON: It might be worth a look at the PDF of the recording of the snapper grouper discussion, to see if the elimination of the minimum size had come up. I don't recall a vote, and I think it was sort of a consensus that something needed to be done, mostly because of shark depredation issues in our neighborhood. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I agree with -- I think Rusty is correct there, but I believe we were looking at a twenty-eight-inch or a thirty-inch or maybe a thirty-two and a thirty-four, I believe, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am working in the background to pull that AP report, but there was a whole range in between the two current numbers that were thrown out, and the council said develop options within that range, and so, right now, we're working on options between twenty-eight and thirty-six, and that is what has been brought so far. That has not gone back to the council, and they just directed it in September.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Mike.

MR. BONURA: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

MR. HULL: Between twenty-eight and thirty-six is what they're dealing with now. Harry.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I took my hand down. I think, at the last meeting, we had a really good, lively discussion on this, most of which I thought was resolved, but I will reserve my comments.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I did too, and Mike clarified, and he's looking further, but they have a range of sizes to consider, if they want to do something, that we gave them. The only thing that I'm not sure of was the alternative of eliminating the minimum size or whether or not that was in there, in the current range of alternatives, and so, to narrow this down, does that entire AP feel like that we want to add that to it? It looks like theirs is some stuff coming up now from Mike of what we did, and he can explain it a lot quicker and easier than I can.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and so I'm just jumping down to the recommendations portion, because these were kind of like the finalized things that were put forward, recommendations that were put forward, and so it was to consider a decrease in the commercial minimum size, and there were options thrown out for a thirty-four, a thirty-two, and a thirty. There was also consideration of equal size limits for both sectors, and so that's kind of the range that was given to the council.

The council passed on that range, and the IPT's discussion, I guess to this point, and this may be a question that you all can inform, but I know the IPT's initial discussions were, okay, and so we've got twenty-eight, and we've got thirty-six, and do we need to go two-inch increments in that, or would options of twenty-eight, thirty-two, and thirty-six be enough? Do we need to go a finer scale? Is it worthwhile to go a finer scale than that?

MR. HULL: Thanks, Mike. This is helpful. I mean, from my point of view, we've presented a lot to the council. They are going to take it from there and discuss this and make a decision on what they feel they're going to do, and then there's lots more comment coming on this to them, but at least this gives them our initial ideas, and, with me, I would just leave it alone and say we stand by our previous recommendations that we made on this. Now, that's what I say. What do you all say? Is that good with you, or do you want to add more to this? Let's talk about it one more time. Do you want to go further with this, or do you want to stand by what we've sent already? Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I still want to recommend that the recreational and commercial are equal in length.

MR. HULL: Okay. Good, and so maybe we could say we would like to add to our previous recommendations that you consider an equal length for both the commercial and the recreational amberjack size limit.

AP MEMBER? It's already there.

MR. HULL: There it is. Consider equal commercial and recreational -- There it is, right in front of us. It's there, Vincent. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: I was just going to say that we had already talked about that, and I was reading through it, and I was going to say that we've given a lot of conversation, I think, on amberjack already, and I wouldn't support going any smaller than thirty-four inches.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so we've given them a range. David Moss, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just going to say that I am good with what we've already recommended, and, if memory serves, I think there was like two or three things that came up at the council meeting, and this might have been one of them, and, Jimmy, you might remember, where a few of the council members eventually said that they had already gone to the AP for recommendations, and we gave them, and then they were bouncing it back to us, and I think this might be one of them. Well, we've already given our recommendations for this, and there might be one or two others, like I said, if memory serves, but I am good with what we've already recommended.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David, and I see that Mike is back up, and it might be what Mike said previously, the issue of do we want to fine-tune it any more than this. Well -- Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, we don't have this as a discussion item on the agenda for this meeting, because the document is being drafted right now, and this was more of an update, to let everybody know that this is what the council has directed us to do at this point. The draft amendment can come back to the AP, for you all to recommend a preferred to the council in April, and we can plan for that discussion, but it's not something that we plan to hash it all the way out within this meeting.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: We can just nix the minimum size, I suppose, because I believe that came up during a Wednesday afternoon public comment, online, and it had been discussed during the Snapper Grouper AP, but it was not part of the recommendations, and so this range right here, from the current recreational all the way to something less than the thirty-six inches for the commercial, and I understand where Jack is coming from, and maybe he doesn't have as much issues with the sharks up there, but, down our way, they're just feeling like an animal probably a little smaller would be better for our commercial guys. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Okay. Are we going to put this to rest here and move on? I don't know that any of that needs to be put -- What you wrote there, Mike, needs to be there. I think

we'll just stand by what we have previously done and get it back to us and see what the council sends back to us, and we can comment again. Is everybody good with that? I don't see any more hands raised. Are you good with that, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it works for me.

MR. HULL: Well, there was -- I see, on the agenda, it does have -- We didn't discuss the recreational annual catch targets, and was there something there that we needed to discuss, or we've already done that also, or --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That was part of what went to you all in April. That's the --

MR. HULL: It's the same thing, and we've already commented.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and you've already commented on it, and that's just one piece of Amendment 49, and that's not specific to greater amberjack.

MR. HULL: Okay. Perfect. Well, I do see a hand up now from Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Basically, then this is just an update, and they're going to bring it back to us in April, and is that what I'm hearing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. BONURA: Okay, and then we can do further -- Hash it out better then, is what you're telling me?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and so last April was kind of defining the range of alternatives that would be considered, and it can come back in the upcoming April, for you all to give a recommendation on what you think the preferred alternative should be.

MR. BONURA: Okay. All right. Very good. Thank you.

MR. HULL: All right. Sounds good. If we're done with that item, let's move on to Amendment 48, the update on the wreckfish ITQ modernization.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Jimmy. I will be giving the update on the wreckfish ITQ program amendment. If you guys will remember, way back in 2019, the council completed the wreckfish ITQ program review, and out of that review came a number of recommendations, which the council intends to address through Amendment 48.

Amendment 48 is going to be a pretty hefty amendment to get through. One of the big things that the council would like to do is modernize the wreckfish ITQ programs, and so get away from those paper coupons and get to an electronic reporting system, but the CFR, the way it's currently written, is heavily tied to that paper system, and so staff is going to need to sort of completely overhaul the CFR to get the wreckfish fishery up-to-date with modern technology. At the September council meeting, the council discussed issues with workload and how best to continue

to work on this amendment, and, as staff, we presented them several different options, including delaying the amendment, splitting the amendment, or moving forward as-is.

The council ultimately decided to keep the amendment as-is, whole, and they didn't want to split it, and the idea is to bring it back to every other council meeting, as workload permits, and that's going to give staff time to get everything done on our end and also allow the council to address some of their workload issues.

On top of that, the council is discussing the electronic logbook program, and staff from the Science Center indicated that they thought the wreckfish shareholders, since it's such a small fishery, could participate in a voluntary pilot program for the coastal logbook, and so, this winter, likely sometime in late January or February, staff is going to be working with the shareholders to schedule a meeting to give them an update on the progress in regard to Amendment 48 and the modernization of the program, as well as to talk to them a little bit about the electronic coastal logbook program. That is the update on Amendment 48, if anyone has any questions for that.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Do we have any AP members that are wreckfish ITQ participants? Rusty, are you up?

MR. HUDSON: Well, I was a consultant for them, and I'm the guy that helped hire the scientist, Dr. Butterworth, that wound up having his assistant scientist do a lot of work, and it cost about a quarter-of-a-million dollars. With cost recovery -- It would be nice if we had cost recovery for the small group of people that are left in this fishery, and half the fishery is controlled by just one family, and it's the type of thing -- It's a South Carolina to Florida scenario, the oldest finfish catch share program in America, and, you know, we were already ahead of the curve when SEDAR could not make the time for us.

I imagine some folks, like white grunt people and others, understand what I am talking about. Things keep getting kicked to the curb, and different priorities, and these folks -- They catch their catch. They are for getting this electronic program, but the 3 percent is outrageous, when you see what they have done to -- With such a minimal participation, and the only example that I can come up with is the golden tile ITQ up in the New York area, and those seven boats or so only have to pay just a hair over 1 percent. All of that needs to be considered, and I just wanted to put it in you all's ear. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Vincent, you're up.

MR. BONURA: I just had a question. Did the council talk about removing the -- Like, currently, you have to own, I guess, 100 pounds, minimum, in order to lease other coupons, and did they talk about, I guess, removing that, in order to make it leasable for all SG 1 permit holders?

MR. HULL: Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Jimmy. They have not talked about that. They have talked a little bit about the permitting structure for wreckfish, and so one of the things that the council will be discussing as they move forward with electronic reporting is eligibility to participate in the electronic reporting and, thus, the wreckfish ITQ program, and so removing that specific language hasn't been discussed, but there has been sort of a broader discussion about eligibility.

Then, if I may, Jimmy, in regard to cost recovery, whether or not it ends up being sort of 1 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, that decision is not a council-based decision. What the council decides is sort of the cost recovery process, and so who is going to be paying, how they're going to be paying, and, all those alternatives, staff is currently working on structuring to hopefully bring to the council at their March 2022 meeting, but the actual decision on that like firm percentage is not a council decision, and that's a decision that's made by NMFS.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Christina. I think this one is pretty simple, and I don't see any other hands. Does anybody else have any other comments? Now is the time. Okay. No hands. It looks like we're through with Item 1 on the agenda.

MR. BONURA: Jimmy, I've got one more thing.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I wanted to know, and did we recommend, at the last meeting, or when we talked about the wreckfish ITQ last time, and did the AP recommend removing that?

MS. WIEGAND: To my knowledge, no, but Mike Schmidtke can confirm.

MR. BONURA: Okay. If not, could we recommend that today?

MR. HULL: What exactly did you want to recommend? Could you say it again, please?

MR. BONURA: Okay. Well, I guess, currently, in order to least ITQ from the ITQ holders, you have to own ITQ, which is hard to buy, because there is only, I guess, half-a-dozen people that own it, and they would like to lease it to other fishermen, but the only problem is, if you don't own any, you can't lease any.

MR. HULL: So, basically, it makes it a closed fishery.

MR. BONURA: Correct.

MR. HULL: To new entrants.

MR. BONURA: Correct. Yes, and so, like in the Gulf of Mexico, you can lease any IFQ you would like over there, and you don't have to own any at all. If you have a permit, you can lease it. Then, here, you can't. You are kind of locked out, and, if you can't buy a hundred-pound coupon, then you're not allowed to lease off of the IFQ holders that currently own the shares.

MR. HULL: So your recommendation is that any SG 1 snapper grouper permit should be allowed to lease wreckfish quota without having the current regulation of owning, own at least a hundred pounds, I think you said is what it is.

MR. BONURA: That is correct. I guess, currently, you have to own a little bit, in order to get a permit, in order to lease it off another individual, entity, corporation, whatever, and you can't even get the permit, because you've got to own your own ITQ to lease it. If you could cancel that

option, that would give an opportunity to all SG 1 permit holders to be able to lease off of the ITQ holders.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that's interesting. For me, I like that recommendation, but let's hear from others before we can send this off to the council. Jack Cox.

MR. COX: I just want to support that. That's a great recommendation. I've got a couple of boats that fish, and some of them like to go out for wreckfish, and, if we have a boat that's down, it makes it mighty easy just to transfer quota from boat to another that already has a permit in place.

MR. HULL: I agree. Does anybody else have questions, comments, or concerns on this recommendation from the AP, which is all of us, to the council? I mean, for me, it makes sense. It opens the fishery up to new entrants, and maybe there is some unused quota out there that needs to be leased to somebody that's out there that could use it. They could put it in their portfolio, which you've got to have a portfolio of fisheries to make it, and it's a possibility. Of course, the wreckfish ITQ shareholders pretty much control -- I believe they control this fishery, and there's not many of them. They may not like it, and I don't know, or maybe they do, and that's why I asked, and we don't have anybody on the AP that is an ITQ program holder, I don't believe. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The confidentiality issue, that's what it's all about, and, unfortunately, in order to do a new stock assessment -- This is one of the limitations that we had to run into, was the confidential data, historically. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Jack, go ahead.

MR. COX: Jimmy, prior to this meeting, last week, I talked to a wreckfish quota holder, and I had a boat that burned and sank last year, and I'm sitting on a permit that I am trying to do something with until I get another boat going, and he said, well, I would like to lease that permit, and I wish you had a wreckfish permit on that boat, so I could put it on it until you get your boat figured out, and so I've already spoke to one of them.

MR. HULL: Right on. Well, how about this, guys? Is there anybody that is opposed to this recommendation from us to allowing SG 1 permit holders to lease a wreckfish quota without owning previous quota? I don't know if it's a hundred pounds or what, but previous quota. Is anybody opposed to that recommendation? Raise your hand or speak up. I don't see anybody opposing it, Mike. Let's make that recommendation.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. We'll save that, and we'll include that in the AP's report to the council. Jimmy, are you ready to move to the next item?

MR. HULL: Yes, sir. I am just trying to move my fingers fast enough here. The next item, Number 2, on the agenda is our fishery performance report for gray triggerfish. This will probably take us a little bit of time. If everybody is ready to go, it's 3:00. If we don't need to take a break -- I don't need to. Does anybody need to take a break for a second, or are you ready to go? No hands, and let's go. It's on to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Before we get into the questions, I'm going to do just a quick overview. There's a link for a Shiny app location that is included in the agenda overview, and I'm

going to slide this over now, so we can view this together. This is just giving a brief update on gray triggerfish and the information that came in the last assessment, as well as some of the landings information that has happened since then.

Gray triggerfish were last assessed through SEDAR 41, and that included data through 2014, and we have another assessment for gray triggerfish coming up, and that will be starting up next year, and that's SEDAR 82, and so, ahead of that assessment, we're looking to the AP to provide information on the fishery, via the fishery performance report.

First, looking at some of the life history information that came out of the last assessment, the maximum observed age for gray triggerfish is fifteen years, and they have a noticeably early maturity, with almost 80 percent of females mature by age-one, and that's about ten inches total length, and close to 100 percent maturity by age-three, or fourteen inches total length.

The last assessment estimated relative abundance using the SERFS chevron trap and video surveys. These showed an increasing trend over the most recent years, the last few years, that were included in the assessment, and the stock was determined to be not overfished, with overfishing not occurring.

Looking at the yearly landings first, and I will pull up the combined landings, and you see, from the combined landings, the overall trend is generally increasing since 2000, with quite a bit of variation in there. Looking specifically at the commercial landings, these have been pretty static since 2012, and those have been hitting both their seasonal -- They have a 50/50 split season, with carryover from the first season, which is January through June, to the second season, which is July through December, and the commercial fishery has typically hit both their seasonal and their annual ACLs, or gotten pretty close to them.

Season 1 closures, when they have happened, have occurred between April and June, although those have not occurred every year. Season 2 closures have been more typical, and they have occurred normally in late October to mid-November in the last few years.

Commercial landings come, from a regional standpoint, primarily from North Carolina, but there are notable contributions coming from the areas throughout the region, South Carolina and Florida/Georgia, as well. Looking now at the recreational landings information, recreational landings are more sporadic, and you can see that increasing trend that we saw in the combined landings is kind of being driven by the recreational landings. These have not hit their ACL in the last couple of years, but they have typically gotten pretty close. Over the last five years, they've been within about -- Between about 80 and 110 percent of the ACL, and so it's been -- It hasn't been down, by a large margin, from the ACL.

Most recreational landings are coming from the Florida/Georgia region, with some contributions coming from the Carolinas as well. Both recreational landings and releases have both shown a big spike in 2016, and this was after the last assessment's data range, and so this is something that may get looked into this time around, as a data point, and it kind of sticks out above the rest, and so that's something that may get looked into a little bit further.

One thing related to the releases is there was a paper, a couple of years ago, that came out from NC State and Florida Fish and Wildlife, and that has already been included in the materials for

SEDAR 82, but kind of the big finding from that was that discard survival is lower than previously estimated in the last assessment, and so that's something that could factor into the results of this upcoming assessment as well.

Next, looking at the landings within the fishing year, and so commercial landings -- We'll look at those first, and those are primarily caught in Waves 1, 2, and 5, and we talked about the split season, and, by May or June of the first season, we've had some closures that occurred there, as well as looking a little bit later into the second season, November and December, you would see declines there, because there are some closures that occur during that part of the year from just bumping up against the ACL.

Recreational landings typically occur in the summertime, in Waves 3 and 4, and next we'll move to the revenue and price information, and so, for ex-vessel value, we've seen general increases since 2000 through the present, and, most recently, gray trigger has been selling for about \$3.00 per pound, with an ex-vessel value close to \$1 million, just shy of \$1 million, and then, finally, taking a brief look at economic impacts, we see, for the commercial sector, there was this bump in 2019 that occurred, but, outside of that 2019 point, the more typical value that we've seen over the last five years has been commercial sales between \$9 and \$9.5 million, income around \$3.4 million, and supporting about 125 jobs for the commercial sector.

For the recreational sector, we've seen the recreational fishery, over the last five years, generating between \$50 and \$75 million in sales, between \$16 and \$23 million in income, and supporting between 300 and 450 jobs. That is kind of the basic information, and then we have a set of questions that we'll go to next, but, before we do that, does anybody have any questions on the information that is included in the app here?

MR. HULL: Mike, the only question that I have -- I don't see any hands up, but it would be what is the spawning season, the peak spawning season, for gray triggerfish? Do we know that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't have that information contained here, but that's something that I could maybe pull from the last assessment. If there is somebody that worked on the last assessment, another staff member that worked on the last assessment, that knows off the top of your head, then feel free to speak up, but, otherwise, I can dig that out, because I'm sure that it would be contained in there.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just for thought, future thought. Thank you, Mike. Any hands? I don't see any.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Then we can move over to the questions, and I will get those pulled up. We have a set of questions here, and, just as a reminder, for those who haven't gone through the fishery performance report process before, these are questions that have been developed -- Some of them, there's a basic set that are asked for each assessment, and then we also send them over to the analysts, to see if they have any input or particular additions that they want to know about the species, so that they can make some of the modeling decisions and make them as appropriately as possible. I see that Chip -- Did you have your hand up before we get into the response for that? You may have the spawning season information.

MR. HULL: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: It looks like peak spawning occurs during the summer, with the peak in July, with the spawning season, it appears, maybe between -- I am looking at a little bit more detail, but maybe somewhere throughout the summer it appears that's when the spawning is, but you guys probably see it more than we do, based on your observations of gutting the fish.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip. That's helpful.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we have these questions that you all can go through and provide information on what you're seeing on the water and changes that you're experiencing in the fishery, to help inform the assessment process, and so, with that, Jimmy, I will turn to you to kind of walk the AP through the questions, and I will be looking to make some notes.

MR. HULL: Right on, Mike. Okay, guys. Let's answer these questions and try to make it concise and to the point and to where it's easy to keep track of and forward our ideas and opinions. Question 1 is have there been substantial changes in the gray triggerfish fishery? If so, when and what do you think caused the change? I am looking for someone that thinks there's been substantial changes in the gray triggerfish fishery. If so, please speak up and let us know what you think has changed. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: When we're out trigger fishing, we've seen -- In the last couple of years, we've seen a lot more participation from the charter boat industry, spending a couple hours of their day out fishing for triggers, a lot more so than we ever have.

MR. HULL: All right, Jack, and so that would be -- He put there increased effort. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: I have seen a good amount of increased effort for triggers as well. They have become a box saver, so to speak, ever since red snapper has been put on hold, for charter as well as recreational in general. I have seen huge numbers of triggers coming in regularly, simply because they're a meat fish, and they make a good taco, and the box is empty with red snapper, and I think it will continue to be that way until the red snapper fishery begins to open up a little bit.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. I concur. Anybody else? Have you seen any substantial changes in the gray triggerfish fishery, and do you agree with what we've put up there so far, that there has been increased effort from the private recreational sector, both charter and recreational, and with the fact that people are pushing into that fishery as an alternative to the closed fisheries, such as red snapper? Chris, you're up.

MR. MILITELLO: Jimmy, I think we touched on it at the last meeting too, and it's just that I am writing so many more policies for people that have never owned boats before, and we're just seeing a lot more boats out there now, and I think it's a nearshore species, for the most part, and so the recreational guys are getting more involved in it, just because you don't have to go twenty miles off to catch them. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris. Andy Fish, you're up.

MR. FISH: Yes, and I would agree that there's definitely a lot more pressure, and, when everybody goes fishing and wants to keep something to eat, triggerfish sure fits the bill, and a lot more of the charter guys are doing what we call chicken rigging, the two-hook rig, and it's a good-biting fish, but there's definitely a lot more pressure by the recreational, and I see that. That's all.

MR. HULL: I think, Mike, you may add in there because it's a -- As he said, it's a species that actually can be retained in a fair amount of number. Harry.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir, and I concur with everybody. I mean, in Hilton Head, we do have to go further out, thirty-plus miles, but, if you said, ten years ago, or longer, when we were pretty much red snapper, one, and grouper, number two, and maybe vermilion, and then a bycatch of trigger, and now it's vermilion and trigger, because that's really what we can catch, right, and so, yes, there's an incredible pressure on that triggerfish, and, here, chicken rigs are absolutely the key, and so you're looking to bring one or two up, or three, depending on how big the rig is, of triggerfish, and so it is one of the primary fish that we go after now.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Andy Piland, you're up.

MR. PILAND: (Mr. Piland's comments are not audible on the recording.)

MR. MOSS: Jimmy, I can't hear him.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Andy, we're having a tough time hearing you. There's a lot of background noise, and so we can't really make out the sound.

MR. PILAND: Is this any better?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: A little bit, yes.

MR. PILAND: In northeastern North Carolina, specifically out of Hatteras, it's the number-one bottom fish that people are requesting, and it's important to the fishermen as well as to the customers in this neighborhood, and I'm agreeing with everyone else. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: I would like to add that, along with what Harry was saying, that we have to go a little bit further, and it's kind of become a bycatch. It used to be something that you would just happen to catch a trigger, but, now, since you cannot catch the snapper, so many people are targeting it, and I'm frankly surprised the numbers look as good as they do on the graphs.

I have been worried about them for years, personally, because I just see them being hit so hard, and I'm quite shocked at the numbers that are looking the way they do. I personally think they're going to go the way the sea bass have. I feel the sea bass have been hit so hard that they just can't sustain it, because we've got other fisheries closed, and I think the same thing will happen with the trigger.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Tony. The effort shifts are a problem. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Jimmy, thank you. I believe you had talked to me about a barotrauma issue with the triggerfish catches, I guess the stomach or whatever, and they can't go back, and is that depth related? That's a mortality, and it doesn't matter what minimum size it is, but it's going to be a dead release. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that was a study at the triggerfish assessment that I was part of, and it was a graduate student that did a diver study on discard mortality on triggerfish that suffered from barotrauma, when their stomach is all blown up, as we've all seen, and their intestines and stuff are hanging out, and, in fact, he said that every one of those animals died, no matter what, if you vented it. When it got to the bottom, its air bladder would catch into its prehistoric head, internally, where all that different bone structure is, and blow up in there, and it would never return back to a proper position. I never heard anything else, other than his study and opinion on it, and I brought it up a few times, but I don't think it's ever been looked at again, that I know of.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, was that study from maybe a couple of years ago, or was it further back?

MR. HULL: It seems like it was during the last stock assessment.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, because the study that I talked about, like just in that brief introduction, was one that -- I think the paper was in 2019, and so it may have been going on. Like the data collection may have been going on close to the last stock assessment, but that's something that is in the materials that is going on and that will be going into the upcoming stock assessment.

Their major finding was, during the last assessment, they estimated that the survival from discarding was I think around 87 percent, something like that, and the estimates that they had coming out of this study were about half, and so about half of that, and so they overestimated how many fish were surviving after they got discarded.

MR. HULL: Right on, and so there is further information from it. It was pretty eye-opening, when it was presented. At that time, I think he said that all of them died in his study, and that begged the question then of why do we have discards at all, if they're going to all die, and so thank you for that update on that, Mike. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, thank you. I was going to wait until that second part, because that was the effort shift, and everybody seems to have talked about that, and so I just wanted to throw this in, that it's most definitely for whole dayboat fleet up here in North Carolina, snapper grouper, with the collapse of the red grouper fishing years ago, and grouper has most definitely become a bycatch, and so I would be very interested in anything that happens with the triggers and beeliners, because that's pretty much our bread-and-butter. If we lose any on that, then we're done, and so there is definitely -- That has become what we target.

As a retail seafood owner and wholesaler, I mean, I have pushed it, and people love it, and they like the fish, and it's just that we need to do whatever can to keep that on their table, and, as far as -- We fish for them in that forty to sixty-mile range, and so we don't really have discards, because they're all pretty big fish, but that's it.

MR. HULL: Good comments, Randy. Thank you. Yes, I agree, as a restaurant and market owner also, and with the private recreational and charter sectors, also. I mean, it's a highly-prized fish for everybody, in this time. I do remember when they used to wheelbarrow them off the dock and dump them, when I was a kid, because they weren't desirable, because there was red snappers and gags, but, Chip, go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: I think you bring up a good point there, Jimmy, where, at least when I was doing some sampling on the docks, gray triggerfish were quite often reported as a fish that was thrown over, and I was wondering if there was a time period that the group can talk about when they shifted from a lot more discarding to a lot more keeping of the fish.

MR. HULL: Well, yes, and I think that you can just look at management for that, as you saw more and more restrictions on these other species. The timeframe I'm talking about is they were just discarded after you brought them in for the picture, and that was back when I was a kid, and so I'm an old man now, and that's forty-five years ago, fifty years ago, when I was a kid doing it, but, yes, it has definitely changed with the regulations, in my opinion, like we've already inferred. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Thank you, Chip. I would recommend looking at the pictures from the late 1940s all the way to the mid-1970s, and you will see triggerfish. We didn't throw them away, and we didn't make them into frisbees, like they said at the Beaufort Lab in North Carolina. Instead, they were easy to clean, if you had a good knife and knew how to pull the skin right off, like you do a mahi. Then it was great, great eating, and we always cleaned those triggerfish in the 1960s, because I started in 1964, and then into the 1970s. You know, it was -- The idea of discarding them just -- I just didn't see a whole lot of that, whether I was on headboats or six-packs.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Rusty. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, back in 1992, I was a broker at a seafood house, and I was hired to sell fish, and I would remember there were days that I would sell 4,000 or 5,000 pounds of triggerfish. We had a fleet of about twelve to fifteen boats, and we were paying the boats thirty-five cents a pound, and they -- It was just not a common fish, and nobody knew what a triggerfish was, and they were all going down to Lakeland, Florida. That's where we were sending them to, and that was in the early 1990s.

Somewhere along about ten or twelve years ago, people started recognizing that it was a very good and tasty fish, and it didn't have a lot to do, so much, with effort shift and management, and we didn't have a lot of that going on during that time, but people were becoming aware of how good they were, and so the price of those fish started creeping up to \$1.25 to the boat, and then \$1.50 and \$1.75. We're paying boats now about \$3.25 a pound for that fish. That's what the boats are getting paid. Now the restaurants, instead of asking for grouper, tuna, and mahi, like they used to, the first thing they want to know is do you have any triggerfish, and so it's a highly-sought fish.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Yes, it is, and I guess, biologically, we're lucky that they mature so early. That's a good thing. To Question 1, have there been substantial changes in the gray triggerfish fishery? If so, when and what do you think caused the changes? We have certainly

talked about the increased effort from everybody, and we've talked about it isn't just regionally, and it's up and down the coast. Management has driven a lot of the increased effort, with those other snapper grouper species closing and less harvesting. We may have answered some of the other questions already up here, and so let's move on to the next one, and some of it we may have answered, or maybe we haven't.

Number two, fishing behavior and catch levels, have there been effort shifts to and from gray triggerfish? Describe, including the timeframe when these shifts occurred. I think we've answered that. Bullet 2, have there been considerable changes in fishing technique and/or gears used to target gray triggerfish? If so, please describe, including the timeframe from when these changes occurred, and maybe we can tackle the next bullet also of how much fishing for gray triggerfish typically occurs during the day versus the night, and I think we can answer that one real easily.

I would just like to start off by saying that, as far as techniques for triggerfish, off of northeast Florida, we fish in the upper water column, with small hooks, for triggerfish, and we catch them while we're fishing for vermilion snapper, and we've been doing it that way for a long time, and so, to go to the bottom to catch a triggerfish, you can certainly do it, but you're going to be weeding through red snapper immediately before you ever catch a triggerfish, most of the time, and so you try to fish them up in the upper water column, before the snapper find you, and then you've got to move anyway.

I think that just the statement that we do fish under the boat, so to speak, forty feet down, thirty feet down, with small hooks and a real small piece of bait, the same way we fish for vermilions, and, as far as -- I don't think that triggerfish bite at night too good. I have never been able to catch triggerfish at night, and I don't know if anybody else has, and so that's just to start it off. Let's see if we have some comment. Harry, go ahead.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I have only been fishing for sixteen years, and I have never caught a trigger at night, and I've done a fair amount of overnight trips, and so that's the first thing. As I said, we fish in eighty to 140 feet, 150 feet, bottom fishing, and, typically, we would catch them down at the bottom, but, recently, we have also been -- In a hundred feet of water, we've been catching -- As a matter of a fact, last week, we caught them almost under the boat, twenty feet, and so, for me, that was new, but, again, I don't have your experience, and so that's what we're finding.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry, and I think it's important to let the analysts and others, the managers, know that we can target triggerfish and not interact with red snapper, for the most part. Eventually, they find you, but, if you start fishing up under the boat, unless you're off of my inlet, where the red snapper have taken over everything, mostly, but you can pretty much catch vermilion and trigger for a while without interacting with snapper, until you've got to move again, and so I think it's important that they know that. Jack.

MR. COX: Jimmy, when we're commercial fishing, we're in about 180 feet of water, and mostly it's a daytime fishery, and then, of course, you know the beeliners will start biting at night, but the dayboats have switched over to a lot more triggerfish, now that the Daiwa Tanacom has come out, and so there's a lot of technology that has taken place and leading to more and to making fishing a lot easier. At first, it was a GPS, and now we're seeing tackle, and now we're seeing trolling motors that will hold you in over 200 feet of water and a three or four-foot sea, and it's just getting a lot easier to go fishing.

MR. HULL: So you're saying, Jack, that the techniques -- I think you were describing those trolling motors that you see on all the outboards now that they don't have to anchor, and it keeps them on the spot, and is that what you meant?

MR. COX: Yes, and I'm just saying we're seeing a lot of effort in fishing because it's gotten so easy for people. Back in the day, when you had a LORAN, and you had to anchor up, man, it was hard, but now you can just push a button and sit right on a place and still your Daiwa Tanacom over the side of the boat, and you're fishing. You're set up, and so these things are going to take their toll on the fish, and we've talked about equipment, and I just wanted to throw that out there, that it's going to put a lot of pressure on it. Things are getting easier and easier to fish, even in deepwater.

MR. HULL: I agree, and so the new technology is making it really easy for anybody, and you don't have to have a lot of talent, or years of experience, and you can be a newcomer. You push the button, and you're on the spot, and you fish. You don't have to have the art of anchoring in your quiver. I've got you. I think he's -- Mike has put that, that you don't need to anchor as much and newer technology and trolling -- They're called trolling motor techniques, and there's trolling motors that they put on the front of the boats now. Offshore boats and not just inshore boats, and it's pretty amazing, and they're all over the place down here. I think that's some good comment. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Jack, does that have the Gulf Stream effect, and so you're able to fish that 165 to way 280 or 300 foot, and you can hold your spot with that without anchoring and without using motor-fishing techniques, or it does engage the motor-fishing techniques?

MR. COX: I go fishing with a guy who's got a thirty-six-foot Yellowfin, and we can hold position in a five-foot sea with that equipment.

MR. HUDSON: Well, there's a way to check out our red porgy population and other red snapper and gag populations in our Oculina for a hundred or 200 miles or whatever. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, guys. We can move to the next bullet. Do you actively avoid fishing for gray triggerfish in certain areas to avoid catching undersized fish or highly-regulated fish, like red snapper, to lessen bait loss? I think we've already answered that with our comments on red snapper, but you really -- You have to go to an area where there isn't, hopefully, as much red snapper to catch triggerfish, if you're going to the bottom especially, but are there comments on that bullet? Do you actively avoid fishing for gray triggerfish in certain areas to avoid catching undersized fish or highly-regulated fish, like red snapper, to lessen bait loss? Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: It seems to me that I saw something about not using natural baits and whether you use some kind of lure or whatever, and then you suddenly get a small fish on it, and then you've got a natural bait, and that is with the red snapper thing, but, with triggerfish and all of that stuff, we normally use like cut squid or part of a Spanish sardine, down our way, and some cut fish, if you're allowed, and so -- Because a lot of that has changed, and it's the way it used to be back in the old days. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: What we call sort of our trigger grounds is a live-bottom area out there in that 130 to 160 foot, and the good thing about that is that all we really catch -- We drop to the bottom, most of the time, and sometimes we pull up, but you're catching the beeliners and the triggers and grunts and stuff, and so there's not much interaction with the red snapper.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Randy. Basically, you have an area of live bottom that you're able to fish for triggerfish continuously without worrying about red snapper. That's a good thing for you and your triggerfish fishery. So you don't avoid fishing for triggerfish. I can't say that I avoid fishing for triggerfish, but I would say that I avoid triggerfish, but I would just say that I avoid trying to catch a red snapper while I'm fishing for triggerfish, which is why we come up under the boat. The next bullet says what do you see in terms of discards in the commercial sector and in the recreational sector? Robert Freeman, you're up.

MR. FREEMAN: In a given area, the fish may be close to the same size, and so, if you're catching consistently small fish, then you're going to want to throw them back and move on to another better place. I know we have caught them where you couldn't even hit the bottom before they've already got your bait, and, one day, we had a party that got 850 pounds of them, and we actually caught a triggerfish on a cigar minnow on the surface, and we were just light-lining, hoping to catch something else, and so they're a fun fish. In some of the old grouper parties they we used to run, their preference now is to catch the triggers, because you can have more of them, and they're quite tasty.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert. I think this bullet was talking about discarding, and, since we had the size change off of my area in northeast Florida -- Our triggerfish inshore are quite a bit smaller than what you get up to the northeast, off the Carolinas, and we have much less discarding now, with the lower size limit.

Yes, you can -- Just as Robert said, you can go way inshore and really get into some small fish, and you, obviously, want to get away from that, and so one of the reasons they would be discarded would be, obviously, because of size. It wouldn't be because of -- It could be because of reaching your recreational limits, and you would continue to discard them, or you would move, and I think most people would move, if they've already got their limit. You're not going to catch triggerfish too much just for fun, I don't think. Any other comments on the discarding, either recreational or commercial? I don't see any hands. Do you encounter gray triggerfish as bycatch when fishing for other species? If so, what species are being targeted on these trips? Does somebody want to speak up to that? Jack.

MR. COX: Jimmy, the good thing is, when we're out commercial fishing for beeliners, we usually see a pretty good, even mix of catch with our beeliners and our triggers, a lot of times, and so we don't have so much discarding out there, at least the way we're fishing.

MR. HULL: Good comment. Thank you. Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: I have a similar experience that Jack is talking about. The beeliners and triggers seem to like the same area, and so it's easy enough to catch them, and they're consistently on the spots that you caught them previously, and so that makes them a nice target.

MR. HULL: I agree, and they bite the same gear quite nicely, small hooks and small baits. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I am just going to go along with what everybody else says. The only other interactions we will get sometimes is with a live bait, and you can tell when the triggers are there, because they will peck the brain out, or they'll peck the rear-end out, but pretty much that's the only interaction that you can tell, that I know of, other than catching them with the beeliners, and that's it.

MR. HULL: I think we answered that. They can be caught as bycatch and co-targeted with vermilion snapper. I think that's generally what everybody is doing. We're fishing with small hooks, with small baits, and trying to catch berms and trigs. We do catch a lot of jacks at the same time, small bar jacks and almaco and stuff, while we're fishing that way also here off of Florida.

The next bullet is do you think that discard mortality is a significant factor for this species? Has this changed? If so, please describe, including the timeframe when the change occurred. Well, I think there is further information coming on that. We just got informed that the discard mortality just got increased to twice as bad as it was -- In the last assessment, I think Mike said it was 80 something percent, and now it's going to be 40 percent survive, rather than 80 percent, if I didn't get that wrong, and I think I got that right, and so there's been a change in what the science says. Now, what are you seeing on the water, Randy?

MR. MCKINLEY: I can't speak really for commercial, but I think, like what Jack said, is, I mean, whenever they changed where the seasons for vermilion and the triggers coincide, that alleviated that, and so there is not a discard problem with the commercial sector, or not up here anyway. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Randy, and so you said there is no change in mortality or a significant factor for this species, and it's the same as you've seen right along.

MR. MCKINLEY: When they changed the -- When they coincided the vermilion with it, that made -- Then the discards are not an issue anymore.

MR. HULL: The season. Okay. Yes, because they bite the same gear at the same --

MR. MCKINLEY: Right.

MR. HULL: Yes, and so that was a good thing.

MR. MCKINLEY: That was a good change.

MR. HULL: That was a good management decision, yes. Jack.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I just want to say that study was done prior to before we started using descending devices and the needles to release the air pressure on the fish, and we're doing a lot better job, when we do have to release these fish, and, when I am fishing, and the water is clear, and we do have to release them, I see these fish doing really well. We vent the fish and watch them swim down, and so we have to take in mind that we're learning how to use that new technology and equipment now, after this study was done, and we're getting better at it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Okay. I think we have provided some pretty good information there to analysts and the stock assessments and the council members, so that they can get our opinions to these questions and use them. Okay. Item Number 3, social and economic influences. For the commercial, how has price and demand for gray triggerfish changed? Is there an increased demand for a specific-sized gray triggerfish, like plate-sized? How has demand for charter/headboat trends targeting gray triggerfish changed? We've answered that one.

Among the species you target, how important are gray triggerfish to your overall business? I think we've answered that one. What communities are dependent on the gray triggerfish fishery? Have changes in infrastructure, like docks, marinas, and fish houses, affected fishing opportunities for gray triggerfish? How have fishermen and communities adapted to changes in the gray triggerfish fishery?

As I say, the one thing that I know that Jack made comment on, as a fish dealer, and he threw out some prices that he used to pay for triggerfish and what prices they are demanding now, and we've seen a massive increase in demand and a massive increase in price for triggerfish over the last five years. I mean, it's just been getting more popular and more popular. I mean, I just throw the five years out in general. Triggerfish price is high, and it's an important fishery for the commercial sector and the charter and the private recreational sector. They're available, and we can catch them, and they're easy to catch. They're delicious. Everybody wants them, and they're a very important fishery that we need to keep open for everyone.

As far as the -- I am just kind of leading into this, and somebody raise their hand and chime-in. What communities are dependent on gray triggerfish? Every community that has snapper grouper fisheries. We're all dependent on them, and becoming -- They're going to become more dependent upon them here shortly.

Infrastructure, yes, we're losing docks and marinas and fish houses all the time. You can't afford to stay at these marinas, hardly, as far as the commercial side, and, I mean, we haven't had to adapt to the changes in the gray triggerfish fishery. We've had to adapt to the changes in the other snapper grouper species, which has made gray triggerfish more important. That's how I would start into it. The prices are high, and the demand is high. Vincent, I see your name. Come on, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Jimmy, I think you pretty much nailed it there with everything, but I can add too that, as a wholesale dealer down here in Broward, Palm Beach, Miami, and the Florida Keys, that, on the gray triggerfish, we've had a good demand, and the price has been going up. We don't catch a lot of them down here, but all the fish we can get and bring down here is easily moveable at a good price, and then pretty much I guess everything else you were talking about is exactly on point.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, but I didn't mean to put my hand up. Sorry.

MR. HULL: Okay, Rusty. Thanks. All right. I don't see any other hands, and I think we've covered that. Management measures. Are there new management measures that the council

should consider, or are there existing management measures, such as size limits, trip limits, bag limits, seasons, et cetera, that should be changed? Are the current ACL and allocations appropriate for each sector?

Management measures, are there new management measures that the council should consider, or are there existing management, such as size limits, trip limits, bag limits, seasons, et cetera, that should be changed? I think that, for me, if you look at the stock status, that would pertain to answering these questions, and you would look at the sectors, who is reaching their ACL and who is catching their limit and getting shut down, and that would pertain to these questions, those type of things.

Do we have some comment on do we need to change the management measures, or should we leave well enough alone? Is it working? Yes, it might be. We're not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring, and so that's a good thing. When you can get that result in the South Atlantic, that's a really good thing, and so do we want to leave it alone, or do we want to fiddle with it? Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: The only thing that I would say to that is, with all this other stuff we're facing and stuff, I have been a big proponent for the step-down, and that's just one of those things that we cannot afford not to have that as a year-round fishery, and so, I mean, I am always -- I would, before -- Even if it's 80 percent or 90, but, just at some point, start looking at a step-down. We just cannot afford for that to close. I know they took it away from beeliners, but my memory is long enough to know that we had a lot of shutdowns years ago, even though it's not happening now, but conditions can change, and stock assessments can change, and all that, and so that would be my only recommendation.

MR. HULL: That's a good one. Thank you, Randy. I like that recommendation, and so it's step-downs can help prolong seasons for year-round fisheries, healthy, sustainable, year-round fisheries. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Sorry. Previously, I had one of those moments, CRS, can't remember stuff, but SEDAR stock assessments, and I participated in them, and we have not had a successful gray triggerfish stock assessment. What's wrong with this picture? Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, and there's some discussion that could be had about that. Okay. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: In this case, as a management tool for triggerfish, the best thing that I could think of would be to lighten up on the red snapper fishery, and that would actually be a tool applied to the triggerfish, but, on the other hand, if it's categorized as not being overfished currently, I believe the Magnuson-Stevens Act reads that we don't need to be touching it, the way that it actually reads. If it's not overfished, we're not supposed to touch it.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you for that. It's kind of like the public comment we had, and he made a good point, Robert Johnson. If it's not broke, don't try to fix it, and this is one of the fisheries where the first thing is it's not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring, and most everybody is getting to participate year-round, pretty much, and I do like the step-down idea for the commercial side, so that we don't have a closure ever, totally, and so we do have some type of at

least bycatch and they're not just targeting triggers, and so then you could be fishing vermilion, and you wouldn't be discarding triggers, because they will still be open. Those are -- I like those management ideas.

MR. CONSTANT: I agree.

MR. HULL: Good, and so, if somebody doesn't agree, they should speak up. I see Chip's hand is up. Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to point out, like Rusty mentioned, that there has not been a successful stock assessment completed for gray triggerfish, and so that does kind of indicate that -- I mean, there's not been a stock assessment to really test whether or not overfishing is occurring and whether or not the stock is overfished. Currently, the overfishing -- There is no overfishing level for gray triggerfish. There is an ABC, a catch target, but there is not an overfishing limit for this species.

MR. HULL: Well, Chip, what is the ABC limit based upon?

DR. COLLIER: It's based on historic catch.

MR. HULL: Which would be more like what we used to do with production models.

DR. COLLIER: Correct. I mean, production models are definitely based on landings, but they also have an index of abundance as well.

MR. HULL: Yes, a much simpler scenario, and so maybe it's a blessing that we don't have a successful stock assessment. Thank you, Chip. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: I hate to rain on our parade, but I see fishing as a very addictive kind of hobby, and I don't know of a fishery that had an unlimited catch that didn't eventually end up being overfished, whether I am looking at cobia or I'm looking at mahi or, obviously, red snapper and porgies, of course. You know, if you look at what has happened to the triggerfish since the closure of the red snapper, there has been easily a 500 percent increase targeting that fish.

It's virtually impossible for that fish not to end up overfished, and we always seem to be -- From a management standpoint, we always seem to be working backwards, as opposed to proactive. The moment you tell a fisherman that -- For example, I have four people on the boat, and how much is enough triggerfish for four people? If you tell me six per person, that's twenty-four triggerfish, and lordy be, and I'm not a commercial fisherman, and so some number helps fishermen stop from overfishing and helps that fishery to survive, and so I'm moving in the other direction.

MR. HULL: Well, Harry, you would like to recommend then that the private recreational trip limit be reduced? I can't even remember what it is right now per person, but you're recommending a possible reduction in it?

MR. MORALES: I am recommending that we, whether it's commercial or recreational, because, as a recreational fisherman, I almost feel like a red-headed stepchild here. At the end of the day,

we have to proactively manage, and I will go back to the greater amberjack. That is the one place where I think we've laid down criteria that makes sense, and we've got to do this across-the-board, because I am not believing in the science that is being thrown at us, where the red snapper is overfished, and it's wiping everything else out, and we all know it, but we're still trying to figure it out. There is a cause-and-effect here, and there is a cost-benefit. At the end of the day, we're going to end up having to protect that trigger, to some degree, and manage it from there, and the fact that we don't really have a good stock assessment, at this point, is amazing to me.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. I see, Mike, your hand is up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I'm just informing you that the current recreational bag limit is ten fish and part of the twenty-fish aggregate, and that includes several porgy species and a couple of grunts, and some of the non-greater amberjack and some of the other jacks, but it's the ten fish and part of the twenty-fish aggregate.

MR. HULL: So they can have ten triggers and their twenty-fish aggregate?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Correct.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you for that information. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Red snapper keeps popping up, and it doesn't matter where we're at or what fishery we're at, and, right now, we're in triggerfish, and I really enjoyed reading the Snapper Grouper Committee Chair, Jessica McCawley's, three-page analysis, and, when I get to page 2, and I look at SEDAR 15 results, which there is one black grouper fisherman represented there, and 2.3 million pounds was the MSY.

SEDAR 24, 2009, is where we got involved, Jimmy. 1.842 million pounds, using the science that they were using, and there was earlier science before SEDAR 15, but SEDAR is where it's all at right now. SEDAR 41, it dropped down to 763,000 pounds as the maximum sustainable yield, and now the most recent SEDAR 73 is 404,000, based on a 90 percent kill rate, or whatever, from recreational discards and stuff like that, and it's insane, and, when you think about it, that document is extremely accurate to the realities, because, when they shut us down on January 4, 2010 -- In the two years before that, we were doing over quarter-of-a-million to a third-of-a-million pounds without a trip limit with a twenty-inch minimum size. The reality is the science is not working. SEDAR needs a change. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Rusty. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: I want to concur with a few things that Harry was saying, and I appreciate you doing that, Harry, for the recreational side, and I am going to do it for the commercial side. I've been at this for a long time. I've been at it for about forty years, and we certainly see a lot less triggerfish than we used to. I don't think it's because of discards. I think it's because of the demand of the fish, and the price is so high, and I certainly don't want to cut out any of my fellow commercial fishermen on the water and say that I think we should change management and go to a smaller size limit.

On the dayboats, we can certainly live with a 500-pound trip limit, because we can go from spot to spot much quicker, and we can cover so much more ground quicker than the traditional bandit boats. I would say that I think that we're going to have to be very careful that we don't get behind the eight-ball like we did with gag grouper, and the worst thing that could happen is the fishery could close, and I really appreciate that. I am concerned about it, and we don't see the landings like we used to.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack, and I think we could say something like, you know, you already have proactive measures that could be considered to maintain the fishery, and we could recommend that the council pay very close attention to this fishery, because, as important as it is, we certainly don't want to see the fishery go into some severe decline where it gets closed, and I think they need to pay close attention to this fishery and to what's going on in it. Andy.

MR. PILAND: Our group just had, two years ago, had like a 50 percent reduction in our daily creel, when they changed that aggregate bag limit to no more than ten fish of any species. Prior to that, I guess, technically, we felt like we could keep twenty triggers per man, and now it's specific that we can only keep ten, and that should have -- I know, on my boat, it made a big difference in the daily take. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: No, and I mis-hit.

MR. HULL: Okay, Harry. Thanks. All right. Management measures, I think we've provided some. I think that's some good information for them. Let's move on to environmental and ecological habitat. Do you perceive that the abundance of gray triggerfish has changed over the past ten years? If so, how has it changed? When and where are the fish available, and has this changed? For instance, has there been any shift in catch, annually or seasonally, inshore or offshore, north or south? If so, please describe.

Has the size of the fish that you typically encounter changed? If so, could you briefly describe the trend? Have you noticed any unique effects of environmental conditions on gray triggerfish? If so, please describe. What are your observations on the timing and length of the gray triggerfish spawning season in your area? Time periods when fish are observed with large ovaries or eggs spilling out, externally or while venting?

What do you see now, in terms of recruitment? Where are the small fish? Are large and small fish found in the same locations? Have you observed changes in the catch depth or apparent bottom type fished on? How have sea conditions, monthly or seasonally, affected fishable days? Have you noticed any change in the species caught with gray triggerfish over the years or seasonally?

Well, there's a lot of bullets there, and a lot of questions, and so let's hear some opinion on that, and some of it we've already answered, and I guess the first thing, environmentally, is have you noticed any unique effects of environmental conditions on gray triggerfish. I mean, I can't say that I have. Mike, go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, I just wanted to point out one of the things that we had specific requests from the analysts on, and that was -- I will highlight the question here, but the observations on timing and length of the spawning season, and, if folks are seeing them when they have large ovaries, or with eggs spilling out, then that's something that they were specifically interested in.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike, and so let's go right to that one first. As far as spawning, does anybody have anything to say about gray triggerfish spawning? When you're cleaning them, or when you're catching them, do you see them when they're really ripe, and is there a time where you think it's changed, or are you seeing that at all, different depths? Does anybody have any observations there that you can bring up? Jack, go ahead.

MR. COX: It seems like, in the spring of the year, we see a lot more roe in the fish, and going into June and late May, and it seems like those fish, in the fall of the year, are quite active, when the water is cooling down.

MR. HULL: So you're seeing more spawning, which maybe the little bit of temperature change that's been noted is having an effect, possibly, environmentally? I wonder if they're expanding further north. I mean, that's something I can't answer. They say that bass are moving further norther, and so that's a good question, but you're seeing more spawning in the spring, late May to June, and I personally haven't seen any changes. It's the same. Anyone else have some comment on that? The analysts would like to hear from us. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: Well, I really started this in May, as far as the retail part, and I've been cleaning triggerfish since May, and they have had eggs in them from May all the way even -- I took in 470 pounds this past weekend on one boat, and they averaged over five pounds apiece, and every one of them was full of eggs.

MR. HULL: Awesome. That's good news. Also, on the life history part of it, I believe that females were 80 percent sexually mature at -- Was it one year of age? They are sexually mature very early, which is great, in a relatively short-lived species, and so, I mean, these are all the kind of things that really matter for this stock for us to continue to sustainably harvest it and with all the increased effort that it's certainly going to get. It needs to be a fast reproducer and mature early. That's the kind of stocks that we really need to fish on. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: It was brought up about the it looks like a spring and summer type of thing, and is that both males and females, or is there a transition difference? Thank you.

MR. HULL: This isn't a species that changes sex, is it? Is that what you're asking, Rusty, a transition?

MR. HUDSON: No, and he was talking about the roe, Randy. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: That's what I heard as well, and this fish does not change sex, but it does build nests and protects nests, and so it does have -- Even though it's not a sex-changing fish, it does have some weird, or some different, spawning behaviors than what we typically deal with with other snapper grouper species.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip, and that does bring up some comment from me that, generally, I can find these fish way off the main part of the reef, and they will be out in the sand, and that's what they're doing, is they're spawning out there and building, like you said, a nest, and so I do find spawning aggregations spread out over a wide area of the overall reef that I am fishing, and they will fish -- You can catch these fish all around your target reef. Anybody else on that particular one, and then the rest of them, also?

I can't see where the abundance -- Some people off of Florida -- I mean, I'm seeing about the same amount of triggerfish that I have always seen, and I know that's just my area, and so I haven't seen any change in the fish availability, inshore or offshore, and it pretty much has stayed the same. The sizes have stayed the same, as I said, off of -- You have to get way offshore to get, typically, a -- To constantly catch bigger fish, and there is a lot of small fish inshore here, and we talked about the environmental conditions. Andy Fish, I see your hand. Go ahead.

MR. FISH: I would have to agree with you here. In the Canaveral area, we really don't have much of a trigger fishery, like north Florida and Georgia and all that stuff, but it seems to be pretty status quo for what it's been, that I remember for the last twenty-five years or so, and I'm just adding that.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Jimmy, just a question. Do you see more baro issue outside of ninety foot with these triggerfish, or you're okay with the sixty-foot realm, because I know we have -- That's where you said the smaller animals were, which are I guess the one-year maturity with the females. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Rusty, thanks. I am not sure about your question. From ninety-foot on, definitely barotrauma increases. Tony, go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, I have to agree with you, from your north Florida. We're up here in South Carolina, and most of our fish are a lot deeper, and they are eighty to 150 feet, is where most of them seem to come from, at least the consistent big ones, and, of course, we're in the low country, and it's not called the low country for nothing, but I have seen -- I haven't seen much of a change in the last ten to fifteen years. If anything, I've seen a slight decrease, but I have seen a lot of big catches in the last year to five years, and pretty consistent, good-sized fish coming from 130 feet of water. I really anticipate the fishery to not be doing as well, but it seems to be running right along.

MR. HULL: Tony, I would concur. It's been chugging along pretty good, and I think it's in fair shape, in my opinion. Lawton, come on.

MR. HOWARD: I kind of wanted to echo what my comrade from South Carolina said, and we -- On my boat, I didn't really want them, and so we would fish with a little bit larger hook, trying to stay away from them, but we are in 160 feet of water and deeper to catch them, and so, when you caught one, it was typically a pretty good one, and the guys that seemingly target them are out even deeper than that, but they had some huge fish, the ones that I saw coming back to the dock, but the main point is that I am not seeing any change whatsoever, none.

They bite all the time, and they're a good size, but I also recognize that Georgia is somewhat unique to all of us, and we've got such a small coastline and such a small area that we deal with, and so whether that has something to do with it or not, and the fact that you have to go so far, and there's just a limited amount of boats that are going to go. I am going to say that we're pretty close to fifty miles out to get into that kind of water, and that's where the fish have been, but, basically, I don't see a change anywhere. The quality is there, and the abundance is there, in our fishery.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Lawton. It's good to hear from you. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I said it once, and I'm going to say it again, and we're in the heartland, in Morehead City, of the triggerfish, and it wasn't ten years ago that our boats had no trouble catching their limit of triggerfish, and they would come in with a thousand pounds, if they wanted to catch them, and they're struggling to do it now, and the triggerfish is not as healthy as it was, and I just want the council to be careful. It takes a long time to catch up, and I don't want to get behind the eight-ball, and I don't want to be in a red grouper or a gag grouper situation, and I'm going to say it again. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. I think we said it already, that the council needs to pay close attention, and I know they're paying close attention anyway, and so I won't say it again, but this is a very important fishery for the snapper grouper overall, all the species, because it's one of the few that we actually have some poundage that we can catch. Robert, go ahead. It doesn't sound like he is happening there.

I would like to ask Jack a question. Jack, in Morehead, your area, Beaufort, is there a lot more commercial -- I know there's a lot more effort overall from everybody, and I know on the recreational side, and so is that what you're attributing the harder to catch, the limits of gray triggerfish, because there's less fish there because of the effort, or do you think it's because of some other factor?

MR. COX: Well, we always want to talk a little bit about climate change, if there's a shift in the fishery and if they're moving, and I would love to find, out from the guys north of us, if they're seeing them, but it's just the effort. It's amazing the amount of increased effort there is from the recreational sector. I mean, plus people on the commercial side. When you're paying \$3.00 or \$3.50 a pound for triggerfish to the boat, they're going to try to catch them, and I really wish I could hear Robert, because Robert is in my backyard here, on the recreational side, and I would like for him to chime-in, because he's been at this as long as I have. Maybe we'll get him back online here in a minute.

MR. HULL: Good. I wanted to pull that out of there, the increased effort from both sectors off of your area, and, of course, we've had increased effort too, but we haven't seen, and the other guys haven't seen, where it's any harder, but it seems like, where you're at, it's really an increased effort, and it's had a bigger effect on it. Robert Freeman, are you there? Okay. David, you're up. Robert Freeman or David.

MS. IBERLE: David, it looks like you're unmuted as well, but we're not hearing you.

MR. HULL: Well, I'm just going to go ahead, and then, hopefully -- As soon as you guys can speak up, speak up. We have pretty much answered, I think, those -- Could you scroll up a little bit, please, Mike? Environmental and ecological and habitat, and so, environmentally, we have addressed some of that. Ecologically, I mean, we've talked about some of that and the catch composition, what's happening overall in the snapper grouper fishery and the abundance of different stocks. Triggerfish seems to be kind of holding its own against its area being taken over by red snapper. Habitat, it's an offshore fish, and it doesn't use inshore, way inshore, habitat to spawn. I think we talked a little bit about that. Robert or David, are you there?

MS. IBERLE: Mike, was that you?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, it's not me, but I see that David wrote something in the question box. He said that he was just going to echo what Jack had said about seeing the fish further and further north. I've heard that from a couple of different people, and that was David Moss's comment. Jimmy, are you still there?

MR. HULL: Yes, I am still here. I do see Rusty's name, and then, Robert, if you can hear us, when you can get in there, chime in. Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I've got a hypothetical question. If triggerfish, or whatever other fish, moves further north, do we have to allocate more stuff up north here in another three to ten years, as they see more and more, if that's the case? Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right now, we don't have any regional allocation for triggerfish, and the only way that it's allocated is between the commercial and recreational sectors, and so that would be kind of a whole new frontier, if we started doing some type of area allocation.

MR. HUDSON: So they would have to have our SG 1 or SG 2. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. If you --

MR. HUDSON: We have to say that, because the Snapper Grouper 1 or 2 -- Anybody north of North Carolina/Virginia line, they don't have to have that permit then, do they?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not that I know of. I am not sure. I'm not sure, off the top of my head, but not that I know of.

MR. HUDSON: Well, the big game is climate change, and so it's been coming on for about a couple of decades. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Mike or Chip, go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: Mike was correct that the management boundary for the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic region ends at the North Carolina/Virginia border. Therefore, north of that is out of the South Atlantic's management jurisdiction.

MR. HULL: So, if the next area north, the Mid-Atlantic, if they don't manage gray triggerfish, then it's just unmanaged, and you can catch all you want?

DR. COLLIER: Well, some states do have regulations on triggerfish north of the border, and I believe that Virginia and Maryland might already have some regulations, at least for the recreational fishery.

MR. HULL: Gotcha. Okay. Thank you. Jack.

MR. COX: You know, it would be interesting to reach out to Michelle Duval, and she's now working with the Mid-Atlantic, to see if they're seeing any abundance of triggerfish at all up that way.

MR. HULL: I think he's getting ready to put that there. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Is that state landings, Chip, or is that Mid-Atlantic landings also, as far as being able to deal with the triggerfish question?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, it's state regulations. It's not a Mid-Atlantic regulation. I am not aware of that.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Bob Lorenz, go ahead.

MR. LORENZ: I just wanted to make one comment on this, and this is more of an incidental fish for me, but I have a comment. As we're getting here into a discussion of, if these fish actually go into another basin area, like the Mid-Atlantic, I mean, are we really possibly going to lead folks into the weeds on a fish that is not pelagic, or not migratory, and these fish tend to be more oriented towards a structure or an area, and what would it really matter to us if triggerfish show up in states north of here? That does not necessarily mean that we're sharing a certain population, and it's just there are migrants, as they can be people, just going to new places and will populate new bottom.

I think that's just kind of important to keep our eye on, and I don't think that will necessarily be an important issue, but, also, to Rusty's comment of just in case, let's keep our eyes on it, and are the scientists going to ever think that does occur, because I think what we're getting at is would we have to split an ABC or something with a larger territory, and so I think what's important to those of us is that any of the allocations that are in our total basin don't get split out to take into other states, and that we demand a look at the fact that, if these fish are changing and going to a new area, they're a different population, and they're not integrating back and forth with ours, and so I would just like to keep an eye on that, so that we don't set a mousetrap up for ourselves.

MR. HULL: Good comment, Bob. Thank you for that. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Bob, it's the same genetic population, and it's being driven by the latest and greatest disaster, climate change, and we've got a whole lot of other fish in front of us, too. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay, guys. I think we've done pretty good with this. What else is important for the council to know about gray triggerfish? Well, we've already covered that, and I think we've

given them a lot. Bob, go ahead. He's not there, for some reason. Maybe his name is up from -- I see --

MR. LORENZ: I walked away for a minute. This is Bob.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Bob.

MR. LORENZ: I guess they didn't eliminate my hand. I made my statement when I made the statement about the population of the triggerfish moving.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you very much, Bob. It's good to hear from you. Now I see Robert Freeman, maybe. Go ahead. We're having some technology issues there, Mike. As far as what else is important for the council to know about the gray triggerfish, I mean, I think we've really given them a lot of information, and it's such an important fishery, just like vermilion is. We catch them at the same time and the same place, and we have to keep access to this fishery open, and we have to have good science on this fishery, and the way we're going to have that is by keeping it open, where we get good data, both fisheries-dependent to go along with the fisheries-independent.

Obviously, we need a lot of data, continuously, to try to work towards coming up with a good assessment and a good characterization of this fishery. We've got to keep this fishery open. It's important for both the science and commerce. I mean, we have to keep it open. The science is dependent upon having open fisheries, because the fisheries-independent is not adequate. It's important, very, but you have to have fisheries-dependent data as well, continuously, year-round. Bobby, are you there? One more time.

MS. IBERLE: Suz, I don't see him on the list. I know you put his name up.

MR. HULL: I didn't.

MS. THOMAS: I just tried to get him on with my link, and it's okay. We're working on it.

MR. HULL: Okay. He can type in his comment, obviously, I think, or maybe he can't, or can add to it. There is time for that. That's the fishery performance report, guys. It looks like we did it. It's 4:30, and so the next item is snowy grouper, Amendment 51.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, today, we were scheduled through 4:30, just to be mindful of folks' schedules, and do we want to start in on snowy grouper, or would we rather start fresh with that in the morning?

MR. HULL: Well, excuse me for that. I didn't remember that we were going to stop at 4:30. This is early, and let's -- No, we need to stop, and we'll start in on the morning, and I really appreciate everybody participating on this opening, and I think we've done a good job so far, and I hope that the staff thinks so, and that the council members do also, and so everybody be prepared for tomorrow, and we will start in on Amendment 51, and so you know we're going to get through that, and probably yellowtail. Mike, where did you see us trying to get through tomorrow, so everybody knows to really sharpen up on it tonight?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, I would like to start in -- I would like to potentially get through gag grouper tomorrow, and possibly start into the red snapper and snapper grouper discussions, and maybe those would get paused and carried over to Thursday morning.

MR. HULL: Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So somewhere between Items 6 and 8.

MR. HULL: Okay. That sounds great, and so everybody dial-in on those items, so that we can get through the discussion on that tomorrow, and we'll start tomorrow morning. At what time, Mike, would we like to start?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Tomorrow morning, we are scheduled to begin at 9:00.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so it's a 9:00 a.m. start. I do see one more hand up. It's my good friend Rusty. Go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Today, you didn't do a biological, and tomorrow is a long day, and do we have lunch? What is the plan on that? Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, I guess we will probably will have to break for some kind of a quick snack, and I don't know if I would call it lunch, but I would prefer a quick break, if that's good with everybody, maybe thirty minutes or something, so you can grab something to eat, and I think we're all probably sitting at home, or close to where we can get something to eat. What does the staff say? You guys are in control, ultimately, on this. Go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The Chair is in control, but we can plan for a tentative thirty-minute break somewhere around noon tomorrow, and I can try to remind about breaks in between in the morning.

MR. HULL: Yes, that would be helpful, Mike, because we will need to break up, a little bit, the day, and then we'll take -- I need to eat a little lunch too, and so it sounds good to me. I really appreciate everybody, and you've done a good job.

MS. THOMAS: Guys, I've got Bobby on my phone, and I was going to try to let him talk through my phone, if that's okay.

MR. HULL: Yes, we've been -- Go ahead. Do it.

MS. THOMAS: Okay. Bobby, I'm going to hold you up to my mic. You're not going to be able to hear them, but please say whatever it is that you want to say, okay?

MR. FREEMAN: Okay. What Jack was saying is pretty well straight-on, as far as the triggerfish. Over the last ten years, due to the pressure that's on them from the number of go-fast boats that are targeting them, as well as the charter boats that troll most of the day and have a bad time and try to go to the dock with three fish, and they will stop on the triggers and beat on them pretty good for a little bit, and so, yes, there are fewer of them. The schools are fewer, and they are still in the same places, usually associated with hard bottom, and, most of the time, they will readily bite, and so they're a fun fish to target, and hopefully we can keep enough of them out there that we don't

have to get more than this ten-fish limit, and so that's what I know about a triggerfish, small hook and small bait and tight lines. Thanks, Suzanna.

MS. THOMAS: No problem.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that, Suzanna and Bobby. Okay. This is it, because everybody wants to chime-out. Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I don't want people to forget that our great Chairman is going to be sitting at a restaurant, and he will be eating very well. Maybe he will have some takeout for us eventually. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thanks a lot, everybody. We will see you at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning, and you may want to chime-in a little earlier than that, for the mic check. I appreciate that, and so have a great evening, and thank you very much. See you all tomorrow morning.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 19, 2021.)

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OCTOBER 20, 2021

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar on October 20, 2021, and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: Good morning, everyone. Welcome back. I hope that you all had a good rest. We have a little changeup this morning. At the request of the council's Snapper Grouper Committee Chair and Vice Chair, I think we want to start with a little changeup on the agenda. They would like us to begin with Item 7 and get into 8 this morning, first off, and so that's what we're going to do. Item 7 is the Fishery Overview for Red Snapper.

Hopefully, you have -- Red snapper, we've all been through for a long time, and this will bring us up-to-speed here on the background and things like that, and there is a really good video that hopefully you got to look at from the council and John Carmichael explaining the results of the assessment and how they interpreted it and put it into the context that they are delivering to us, and so hopefully you got to see that, and it kind of tells you why they're doing what they're doing, and it shows the discarding. I see some hands up immediately, and so go ahead, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I think that was an accident. I did not raise my hand.

MR. HULL: Okay, and I see Todd. He may be just saying that he re-signed in, possibly, trying to get his mic up. I guess I will turn it over to you, Mike, to get us started.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy. Before we get going, I do want to just let folks know that Jessica, when she talked to us yesterday, Jessica McCawley, she said that she would be kind of in and out of the webinar, but we do have our committee vice-chair, Kerry Marhefka, and she's on this morning, and she'll be on throughout the meeting, to help answer any questions that you all have from the council. We'll also have other council members signing-on throughout the time, but I believe Kerry is expected to be on for the entire meeting, and so we should have at least one council member here the entire time.

MR. HULL: Great.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: This morning, we're going to start off talking about the red snapper overview, and this is really just a basic summary of the stock assessment. You all may have tuned into the council meetings, or the assessment meetings, or the SSC, or some other committee, and seen something more in-depth, and we're really just going to hit pieces of this that are pertinent to some of the follow-up actions that the council is trying to take, and so I'm going to give kind of a rough overview of what happened with the assessment and what the recommendations from the SSC coming out of it were, and then we're going to transition into a discussion of how these issues are -- How the council wants to address these issues within the context of the greater snapper grouper fishery.

Within your briefing materials, there is the document that you see here on the screen that gives a little bit of assessment background, and I'm not going to go through that in-depth. That's something that you can read on your own time, but that's just giving a little bit of the history behind the stock assessments. I am going to shift now to the Shiny app, just to give some visuals of what happened and what the results of the assessment were showing. That is linked both in your agenda as well as in that overview document.

The two big graphs that we look at, when coming out of a stock assessment, are looking at the fishing mortality and at the biomass, or the spawning stock biomass, spawning stock biomass in the case of red snapper, and those are the indicators of stock status, and what we have here, in the case of red snapper, is we have an annual fishing mortality rate. This figure indicates whether overfishing is occurring in the fishery throughout the time series, and I know the numbers are a little small, but we can try to zoom-in a little bit.

What you can see here is the endpoint, the last point that you see on the screen, is above the line, the fishing at maximum sustainable yield line, and that is indicative that overfishing is occurring in the red snapper fishery, and I will give a little bit more indication, in a second, on what exactly that means in the case of red snapper, because sometimes the term "overfishing" can have -- It can take on a little bit of a different meaning, or a different understanding, for some folks.

The other big figure relating to stock status has to do with the spawning stock biomass, and what we see from the assessment information is that the stock is growing. The biomass is growing in the stock, and, if you look back, it's as high as it's been since the 1980s. It's the highest it's been since about the mid-1980s, and so that is something that is a positive indication, and it's something that is corroborated by reports that we hear from you all on the water, that you're seeing a whole lot of red snapper, that the biomass is growing.

One of the reasons why it hasn't quite gotten up to the biomass level that we're looking at, and I'm going to shift over to a figure that is a bit more descriptive from the assessment, and so we see the numbers here, and the colors within these bars are different ages within that year, and we see a whole lot of these young ages, these one, two, and three-year-old fish, here towards the end of the time series, and so we have a lot of younger fish, and these younger fish are of smaller size than the older fish.

Because of that, when we look at -- When we scroll down a little bit and look at how that corresponds to the biomass, the weight of those fish, the biomass isn't quite up there, and so what we're looking for, in terms of being able to hit that biomass threshold and be able to say that the stock is rebuilt, is we're looking for more of these younger fish to grow into the older age classes.

The recruitment that we've seen, we've seen high recruitment in the fishery, and that's a very positive sign, that fish are coming into the stock, and they are progressing through these ages, and we're seeing kind of growth through the population over time, and we just haven't quite hit that goal, and so it looks like we're on track and we're making progress, and we're in line with the rebuilding plan that is in place, but it has not hit the status that would say that the stock is no longer overfished.

Coming out of the assessment, this information was reviewed by the SSC, and the SSC then recommended landings levels that you see on the screen. I'm sorry, and I forgot to bring up one piece of information from the overview, and that has to do with the projections, and that was kind of what I was indicating as far as this overfishing that's occurring in the fishery, and so what we see from these projections -- This is projected landings through the end of the rebuilding period, and one thing that you will notice --

The two different graphs are just two different recruitment levels, and so we've seen a higher recruitment in recent years, and we've seen more young fish coming into the population, and, if that trend continues, that we continue to see that high level of young fish coming into the population, then this is kind of the predicted outlook of what the landings could look like. If we see more of what the long-term average is for young fish coming into the population, then this is more of what we're looking at, as far as the long-term outlook of landings.

One of the big take-aways that you can see from this comparison is we have our dead discards shown in kind of this brick red and the landings shown in this navy blue. The dead discards greatly outnumber the landings, in both of these scenarios, and they're the majority of the mortality.

While we have this overfishing status, the bulk of that overfishing that is going on is coming from mortality associated with dead discards, and that's something that is recognized by the council, and that's why the council is trying to come up with a different approach for how to address the overfishing that is occurring within the red snapper fishery, because it's not overfishing that is associated with landings, and it has to do with the dead discards.

That was one thing that I wanted to make sure we pointed out before we move forward, but, coming back to the SSC recommendations, the SSC recommendations for landings are shown here on the screen, and this information would need to go through an amendment to be put into place, and I guess, at this point, I'm going to -- There is also a summary of regulations and accountability

measures in the fishery right now, and that's within this document, and that's more for your information, and not as much as the focus for our discussion.

Before we move into the changes that are being discussed from the management perspective, are there any questions about the assessment information that I have provided? Please bear in mind that I am not the analyst for this assessment, and so I will do my best to answer those.

MR. HULL: I see that Andrew has his hand up. Go ahead, Andrew.

MR. MAHONEY: I just wanted to know how they come up with the number for the amount of discards.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So we have discard estimates, as far as recreational releases, and that's one aspect of it. There's also a methodology for, I believe, reporting commercial dead discards that they look at within -- Commercial discards, rather, that they look at within stock assessments, and so they use both the commercial and recreational side, and they use that to get a total number of discards, and then they apply a percentage, and that's similar to what we talked about yesterday with gray triggerfish and the release survival. There's a discard mortality associated with releasing fish, and so they apply that mortality as a percentage to the number of discards that occur throughout the fishery.

MR. MAHONEY: Are all those discards floating away?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There would not be that resolution, I don't think, in the data, to say whether the fish was floating or swimming afterwards, and they're kind of -- All the discards are grouped. The place where they would be -- That distinction between the floaters and other types of mortality that they would experience on their way back to the bottom, that would be something that would be captured within that percentage, that discard mortality rate.

MR. FISH: Thank you.

MR. HULL: I see, David, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Kind of building on what was just asked there, I was curious what -- Number one, what the discard mortality rate that we're using, or that is being used, is, and if there's any kind of allowance that came into effect last year with -- I think it was last year, when Regulatory Amendment 29 went into effect and the descending device requirement.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I can pull up the table from the assessment, but, while I'm kind of scrolling to that, what they did is they divided the discard mortality rate into time blocks, and they had different rates for different blocks of time that indicated different levels of advances that we have in improving release mortality, and so I will pull this table over. What you see is you have -- I will zoom-in a bit.

You have the different fleets. There's the commercial handline, the headboat, and the recreational, and you have these different blocks that are associated, and each block has a different timeframe, and so Block 1 goes through 2006, and then Block 4 is from 2020 on, and Blocks 2 and 3 are intermediate to that, and what we see is, as you progress through time, as you get further and

further towards the present, the discard mortality rates are going down, and so more fish are surviving, are estimated to survive, as a result of things like best practices being put in and increased descending device usage and things of that nature.

MR. MOSS: Just in response to that, if we go back to the chart where it had the discard mortality, and you don't have to go back to it, but I'm just kind of referring to it, but we can say, in some manner, it's almost incomplete info, because, as it looks, the most recent block, which is 2020 on, and so it really started last year, discard mortality has decreased significantly from Block 1, and, obviously, not as much from the previous year, but -- Then the ideal is that, as more people are using descending devices, discard mortality goes down, and, I mean, is it safe to make that inference?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I think that's the inference that's being made, is that, as more people use descending devices, discard mortality is assumed that it would go down, and I think what they did, and this is something that I may need correction from Chip, but I believe what they did, as far as the projections, is that they used these time blocks to do kind of the past information, but, when they projected forward, they used only Block 4. They used Block 4 to project what the discard mortality would look like going into the future, because Block 4 is after the data ended for this assessment, and I believe the last year of data might have been 2019, or possibly 2020, but this is after 2020, and so Block 4 is -- This is what we're estimating discard mortality for the future to be.

MR. MOSS: I understand that -- I'm not going to hold you to this, or hold anybody to this, but, in a perfect world scenario, it could actually be even a little bit of a better picture, assuming that there's a high rate of compliance, with Block 4, since it's kind of an estimate at this point.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It could potentially be, yes. I mean, that's something that, once we get into kind of the management information, the management reaction that the council is having, that's one of the goals. One of the goals, one of the primary management goals, is to reduce the discards and the amount of -- I don't know, necessarily, as far as the rate, the mortality rate, but to reduce the number of overall discards that is happening in the fishery, to reduce that and to have more of those fish be available for potential use as harvest.

MR. MOSS: Gotcha, and I don't want to monopolize too much more time here, but I just -- It's my understanding that, in some ways, this is almost like a worst-case scenario for Block 4, because it doesn't show that much of an increase from Block 3 to Block 4, and Block 4 is when the requirement went into place, and so just so that we have all the information, like I said, and thank you very much, and I don't want to monopolize too much.

MR. HULL: Thanks, David. I see Chip is wanting to clarify, possibly, and so go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for recognizing me, and I just wanted to build on what Mike was saying. If you look at Block 1, you can see that, for the commercial fleet, it was slightly different for the time block for Block 1. What that's representing is a pre-circle-hook regulation. Commercial fishermen had indicated that they were using circle hooks a little bit earlier than it became really popular in the recreational fleet, and that's why have slightly different time blocks there.

Time Block 2 represents a time period where fishermen had indicated that's when the circle hook regulation, the dehooker regulation, was in place. Then Time Block 3 is a time block where fishermen were indicating that they had started using descending devices, but it wasn't really all that popular, and then, like David was mentioning with the Time Block 4, and Mike had mentioned as well, that is when the descending device regulation was put in place, as well as recommendations for other best fishing practices, and he was right that the data do go through 2019 for the landings, and so, looking at Block 4, that is just for projections.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip. There's lots of improvement there between Block 1 and Block 4 for all sectors. Andy Piland, you're up.

MR. PILAND: My question was answered, and it's the same as the last one. With the requirement of everybody having the release devices, was the calculation -- Had the calculation been corrected, but you answered that question. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. Andrew Mahoney, you're up.

MR. MAHONEY: How does this block series thing compare to the Gulf side?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't know that, off the top of my head. I would have to get back to you on that, Andrew.

MR. HULL: Okay. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: This is really, I guess, for Chip. Are the scientists giving any consideration to assuming that descending devices are increased in utilization and that there would be a greater differential between 3 and 4?

DR. COLLIER: The difference between Block 3 and Block 4, it's assuming a 25 percent usage rate in Block 3 and a 75 percent usage rate for Block 4, and what that's indicating is fish that need descending are actually -- Fish that are displaying signs that they need to be descended, they're actually descended, and so it's a little bit different than thinking 75 percent of the people are using it. It's based on the fish actually needing that treatment, that recompression treatment, that a descending device gives.

There is other factors that go into the release mortality for red snapper, and not all of it is due to barotrauma. There is other issues that come into play, whether it's hooking mortality or depredation after release, or even predation as you're reeling it up as well, and so it does account for some of that, but it is a complex issue that has many aspects to it.

MR. MORALES: Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip and Harry. I don't see any other hands up at this time, and so carry on.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am grabbing this document just as a brief introduction, but I am going to be passing it off to John Hadley in a second here. We're going to get into more of the management response at this point, and the council -- They saw this information, and, as I pointed out, we see

that the discard mortality is a heavy component of it, and so, in order to address discards, that is something that goes beyond just changing limits on red snapper, but that has to do with other fisheries that are operating throughout the year that are encountering red snapper and catching them and releasing them.

The council, they came up with -- Jessica produced a statement, and the council was largely supportive of it, and that's something that's been referenced already, and the gist of it is there's kind of this short-term and long-term approach, a short-term looking at more of a framework amendment and a long-term that is looking for significant changes to how the fishery is managed and trying to do so in a bit more of a holistic manner.

One of the things that was brought into the discussion for large-scale changes to the fishery was also the two-for-one discussion and the commercial snapper grouper permit, and that was brought in as part of these large-scale overall holistic changes to the fishery, and so, for right now, I think we're going to pass to John Hadley to present the information on the commercial permit, and then, after that, we'll get into the discussions on potential future amendments related to discards in the fishery, and so, John, are you ready for me to pass presenter?

MR. HADLEY: I am, yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Great.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I am actually just going to go through the slides here, and so, that way, we can keep the raised-hands icon going up, but I just wanted to kind of orient everyone, and this presentation kind of pulls the highlights of the background discussion that was also included, and I believe it's Attachment 9a, if I'm not mistaken, in your briefing book.

Really, all the information presented here is in that paper. If there's anything specific in that paper that we want to bring up, I can bring that onto the screen as well, but, overall, the intent here is to discuss the commercial snapper grouper permit from a holistic perspective, and, really, I think the majority of the discussion is intended to focus on the SG 1 permit, but the council has the intent to at least initially examine the commercial permitting system as a whole, and, also, that includes the SG 2, or trip-limited, permit.

Overall, we'll start with a little bit of background information and get into the creation of the commercial snapper grouper permits, Amendment 8, which implemented the two-for-one permit, and also differentiated between the SG 1 and SG 2 permits, provide a little bit of analysis and information on the current fishery and the profile of how the fishery has been performing since the implementation of the two-for-one provision in recent years, and we'll look at trends in the fishery, and then we'll wrap up with kind of an overview of your most recent input, which came up under Other Business, and then we'll get into the discussion and AP recommendations at the very end.

As a little bit of introduction, how this really came to the forefront, at least in recent times, is it was part of a response to an executive order, and this executive order instructed the councils to submit a list of actions to reduce burdens on the domestic fishing industry that could increase production within sustainable fisheries.

When the council was going through the specific items that could be accomplished, or could address this executive order, the council indicated the intent to evaluate the performance of the snapper grouper commercial permit two-for-one provision and consider if changes would provide social or economic benefits to the fishery, and so that's kind of the key provision there, kind of the key goal, of what the council is examining for the two-for-one provision. Additionally, the council stated that fishermen are reporting that the burden to entry has become excessive, especially to younger fishermen.

The council reviewed a similar document and a similar presentation at their September meeting that I am about to present to you, and they really came back and discussed this, but they also wanted additional feedback from the AP, since, the last time you did discuss this, it came up under Other Business, and you didn't have the full set of background information available, and so that's why it's coming back to you now, at this meeting, with kind of additional background information to help with the discussion.

Looking at commercial permits, they were first required in the snapper grouper fishery via Amendment 4, and that became effective in 1992. Each permit was, and still is, issued to a vessel, and then Amendment 8, which became effective in 1998, established a two-for-one method of limiting the number of commercial snapper grouper permit holders specifically for the SG 1, or the unlimited, permit.

Kind of the council's mindset at the time, and what they were facing, and really the fishery was facing, is there was concern over excess capacity and intense competition over the snapper grouper resource, and so there was competition between ever-increasing recreational and commercial participants and then, also, within the commercial fishery, there was increasing competition between participants employing different gears.

The size of the commercial fleet had increased through the 1990s, and some snapper grouper stocks were experiencing overfishing and/or approaching an overfished status, and there were concerns that gains from regulatory measures that may address the overfishing within an open-access fishery would attract new entrants and the fishery would not be able to sustain increased efforts overall.

The council developed Amendment 8, and this resulted in the two different commercial snapper grouper permits, the SG 1 permit, which is the unlimited permit, and there is no overall poundage restriction, aside from the species-specific trip limits, and this permit is fully transferable. There is the provision to obtain a new snapper grouper permit, and so, if you're entering the fishery, a vessel owner has to purchase two permits, two individual permits, and retire one of them, and so, in other words, the two-for-one requirement, or the two-for-one provision, to be issued a new permit and commercially fish within the snapper grouper fishery.

Within Amendment 8, there was also the creation of the SG 2 permit, or the trip-limited permit, and this limited overall snapper grouper harvest to 225 pounds per trip. The intention of this permit was that it would only be transferable to immediate family members or on to a new vessel under the same owner.

Looking at the initial eligibility, the council looked at -- Well, basically, essentially, the initial eligibility that the council looked at was examining vessels that possessed a commercial snapper grouper permit between February 11, 1996 and February 11, 1997, and, additionally, looking at

vessels that could show at least one landing of snapper grouper between January 1, 1993, and August 20 of 1996, and so that's sort of the time series that was examined, and, overall, vessels that landed at least 1,000 pounds in any one of those years, from 1993 through 1996, were issued a -- Or were eligible to be issued a Snapper Grouper 1 permit. Overall, there 1,075 qualifying vessels.

If the vessels landed less than 1,000 pounds, but showed at least one landing of snapper grouper species over that time species, they were issued, or at least eligible to be issued, a Snapper Grouper 2 permit. Overall, there were 448 qualifying vessels for the SG 2 permit.

When examining the objectives of Amendment 8, this amendment aimed to prevent overfishing, provide a mechanism to vest participants, promote stability, create a market-driven harvest pace, minimize gear and area conflicts, decrease incentives for overcapitalization, prevent continual dissipation of returns, and evaluate and minimize local depletion. That's something we'll come back around to at the very end, and one of the discussion questions aims at evaluating whether the objectives of Amendment 8 have been met. That's, for the most part, the background information, and we'll kind of switch gears a little bit and look at the analysis and information available on the fishery.

There are two reports that the Snapper Grouper AP has received in past years that really dive into the details of the snapper grouper fishery and participation across communities and across species, but the first one was the report developed by Kari MacLauchlan-Buck in 2018. She developed a detailed socioeconomic profile of the commercial snapper grouper fishery, and this examined snapper grouper permits, fishing communities, participation, and landings, covering the years from 1998 through 2016.

The Southeast Fisheries Science Center developed a technical memorandum. Specifically Elizabeth Overstreet, Larry Perruso, and Christopher Liese developed a technical memorandum on the economics of the commercial snapper grouper fishery, and this examined data from 2014, 2015, and 2016, and so this was sort of meant to be a more recent snapshot of a slightly shorter time series, but there's a great deal of information in there provided for the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, as well as subsets of the fishery, and so specifically looking at shallow-water groupers or deepwater species, and there is several different subsets within that report.

I should mention that both of these reports are linked in the background document, if you do want to go kind of dive into the details of each report. I kind of touched on a few items here, just to keep it timely, because each one of those reports has a great deal of information that could be talked about for quite a while, but, continuing along with the analysis, looking at permit counts and trends in permits, looking at 1998, which was when the SG 1 and SG 2 permits were created, and up until recent years, and so looking at 2019, and you can see, overall, there's been a pretty considerable reduction in both the SG 1 and SG 2 permits.

Overall, you're looking at approximately a 49 percent reduction in the SG 1 permits, and so about half of the SG 1 permits have been removed from the fishery, and approximately 67 percent of the SG 2 permits have been removed from the fishery, and so, overall, a pretty large reduction there from the initial implementation.

On average, 83 percent of snapper-grouper-permitted vessels do record at least one pound, and so some commercial landings of snapper grouper species. Overall, the point being here is that there's not a great deal of latent capacity, if you will, where there's not that many vessels that are permitted that aren't active in the fishery, and so there's a pretty high utilization of the snapper grouper commercial permits.

Looking at ownership structure, approximately 45 percent of the SG 1 permits are corporate owned, and this is an increase from 17 percent in 1998, and the reason I bring this up is that the ownership structure, whether it's individual or corporate owned, can allow a loophole, if you will, around the two-for-one provision, and so some certain corporate structures allow -- They basically allow, if purchased, another Snapper Grouper 1 permit is not necessary, if the corporation itself is purchased, and so, overall, looking at the corporate-owned permit, two of the 242 corporate-owned SG 1 permits would not be exempt from the two-for-one provision, and so the point being there that the majority of those corporate-owned SG 1 permits would be exempt from the two-for-one provision, and so there's a little bit of a loophole there, looking at individual versus corporate ownership.

Looking at the potential costs to enter the fishery, as far as the costs to obtain a snapper grouper permit, based on the most recent information available, which was reported in Kari MacLauchlan-Buck's paper, she reported approximately \$60,000 to \$80,000, and, again, this is in 2017 dollars, and so it's a little bit dated there, but, looking at average annual lease prices, you're looking at \$6,000 to \$8,000, and so approximately 10 percent of the value of the permit overall. I know that that has gone up slightly since then, and I know that Jimmy -- When we were presenting this to the council, Jimmy mentioned that you're looking at approximately -- If you're looking to obtain a Snapper Grouper 1 permit, and so whether it's corporate-owned or two individual permits, you're looking at approximately \$100,000, currently.

From there, we'll jump into a profile of the recent fishery, and so looking at kind of a snapshot, if you will, of the commercial fishery. On average, from 2015 through 2019, you had approximately 556 vessels active in the fishery, and they took approximately 11,000 trips annually and about just under five-million pounds, on average, of South Atlantic snapper grouper landings and approximately 8.6 million pounds in total commercial landings.

From a revenue perspective, the snapper grouper landings had an ex-vessel value of approximately \$18 million, and the total gross revenue of all species landed was approximately \$26 million. On average, the annual gross revenue per vessel was \$46,700, with 70 percent occurring from the sale of snapper grouper species, and so there's a pretty heavy reliance, not surprisingly, on the snapper grouper fishery for vessels participating in that fishery, versus other fisheries, such as say the king mackerel and Spanish mackerel and dolphin wahoo, and so there's a very high reliance on snapper grouper species, from a revenue perspective.

Looking at some of the trends in vessels and trips, you can look at this as metrics of effort, and this figure here shows vessels and trips in the fishery from 1993 through 2019, and, in the next series of figures, you will see this red line at 1998, and that's meant to represent when Amendment 8 went into place, and so, there again, that's when the two-for-one provision for the SG 1 permit went into place, and you can see, prior to 1998, there was a runup in the number in the effort in the fishery, and so the number of trips as well as the number of vessels active in the fishery, and there's been pretty much a decreasing trend since then, particularly through the early 2000s.

However, in recent years, the number of trips, as well as the number of vessels, has been somewhat steady. There's still a slightly decreasing trend, but it's not quite as steep as it was through the 2000s, or the early 2000s, I should say.

Switching gears and looking at landings, and so this is landings in pounds and not looking at revenue, overall, the trend in landings is similar to that of -- To the trend in vessels and trips, and so, really, increasing into 1998, when Amendment 8 went into place, and then generally decreasing since then.

Total gross revenue shows a little bit different story. Overall, there has been a slight decrease. However, revenue has exhibited more stability, and this is partially offset by the increasing price for most snapper grouper species, and we talked about this a little bit yesterday during the gray triggerfish discussion. We talked about it for several other snapper grouper species as well, and there certainly seems to be an increasing demand and increasing price for these species.

When you have decreasing participation in the fishery and then a fairly steady revenue stream, when you look at the average gross revenue per vessel, it has been increasing through the time series, and so, really, this is a result of the decreasing participation combined with the relatively stable revenue stream and increasing ex-vessel price of snapper grouper species.

When examining percent of total revenue for a specific species, on the top, you have total revenue from South Atlantic snapper grouper species, and, on the bottom, you have total gross revenue from other species or other regions. In general, there has been an increasing reliance on South Atlantic snapper grouper species for vessels active in the fishery, and this has -- It's been fairly steady in recent years, but it's interesting to see how it has been generally increasing over the years, from a revenue perspective, and, there again, increasing reliance on snapper grouper species.

That's basically the snapshot of the trends in the fishery, and we'll switch gears and look at your most recent input. Again, this came up under Other Business at a previous meeting, and so, just to reiterate what the Snapper Grouper AP has recently stated, and I just wanted to go over that, and we can certainly come back to that and see if there's any different recommendations, but the AP discussed the two-for-one policy as other business last year.

There were a number of commercial snapper grouper permits, and it has been greatly reduced, and so the AP noted that there is a reduction in the number of permits and suggested that the council consider whether the number of permits has reached the goal for a two-for-one policy. There was a discussion on technology impacts, on efficiency, and requested, essentially, additional information on the fishery and how the fishery has performed, including the trends in permits.

The Snapper Grouper AP noted that the fishery may not be able to sustain additional permits, and several populations, fish populations, specifically, have shown declines. The AP noted that there was a small portion of permits catching a large portion of the landings and that a majority of management has been towards decreasing pressure on fish stocks. This may be counterproductive to increase -- It may be counterproductive to increase the number of permits, as that may increase fishing pressure, and consider the cause of reductions to fish populations, consider, basically, implications by sector, whether there are too many participants overall and just I think, generally speaking, on effort.

With that, I will switch it over to the AP, and there is a series of discussion questions to help guide the discussion. The council, when they reviewed this information at the September meeting, they were really hoping that the AP could run through some of these discussion questions and help just provide additional information and guide some of their future actions and whether or not to take action on changing any of the permit provisions for the SG 1 or SG 2 permit.

I won't go over them in great detail, but just a brief overview. Question 1 looks at whether or not the objectives of Amendment 8 have been met. Question 2 examines whether -- It's soliciting information on whether there are undesirable outcomes that the two-for-one permit provision has caused and what would be the reason for removing the provision. What are the undesirable outcomes of removing the provision, and, if this was removed -- If the two-for-one provision was removed, could it provide social or economic benefits to the fishery?

Are there ways to get new entrants into the fishery, other than removing the two-for-one provision? Should the council establish a timeline for reviewing this provision? If so, what is the desirable timeline for that evaluation? Then Questions 7 and 8 touch on whether or not there is anything that the council should know regarding leasing of SG 1 permits, and is there anything that the council should know, or is there anything that they should consider changing? Similarly, Question 8 focuses on SG 2 permits, and is there anything that the council should know about the SG 2 permits or consider changing, as far as that permit structure? With that, I will hand it back over to the AP.

MR. HULL: John, thank you for that. I think that everybody that has a stake in this is going to want to comment, and the one question I would have, that I would like to know the answer to, possibly, is can we find out how many SG 1 have been retired recently, and so in the last couple of years? Is there a way to find out how many have actually bought up and retired? I think that information would be helpful in determining if we have reached our goal and so, with that, I will get back to my comments, and let's go to Andrew Mahoney. You're up.

MR. MAHONEY: Do the species that have shown decline have anything to do with the number of permits that are out there?

MR. HADLEY: I mean, it depends on -- I don't think there is any direct correlation to that, specifically to the number of permits and then species in decline specifically, and I'm not sure -- Is there a better way to answer that question, as far as -- If you look at trends in the fishery, there has been decreasing participation overall, and you still -- As we go through some of the stock assessments, specifically for the grouper species, there are other issues in the fishery, or in the population, that are cause for concern, and the trends in the population have decreased.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. I would like to -- If there is nobody else up there right now, you can -- In your presentation, it shows that we are now at I believe it was 83 percent of the SG 1 are actively producing, and so that's a small percentage that are not actively producing, and so that ties into, in my opinion, defending the fact that we have reached our goal. We're not seeing -- That goes to my question, is how many of them have been taken away and basically retired, or thrown away, recently? From my experience, it's very hard to find.

If you wanted to get into the fishery, you can't find a permit to buy, two permits, and you can't find them, and so we have -- In my opinion, we have reached the goal, and you can see where, economically, we're pretty stable. Everybody is pretty stable and using their permit, and production is pretty stable. You don't see overcapitalization. We have been -- The commercial sector has done everything that is asked of it.

We have decreased our effort, and we have total accountability, and so, for me, for my perspective, I could keep going, but it's all self-evident, when you look at where we're at. We are where we've reached the goal. Now, as we see our fisheries and our ACLs declining, you can make your argument of, well, what are we going to do here, and there is less fish for the commercial guys, and, well, yes, we're facing that, but that could change, and we could see more fish, and the very next stock assessment could change all of that for a specific species.

The fact is that it's part of a -- To survive in the commercial fishery, the snapper grouper -- You can't survive as a sole snapper grouper fisherman, and you showed 30 percent of other species was part of it, and that's at a minimum, for my area, and it's part of your portfolio, and you have to have this permit to survive as a fisherman in the South Atlantic, and you have to participate in many fisheries. You need a shark permit, and you need a mackerel permit, and you might have to do other things. As a fisherman, you have to participate in many different fisheries, and, if you don't have a snapper grouper permit, you're not participating, and so you're probably not going to be successful.

There is a big concern, on my end, from my perspective, having my family in the future in the fish business, with markets and restaurants and production of fresh, local seafood for the consumers, that we have no -- There is no young blood coming into the fishery, and, the few guys that are, they can't afford to -- They can't find a permit to buy, and they can't afford one if they did, because they're nineteen-year-olds, or twenty-year-olds, the kind of people that you need to get coming in and develop into fishermen.

I am specifically speaking about my opinion in my area, and so I believe we have reached it. We are not overcapitalized, and we are not -- We are in status quo, I believe, and we're where we need to be, from my opinion on it, and so, with that, I will go to Jack.

MR. COX: Yes, sir. Good morning. You know, I see a different picture. I pretty much see things a little different than Jimmy, and I'm in the Morehead City area, from Cape Lookout, and we fish from Cape Lookout to Wilmington, North Carolina, and our region encompasses about 150 miles across the ocean, and most of our participants are not in the twenty-five to forty-year-old range, and so thank God we have seen some young participants coming in, most of them on the smaller dayboats.

They have figured out a way to enter the fishery, and most of them have bought into the fishery. They're full-time fishermen, and they make on the average of \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year fishing, and that's what they like to do, and they -- I mean, in all due respect to Jimmy's comments, and we're in different areas, but our fishery is not as healthy as I think Jimmy's is. We're seeing a really sharp decline in all of our groupers, and a lot of pressure is coming from the commercial permits, along with -- I have a lot of heartburn for the way that the commercial fishermen are prosecuted in relationship to their accountability, versus the recreational, but I must say that, with thirty-eight years of experience in the fishery, and holding one of the very first snapper grouper

permits that came into existence, and I'm still holding it today, at fifty-seven years old, that I am concerned about the fishery.

I don't think that this time is the time to say we have -- We are at a place of equilibrium, and I think we still -- To maintain a professional fishery, a full-time fishery, the fishermen -- The fishery is just not healthy enough to do this, speaking of my area in Morehead City. I fish -- I go out there, and I'm actively fishing this year, and I'm going out there and doing all I can to scrape up anything I can within thirty miles of the beach, where we used to have a really fruitful fishery, and now we're having to go out to really deep water, because it's beat up so bad, and, yes, a lot of it does come from the commercial sector, but these are my comments.

This is -- We've got young people in it, and we do have permits for sale. I've got one for sale now, and I'm sure that somebody is going to say, well, how much do you want for it, and I think it's worth \$80,000. In two years, that permit could be easily paid for, if you're a professional fisherman, which I think is very respectable to any business that you go into, that you could pay for that that fast, but, I mean, I just -- Unfortunately, I just don't see that it's the time and place to do this. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: I'm going to come back, and I'm going to disagree with Jack. We're not too far south of him, and our fleet is aging out, and it's a shame that this loophole with the corporate stuff and the SG 2, which we shouldn't even be discussing those, because there shouldn't be any, unless it was passed on, and I think something needs to be done with that. I think, with it being eighty-some percent of the permits being used, I don't think that this switch to the two-for-one is going to bring any more people into it, and I really don't think so, and so I'm going to disagree with Jack.

I think that what Jimmy said is right on the spot, and I think it's time to get rid of this. There's a lot of fishing pressure, and there's no doubt, and I see what Jack is talking about, but it's not all the commercial guys, and, for us to be able to transition in a fair way, I just disagree with that, and I think it's time to set a number and maybe address these SG 2 permits that are corporate and switch them back the way they were intended to be. If there wasn't that corporate loophole to begin with, we wouldn't even be talking about this, because there would be many, many fewer fishermen out there, but, anyway, that's my comments.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Randy. Anybody else have their hand raised at this time? Harry, go ahead.

MR. MORALES: Well, I don't have a dog in this fight, but I have listened to you guys talk about this, and, obviously, at some point, in some parts, the fishery is aging out. If you've got 17 percent of those SG 1 that aren't really being utilized, it's roughly ninety-two licenses, and my way of thinking, in a compromise fashion, is why can't the council allow for some percentage of that, say twenty licenses, that can be exempt for the two-to-one, allowing people like an Andrew, for example, to acquire that license and be able to fish?

On the other side, you're talking about a fishery that's capturing, what, five-million snapper a year, and so, as you increase from 83 percent, you're also going to increase the pressure, but I think

there's got to be a compromise in the fishery being able to bring in new blood, and motivated blood, and a gradual transition, which also helps whether it's Jack or anybody else that's got SG 1s. The younger talent that is in the market, working and making money, can also turn around and be the buyer of your business and/or license, and so that's what I've got to say.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. Bobby, you're up.

MR. FREEMAN: The portion of the time that the AP spends on discussing taking action on whatever of the fact that there's too many fishermen and not enough fish, I can't imagine why it makes sense, at this point, to increase the number of people that can participate. I have a neighbor that does day charters, and he also has a leased commercial permit that he is fishing under, and you get into this business because you love it, and I just don't see that there is anything in the North Carolina fisheries, so far as the quantity of fish that are landed, and when you look at what's out there compared to what it used to be, and I have fished out there since the mid-1970s, and it's just not an optimistic viewpoint to say, hey, it's time to open up and allow more permits, in spite of that fact that people would love to have them.

I know I got kicked out of the commercial side, and I think the year was like 1996, because I had another job that paid more than the boat took in, and I don't regret that. Financially, it helped me out, but I fished it because I loved it, and it's a fun thing to do, and it meets a need in the public, but, at this time, I can't see opening up for new permits or whatever.

MR. HULL: Bobby, thank you. Andy, you're up.

MR. FISH: Good morning. I personally, as a commercial fisherman, do not see that the fishery can sustain more commercial fishermen, with the ever-growing recreational growing out of control, but I would also like to offer another way to look at it, as the younger -- Maybe the guys with not as much money to be able to afford it, and it's the problem with all these guys that are buying up permits and leasing them and holding onto them and driving up the prices of these permits, when they're really just using the permits as more of a business, and I understand it, but, I mean, when you bought a permit for --

Even if you buy one for \$100,000 now, if you can lease it out for \$10,000, you're making 10 percent on your money doing nothing, and maybe we could look at a different way. I'm not saying owner-operator, even though I'm in favor of that, but maybe there should be limitations on how many permits people can own and how they can deal with it, and that's what I'm getting at. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. David, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have two kind of questions, and they're not -- The first one, you don't necessarily have to answer right away, but, in the commercial sector, my first question is how quickly are we hitting ACLs for all these different fish that are in the snapper grouper complex? If we had that much more participation, whatever that amounts to, how much quicker are we going to hit those ACLs?

I know it's tough enough for you guys to make a living as it is, in a lot of instances, especially if you live further north and you have to go further offshore, and then my second question was, and

this is something that, Jimmy, maybe you can answer, but I think that one of the biggest threats to the commercial sector is really the lack of working waterfronts and the added pressure, as somebody just said, I think just before me, the added pressure of the recreational sector, but certainly the lack of working waterfronts for you guys to even be able to dock at or sell your catch or do whatever you need to do. I would think that that's the bigger threat, but, I mean, I could be wrong, because, obviously, I'm in the recreational sector.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David. I can tell you that the lack, and the loss, of working waterfront is a big concern, especially on the biggest population centers along the coast, and, of course, everybody is moving to the coast, and so it is a concern, and it's hard to find a place, and that's why a lot of people have gone to trailerable boats, where they can bring them home with them and find places to load and unload and get their ice and their fuel. Hopefully that answers that question, and, yes, it is a concern. Andrew, you're up.

MR. MAHONEY: I think that everybody is making great points, and the difference is in where we are geographically, and that's making things different for me or for Jack or for Jim, and it can all be taken care of if we make a motion to implement the special management permit. Most of these questions already can be answered in that, and so I would like to make a motion to implement that as our answer to Question 4.

MR. HULL: Hold on. Let's see Question 4, and then you can word your motion and see if we can get a second, or we don't need to see Question 4, if you just want to -- Other than removing the two-for-one commercial permit provision, are there other solutions for supporting new entrants? Go ahead and make your motion, Andrew.

MR. MAHONEY: I would like to make a motion to implement the special management permit plan.

MR. HULL: For everybody's information, the special -- Implement the special management permit plan, I believe that was what you presented to the AP?

MR. MAHONEY: Correct.

MR. HULL: Okay. Andrew has made a motion to implement the special management permit plan. Do I have a second for this, and then we can discuss? Speak up, if you want to second this.

AP MEMBER: Can you refresh us as to what is the special management permit plan?

MR. HULL: I think that's what we would need to be refreshed upon, and I don't know that we can get into all those details right now, but I suppose we may have to. If you want to know, I think you need to second it, and then we can start discussing it. Somebody will have to second this, and then we can have discussion. Myra, help.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy. Thanks for recognizing me. I guess, you know, I recall that Andrew had submitted a proposal with this special management permit plan. However, that was not presented to the AP officially, as I believe Mike mentioned earlier, or maybe it was John Hadley, and that topic was discussed briefly under Other Business, and so the AP has not yet had the benefit of asking questions and understanding Andrew's proposal, and so, at this point, I would

suggest that perhaps that is not the appropriate time to make this suggestion to the council, until the AP has had a chance to discuss the pros and cons of what Andrew has proposed.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Myra. With that, I think we need to move on. Andrew, we don't have a second, but I think we can bring this up, and none of this is immediately taking action, and so we need to talk about this more, but we just can't talk about it right now, because not everybody is up-to-speed on that, and it wasn't presented, as Myra said, officially to us.

MR. MAHONEY: All good. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andrew, for that. I see Jack. You're recognized.

MR. COX: Thank you, Jimmy. I was just going to circle back to what David Moss was asking a question about, how are we achieving ACLs, and, well, we were doing pretty good on ACLs a little while back, and then, all of a sudden, we started getting into a situation where we couldn't achieve and meet the goals of catching our ACLs in the commercial sector, because the fish are just not there to catch.

We don't have the red grouper, and we don't have the gags, and we don't have the triggers, and we don't have the snowy, and I can go on and on, and that's why I said the fishery is not healthy enough to have this discussion, but I wish we were achieving our ACLs like we were a little while back, because it indicates a very healthy fishery.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. I see that Kerry has her hand up. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Jimmy. Thanks for letting me interrupt your AP meeting, and, first, I just want to say thank you all for being here, and, as a council member, I'm personally getting a lot out of your discussions. If you will permit me for a minute, I would like to get you all to zoom-out with me for a minute and look at the bigger picture and tie-in some of these discussions we've had this morning to some things the council talked about in December.

Sort of it's hard to come out, because it didn't come out in the form of a motion, but, if you get a chance to go back and read our minutes, when they're ready, for September, you will see that the Snapper Grouper Committee, and the council as a whole, had a lot of discussions about where we're going, sort of holistically, with managing the snapper grouper fishery.

In my mind, there was an incredible amount of support and desire to look at the fishery as a whole, meaning both sectors, meaning all the fisheries, and really think about doing things differently. It does include discussing things like the commercial permit, as you're discussing here, and it also includes some of the things that have already been brought up this morning that I think you will get back into, like short-term framework actions, like possible gear modifications, or time/area closures, and there are some longer things in the works.

We have a workgroup that is working on looking at recreational permitting issues and then this really kind of newfangled way of looking at management called management strategy evaluation, which is something we hope to use in the snapper grouper fishery in the future.

I say all that not to -- I don't want to stop your discussions here, but I think, if I -- As council members, I think that what would be really helpful for us from you all is for you all to also zoom-out and think about sort of the things that you all talked about yesterday, whether it's triggerfish or amberjack or red porgy, and, of course, red snapper, and, instead of thinking of all of these things piecemeal, if you could help us look at this in a holistic manner, and sort of how would you create sort of the perfect snapper grouper fishery management, knowing we have issues with dead discards and, of course, climate and things we have a little bit less control over.

Really, what we're hoping is that you guys can really give us a shift -- Some ideas for shifting management all together and holistically. Again, there is short-term stuff, which we can do via framework and amendment, and then there's going to be some longer-term things, but the council is really, really ready to make a shift in how we do this, and so I would just caution you not to get bogged down in the details today, but, if you could paint a picture of what you would love both the recreational and commercial fishery to look like going forward in the future, I think that would be really helpful for us.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Kerry. I appreciate you a lot, and we are starting to get bogged down in this, and this is a discussion that's been going on for a long time, and it's going to continue to go on for a while, and so, I mean, we do have questions that they have for us that we can get bogged down into, to try to come to some consensus recommendation for the council, and I don't think we're going to be able to do that, but, overall, the discussion of the commercial sector and what's -- This is part of the reduction in overcapitalization, and it continues on, and it started way back with Amendment 8, and it continues on at this time.

We are reducing effort continuously on the commercial side, and overcapitalization, and, of course, we have to have that discussion later on the other sector, and so I'm just going to go down the list. I really don't want to get too bogged down in this, and I am not going to die on this sword. If they don't do anything with the two-for-one, then so be it. We'll just have to carry on and keep going, and so, Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: Thank you, Jimmy, and that was -- Kerry, I really appreciated your words. I have struggled in listening, and I've only been on this committee for a year, but I have struggled in looking at all of the SEDARs that you guys have done and a constant shrinking population of fish. Anyone can see that our fishery is in deep trouble, and one of the first calls -- You know, I introduced the Waddell Institute and wondered why as an AP are not looking at changing direction and having the government focus on increasing the population of the various fish and/or increase the habitat.

One of my first visits, I looked at Florida having 3,800 artificial reefs, and the Florida congressperson that has just introduced a bill to take Navy mothball ships and start dropping them in Florida, and why aren't we doing that right up the east coast? I mean, the Philly Navy Yard is loaded with mothball ships, but, at the end of the day, you can either stop me from fishing, and I don't believe that the recreational fisherman is the bad guy here, but, overall, either you increase the habitat, and/or increase the population, or we just stop fishing.

I mean, one way or another, we're like the red porgy, and we're just chasing our tails and not ever getting ahead of the curve, and so, yes, you have to change your mindset and now start thinking outside of the box and start doing things to help -- You know, I was looked, and I was studying

for the snowy grouper, which I never catch, because, in our waters, I've got to go to 180 feet in order to try to catch one of those, and I'm not going to go all the way the hell out there for a snowy grouper, but Asia is farming grouper, and China brings in 61 percent, and Taiwan another 15 percent.

I mean, these guys are doing it, and here we have Waddell in South Carolina that has done black sea bass, and has done cobia, and has done redfish, and released millions, and we should be doing more of that, and that's my two-cents, if I'm going to think on a broader scale.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. James, you're up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Hello, everybody. I mean, just getting back to -- Staying on track here, I think that we entered into this two-for-one with the idea that we needed to lessen the number of vessels in the industry, in order to ease some of the burden of overproducing the amount of fish, harvesting too many fish, from our fishery. I think that, overall, this has been a success, and, as we go through the years here, we are still having the discussion of stock declines across the board, and, really, it's only suitable for us to follow suit and keep this the way that it is, just because we don't have a fishery, overall, that is super viable to really ramp up any sort of production.

I mean, the negative, or the undesirable, outcomes, really, they're not there, and, if we remove the two-for-one, the only undesirable I can see is maybe a few more full-time fishermen might be in the game, but, if it's within the number of permits allowed, then go for it, and, if the fish are there to be caught, then go for it, but I just -- Faced with this question, I think that the entire -- The way that we've done this program has been a success, and, without a blooming fishery overall, we need to stay limited, and that's my two-cents.

MR. HULL: Thanks for those good comments, James. Robert Lorenz, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. I just want to make sort of a general comment, and it was stimulated by what Kerry said, and it will be for the good of this committee, because I follow this council now, and I will be going on sixteen years of it, and I've actually been on this committee over seven years, but it sounds like what Kerry has asked us to do -- I believe that the council needs to dust off some old books and some old files.

Back about ten years ago, and it was interesting having Robert Johnson speak yesterday, because, on this committee at the time, he spoke a lot of these things too, as I did, and remember that we had -- Jimmy, you will remember that we have that strategic plan blueprint for the snapper grouper fishery, and I know, here in North Carolina, I was really all-in on that thing when Michelle Duval, from our DNR, came through, and she became kind of a champion for it later, when she became the council chair, but it was actually started before her.

I remember that we've been through all of this with a more global -- To try to get a more global perspective for the fisheries, and there were port meetings, and there was probably hundreds of thousands of dollars spent, and I'm just wondering, and it is kind of interesting that we seem to be circling right back to that initiative, which would have been excellent to carry through, and, back then, I did a lot of talking with Mel Bell, who was also very interested in this, from South Carolina, but I would like to know, from Kerry's point of view, and it looks like we're going right back to

where we were, and a tremendous amount of work has already been done, and a tremendous amount of perspective probably already exists.

I would just like to bring that point up, and then maybe, for the good of this committee, if some of those files were available on the final output, and I think a lot of this stuff just died about four years ago, when Michelle was no longer the chair, or gave that up, and it kind of dropped when she left the area, and that objective kind of fell apart, but it's a very good one, and there is just a tremendous amount of effort that was put into that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Bob, for bringing that up. I know that there's a lot of stuff going on at the council level very similar to the strategic plan right now, and so they're just -- They're on it. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Harry, thank you for your comments, and they were very good comments. My thoughts go back to these things all the time, of what can we do as a team and work together on this AP to do a very good job helping the council moving forward, and one thing we know we need to do is we need to try to figure out ways to increase fish populations.

When you talk about things such as hatcheries and fish are declining, like groupers, it makes -- I am also a part-time crabber, and I crab, and the marshlands around where I live are getting built up and destroyed from the new construction coming in on the waterfronts, the new homes, and we're losing all our marshlands, and we need to have some discussions about water quality, because, when I would go crabbing, for many years, I would find these little baby groupers and different types of snapper grouper species, but that's where they're hatched, and that's where they're born, and they go out to the ocean. We know our inshore water qualities are declining, due to runoff and due to a lot of things that we should probably be discussing.

Also, I have often -- There is places where I fish and dive and spearfish that would be a perfect place for a shallow-water MPA, a place that we could -- If we had a hatchery, we could release these things and protect it, like we do wildlife reserves, and do all we can to increase the population of species, and it would be good for both sides, commercial and recreational.

Then, on another subject, thank God NOAA is looking at aquaculture, because we know, as commercial fishermen, we're not going to be able to give the protein to our country that we were able to do in the past, and we're going to have to start thinking outside of the box, but, Harry, I just wanted to commend you and thank you for bringing that up.

MR. HULL: Okay. Kerry, I see you. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This will be the last time I will butt-in on your meeting, but I think it is important to acknowledge that we're talking about the council visioning amendment, and that absolutely will be -- It's there, and it's on the website, and it will be taken into account as we move forward, and it's not forgotten about, by any stretch, and sometimes I think that we can get sort of lost and forget about it, but we will be using the visioning amendment, as planned, I think, to inform decisions we make along the way.

I think what happens is we get assessments, and we have to react to the assessment, and so that's higher priority, and we get bogged down, and we get caught in the circle, and the circle is what

we're trying to get out of, and so, you know, I just hope that you all can make sure that you have time today to effectively discuss some of the items that are mentioned in a possible future framework that deals with some of the discard mortality issues we're dealing with right now, so that, short-term, we can be as holistic as possible.

Any new AP members, please check out the visioning amendment, and please know that the council has always, and will, use that to inform decisions as we move along, because that's what guides us, but please try to leave time to talk about -- Make sure that you have time to talk about some of these things that we can do right now for the entire fishery, because we have red porgy that we're not going to be able to keep a lot of fish, and we have red snapper, where we're not going to be able to keep a lot of fish. We got a bad gag assessment, and so we have to find a way to reduce discard mortality, if we want to keep fishing, and so I just want to make sure that you guys have time to look at all of that as a whole.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Kerry, and that is a concern that I have at this time, as we continue to get bogged down on this discussion. I mean, this is -- I am going to go to the names that are on there, and then hopefully it will be the end of it and we can come to an agreement to tell the council that, yes, overall, we don't -- We can't come to a -- Give you the advice that it's time that the two-for-one has reached its goals, not everyone, and so we need to move on from this, unless there is -- We have to have this same discussion, kind of, next, regarding discards, and the recreational sector is going to come into play heavily, and so, Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: I have the same feel, that we are getting bogged down. As far as the two-for-one goes, I feel for what Andrew is saying, that it is harder and harder for the young guys to get into the commercial realm, and I see it a lot around our area, in southern South Carolina. With that said, you can look at the numbers we've been looking at, and they've decreased. The total number of commercial boats have decreased about two-thirds, from 1,500 or 1,600 down to 550.

On the flip side of that coin, so has the stock assessments, and, I mean, we've taken our sea bass from fifteen down to five, and we're closing multiple species, and it's being harder and harder to manage, and so it's a coin that is really hard to look at both sides, because of you've got these guys wanting in, and you've got the fish depleting, and what Harry was talking about is maybe we shouldn't focus more on reef and fish, and I don't know so much if we can have hatcheries, but, for instance, I'm on the state board of CCA in South Carolina.

In the last ten years, we've put eighteen reefs off our shore, and, in the last five years, we've put five reefs -- I'm sorry. This year, we've put three reefs, deepwater, over a hundred feet deep, and that's eighteen reefs in total in a ten-year period, and our goal is thirty by thirty, to have thirty offshore reefs placed by the year 2030. That is supplying a whole lot of structure for South Carolina residents to fish, and whether that changes numbers or not, but it sure looks good in South Carolina, but I think we probably ought to move along too, and so I'm going to leave it at that.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Andrew.

MR. MAHONEY: I just wanted to answer I guess it was a question, when Kerry talked about the big view, the holistic view, and I would like to see the commercial sector go towards where coastal communities need harvesters, and don't have them, that the harvesters can gain entry, in order to produce for their communities. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andrew. Jack.

MR. COX: My hand was -- I meant to cut this thing off, Jimmy, and I'm sorry, and I got sidetracked and didn't lower my hand.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Jimmy, I'm over here listening to all of you guys, and everyone has really good views and points and everything, but, in my opinion here, I don't think we're ready for the two-for-one to go away yet, and I'm kind of on the fence about it. I guess I could go either way, but I would believe there is a lot of other issues that have to be taken into consideration here before we do that, as to how many permits and how many fishermen I guess the fishery could actually withhold, or withstand, and the commercial fishermen probably aren't the actual issue here, and the recreational permitting could be the issue here, in my opinion.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. Okay. Let's wrap this up. John and Mike, I don't know that we really did much to answer these specific questions point-by-point, but I think the council gets where we're at, that we really -- I think the overall perception is that, at this time, we can't recommend -- This would change what we had -- I think we recommended -- We made a lot of recommendations, as you showed, and we didn't specifically recommend eliminating the two-for-one, as I recall, but to study it and do a white paper, and so I think we're right back to there. Further information is needed, more discussion, more thought, and for things to shake out and settle out, with all the changes that are coming our way, and so hopefully that's good enough. Back to you, John.

MR. HADLEY: I appreciate that, Jimmy, and I think that summarizes it pretty well. I mean, it seems like there is some regional differences, in particular, and I think that will be helpful for the council to hear, and so I appreciate the discussion and everybody's time and effort to make thoughtful comments, and so I think we're good on this end.

MR. HULL: I think we need to move on. I think the one question I had was, and maybe the Permits Office could provide it, is how many permits have been retired recently, in the last year, or going back a few years, and I think that would be important information to know. Thank you. With that, going to this two-for-one discussion kind of threw me off a little, because we had started the day out with the discussion of the red snapper fishery, and then there was going to be discard reduction for snapper grouper fishery, and so I think that's what we're back to now, I think, the discard reduction for the snapper grouper fishery, and we're back to you, I think, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I will grab the screen here, really quick. While I'm doing that, just trying to tie the loose ends, because, yes, it did get a little bounced around, and I think the way that the commercial permit came into play is that the council, when they discussed -- This all was in the aftermath of the red snapper assessment, and red snapper is kind of the poster-child species for issues of, one, the discard problem that's going on in the snapper grouper fishery and, two, an issue that is bigger than one species.

When the council got to talking about those discussions, it was brought in as well that any changes to the commercial permit would need to be considered in any overall large-scale holistic changes

to the fishery, and so that's kind of the place, but I certainly apologize for any jumping around that we did there and having to cover these different topics in the way that we did, but that's kind of the connection here, and so we had that red snapper, that poster-child assessment, and now we're looking at that, and, in order to make the changes that need to be made in the fishery, that would affect red snapper, but that would affect the rest of the fishery as well, and we need to look at it from this more holistic type of standpoint.

As we're moving on from there, we're now looking at these actions, and I want to look at Kerry, just one more time, just to see -- Do you have any additional comments regarding the council's overall direction, before we start talking about the discard reduction?

MS. MARHEFKA: I think I have said enough, but I'm here if anyone has questions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. In that case, we'll start going through this, and so the direction, and it's been spoken about quite a bit at the meeting already, is that, to address the discard issue that's going on in the fishery, the council wants to take a short-term action, which would be a framework amendment, that the goal of this is to reduce discards based on the information that we have right now and based on the means, the methods, that can be implemented rather quickly, and we don't want to have to go through steps that would require a long plan amendment, and we want to be able to do a shorter action, through a framework amendment, and so that kind of limits what actions we would take.

Really, the big thing is that we wouldn't really do anything related to allocations, but the things that we're considering here, like gear modifications, time/area closures, or slot limits, those are all within the scope of what can be in a framework amendment, and that can be put in place quicker than what a plan amendment would take.

The other aspect of this is a long-term plan, and Kerry mentioned it, and it starts with this thing called a management strategy evaluation, and this is something that we're not going to dive into today, but it's something that I want to give you all a heads-up on, because we're -- The plan is that the AP, and stakeholders in general, would be involved in this process.

The basic way that this management strategy evaluation works is that we would set management goals for the snapper grouper fishery, and this would be snapper grouper fishery and not species-specific, and so we would set management goals, and we would need input from the AP, and the council would develop what are the goals, what are the things that they want to prioritize, for the snapper grouper fishery, and we would collect information about that. There is data available, and so we would be kind of scouring all the different sources that we have to look for information, and then we would put that into a model that would say these are the strategies that would be the best pursuit of the management goals that you have set.

This is a long process, and it's going to require a lot of input from a lot of different people, and so that's why we're kind of doing this short-term/long-term thing. We want to take action quickly right now, but we also want to have something that's larger, broader, that we can put in place that will be a few years down the road.

We're going to be working on it during that time, and it will be implemented a few years down the road, and so you will see this in future meetings, and we'll be working on it, but the final results -

- Kind of don't expect it to be turned around in a year. This is going to be several years in the making, and we'll be working throughout that time, and it's a big undertaking, and so I just wanted to give that heads-up on that long-term event, so that you all are aware that that process is going on over the next few years.

Now, getting into this discard reduction document, this is focusing more on the short-term action on the framework amendment, and so there were several proposed actions that the AP put forward to the council, and this was in a discussion that you all had most recently in April, and it's been a recurring discussion that the AP has had of how to reduce discards in the snapper grouper fishery, and the recommendations that came out of the April meeting have been put into the form of proposed actions, and there have been questions developed, kind of follow-up questions, and so we had these recommendations put forward from you all, and now we're trying to get to the step of, well, how do we get the language right, get these items right, so that we can develop some action language and some alternatives to put into a framework amendment.

One of these is gear modifications, and then we'll also be talking about spatial or time/seasonal openings, and then we'll finally be talking about a size limit, some type of maximum size limit or a slot limit, for red snapper, and so those are the three things that we are going to cover.

We will start off with the gear modifications, and the recommendations that were put forward by the AP in April included single-hook rigs, larger hooks, leader modifications, and natural bait prohibition, and we developed some follow-up questions regarding these items, and so they're shown there on the screen, what minimum hook sizes would be considered, how would this be measured and specified, what are the leader lengths that should be considered, or are there other leader modifications that should be considered for regulation.

For definition of "natural bait", one of the things that was talked about is simply has it never been alive, or does it mean like freshwater fish versus something that would be native to the area, and this is something that we would need to define it, if we're going to make any type of rule or regulation regarding it.

Then have some information, some discussion, on how each of these measures would be expected to reduce the dead discards that would occur, either by improving the mortality rate or reducing the number of fish that need to be discarded. Then just kind of expanding this, to see are there additional gear-related changes to management that could reduce the discard removals that should be considered, and one of the examples that was brought up was the possibility of saying no gaffing would be allowed, or anything else, and it's not meant to be exclusionary or looking specifically at the gaffing thing, and that's only meant to be an example, but is there anything else that's not being talked about that should be talked about, in terms of a gear modification or a technique modification?

Regarding descending devices specifically, would the requirement of use at certain depths be useful and practical? We know that certain -- At the shallower depths, it's recommended that you may not need to use a descending device at a shallower depth, if it would be faster to just put the fish back in the water and the fish is able to get back to its natural depth on its own, whereas, if you're fishing in deeper water, it may be more useful to have some type of requirement for a descending device, but then there's the question of practicality, and so if you all could comment on that.

Then differences by sector, and, finally, would something like a gear modification -- The things being talked about here, would these be better suited to best practices outreach campaigns, or would they -- Rather than regulations, or are these things that you all think could be regulated and enforced, in that type of fashion, and, if there's kind of a split in between those, if you could have discussion on what items are better suited towards a regulation, as opposed to what are better suited towards kind of a best practices type of thing. With that, I will pause and kind of, Jimmy, pass it back to you, so that we can open up discussion.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. So we want to tackle these questions, and we want to give information back to the council, and so we're going to concentrate on this and try not to get way, way out, which is easy to do, and I can tell you that, when we look at these recommendations that we've already made, as to gear modifications, a lot of these -- If you fish for different species, we use different gear, and so, if we were fishing offshore in deep water for snowy, we're going to be using a different rig than if we're fishing for vermilion or trigger, and so it would be hard to make a single regulation for the entire snapper grouper fishery pertaining to all the different species that we fish for, and that's one thing that pops out to me right off the bat, but, with that said, I will start out with David. You're recognized.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Jimmy, you hit the nail right on the head, and so, with the vast variety of species that we have in this complex, it's going to be so difficult to do kind of across-the-board measures, and, I mean, you look at just the first one with minimum hook sizes, what you're going to be fishing with for gag grouper or black grouper is going to be very different than what you would for like yellowtail, or I'm assuming triggers up north, and I don't really participate in that fishery, but certainly, for yellowtail down south, we use really small gear when we're fishing for yellowtail.

The same thing for leaders, and it's very species dependent. If you're fishing certain areas, for like mutton snapper say, you use a very, very long leader, and there's other times, where you're fishing for other species, that you can get away with four to six foot, depending upon what you're using. Natural or -- How that should be defined, I think it's something that you could say it's something that was alive at one time, but I don't know that having a prohibition on natural bait would be very effective.

Additional gear related, the only other thing would be -- You kind of hit on it a little bit, about the certain depths for descending device use, and, really, that's going to be a difficult one too, because you can get barotrauma, or fish can experience barotrauma, in as shallow as one atmosphere, which is right around thirty feet, and so, basically, if you're fishing for bottom fish for snapper grouper anywhere, they run the risk of getting barotrauma, if you're going to release them, and so this -- I will be interested to hear what some other people say from other fisheries, but this is going to be a difficult one to just do across-the-board anything with.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David. Points well made. Andrew, go ahead.

MR. MAHONEY: I just wanted to comment on the hook size. I think that, during closed seasons, the gauge of the hook size should be considered, maybe a skinnier hook to bend out, so that those fish don't even come up, would probably be more effective than bringing them up and sending them back. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I just find it crazy that we're in the weeds of this and even talking about this, because fishermen are going to use what they want to use. There's no way to enforce this. I mean, it's a waste of time to even have this discussion. I'm not trying to be rude here, but I'm being realistic.

I mean, we need to be frying bigger fish and talking about other things, and it's like all the years that we circle hooks that we were supposed to use, and I never had enforcement check me and look at my hooks, but I think we should focus more on how to educate fishermen of why discard tools are so important, or to try to tell fishermen that, hey, if you get on a population of fish that we need to be protecting, and you're catching something that you're discarding, let's get off it and move. Don't stay on that, but I just look at this, and I'm scratching my head like why are we talking about something that can't be enforced.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack, and I think that it may be that this is better suited, as Number 7 says, as best practices and outreach, rather than regulations, and there could be guidance as to hook sizes and what species you're fishing for and some of the other recommendations, but, as you say, none of it is enforceable, and it would be better for best practices. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: I have to agree with a lot of that, and especially with all the gear for each species. I mean, between hook size and leaders and double hooks, it's very much species-oriented, but, also, with natural bait, it's regular to go out there with a live well full of cigar minnows or something to fish with, and so that's going to be a very tough one as well to get passed and through, but I do agree that the discard situation is very troubling, and it has been for me for years. I mean, before we used the descending devices on a regular basis, we would properly vent, and you put a big snapper back in, and you know that that shark ate him on the way down.

My suggestion would be, instead of dwelling on a slot limit or a minimum or maximum size, and especially with red snapper, is to eliminate the sizes altogether and say one per person, four to six per boat, and the first fish you bring in is it. There, you eliminate your discards that way, and it's worked for other species in other places, but, if you catch a twelve-inch snapper, or a twenty-four-inch snapper, that is yours for the day, and three people or four people on the boat and you're done.

Now, the flip side of that coin is how do you enforce that? Well, at least they would continue to vent and descend, but, if you were to catch a sixteen-inch snapper, instead of waiting for that thirty-inch, that's yours for the day. You catch one fish, and you go home, or at least of that species. That's it.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. Bob, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, I'm going to pass right at this moment, because what I have in mind is something pretty large, with respect to talking about the credibility of assessments and fishing, and so maybe it belongs a little later, under best practices, and I have an idea, and the thought is, if you fish, there will be discards, and so I want to hit on that, and maybe it would be appropriate later.

MR. HULL: All right. Thanks, Bob, and I wanted to say one more thing before we go on, and a lot of this is a response, a quick response, and the council is trying to find a way to reduce the dead discards, so that we can have more harvest, and it's something quick, and we're all throwing out things that come to mind, but I really -- At the end of the day, the only way we're going to reduce the dead discards is by reducing effort.

That's the only way, if you're really going to do it, and all of these things can be best practices, but, while the unending effort continues, you're going to continue to have dead discards, because these fisheries are closed, and you're fishing for other species, and so, I mean, that's really the bottom line, but, in the short-term, I mean, these could be best practices ideas. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. I've got to agree entirely with Jack on this. I mean, we're wasting time on stuff like this, that's not enforceable, and it should definitely be in a different place, and there's so much more, and I wanted to get into more of a holistic thing, and I was going to save these -- I'm going to save these comments until we get into gag fishing, because, if we start bringing it into all this, it's just a mess, but I think it's way past time that, for commercial fishermen, that we don't have discards, and, by doing that, I think you should have a large-hook fishery, a set time, and no discards, and that would solve that problem completely, and I think it's time to look beyond any one species and go into something like that, but, anyway, that's my comment for right now, and I know we'll be talking more about it when we get into gag.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Randy. Andrew, go ahead. If you're not ready, Andrew, let's go to Mike, and I see you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy. I just wanted to make sure that I'm clear on the understanding of a couple of comments that I have heard, as far as no discarding. I heard that with the last comment, and then one a little bit further back, and are you all suggesting the potential for required retention, and so what you catch you keep, and you don't throw that fish back, and then, when you've kept your limit, that's your limit, and is that -- I'm just making sure that that's what is being thrown out here.

MR. HULL: I think Randy just made that comment, and he may want to address what he said there with no discards for the commercial, and, of course, on the recreational side, I think that it was mentioned that -- I think it was Tony that said that you keep the first fish you catch, and so maybe you guys -- Before I go to you, Jack, let me see if Randy wants to chime-in on what he said. Go ahead, Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: I mean, I think that our biggest monster is these discards, and, I mean, I don't want to see it, but, again, I was going to talk about it when we got into gags. To go from 1,000 pounds down to zero is too late to say we told you so, and, I mean, we've been trying to stop that forever, that many fish, but there could be a way that we could work it out that there's a season that you can use these big hooks for the grouper complex, the red grouper, and the Americans, and that's when you can do it, and you maybe have some set weight limits inside that.

You know, I don't even want to throw out numbers, but I think that's where the discussion needs to be, that you put all of this into one group, these big fish. I mean, when we fish for the triggers and beeliners with small hooks, and small leaders, you're not having any discards, and so, for this big-hook fishery, I think all these fish need to be tied together, and then we could just eliminate

the discards, and the numbers, how it's set up, I don't know, but I think that's the way that management needs to go, because these discards are killing us, and the thought of these bandit boats sitting out there on the break and bringing up these big gags and watching them float off, I can't stand it. It's just terrible, and it's bad enough with the Americans, but, anyway, maybe that clarifies what I said.

MR. HULL: Yes, it did. It helped me understand where you wanted that to lead, and I hope that helps Mike, and it's kind of like when you're allowed to fish for these bigger fish, and you would use a bigger hook and avoid discarding undersized animals, and then, obviously, when you're fishing the smaller gear for vermilion and trigger, you're going to be using a smaller hook anyway, and we don't have that many discards there, and so, yes, I follow it. Does that help, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think so. I'm just thinking in terms of best practices versus a regulation-type of thing, because, if there is a requirement for retention, then there would need to be something that would say that you're not allowed to throw those fish back, I guess, or, if that's a best practice -- I guess that's where I am trying to lead my mind towards, but should there be some rule against -- If it changes, then, obviously, we would have to change other dynamics of the fishery, but then would there be a desire for some type of rule against discarding during fishing in that manner?

MR. HULL: Right, and how would you enforce that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. HULL: Tony, go ahead, because you had mentioned that, about on the recreational side, I believe. Go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, and I agree that the discards are killing us, and, if you were out on a recreational boat, and you drop on some snapper, and you catch one, and say it's a sixteen-inch snapper, that's it. That's your fish. Then the next guy catches a twenty-four, and the next guy catches a twelve. Well, you're done. That's three fish, and they're in the boat, and there is nobody venting, and there is nobody descending, and there is no sharks grabbing them. Yes, it could be hard to enforce, but so is a lot of things out there, including hook sizes and leaders.

I have seen it work on inshore species, that they have eliminated the size limit, and it really eliminated the mortality rate. I think it's a good way, and I think, personally, another way that would help with the red snapper is to do that along with say two two-month seasons for the year. Instead of a three-day in July, have two months here and two months here that it's open, and I believe that would relieve an extreme amount of pressure on triggers and red porgies, as well as sea bass. I think we would immediately see all the other species start to rebound slowly, simply because they're not being overfished and more mortality on them as well.

MR. HULL: Okay, Tony, and so a follow-up with you on what you said there. So you say, well, we would open up the private recreational, the entire snapper grouper fishery, for not just red snapper, but the entire fishery for a month here or a month there, and then, the rest of the time, the entire fishery would be closed, and is that what you mean?

MR. CONSTANT: No, I don't. I am just talking about simply with snapper. If you took a two-month -- Because I feel this total closure of snapper is really affecting all these other species

directly in the snapper grouper realm, and I believe the reason we're talking about red porgy is because the snapper have been eaten them all, and they've gotten to the point, at least in South Carolina, and maybe it's because we put eighteen reefs in our waters, but we have gotten to the point where we can't do anything but catch snapper, and so, if we let some fishermen catch these fish, with no venting and no releasing, and, if you catch one, you keep it, and you try that for two months, instead of three days, and you might see some rebound on some other species. Keep the other species and regulate them the way we have to.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony, and I don't disagree with any of your comments, but I can tell you that the council has no ability to go beyond what is delivered to them, as far as ACL from the SSC and the stock assessment, and so, if they say that you're going to have a three-day season, that's what you're going to have, as far as harvesting, and, the rest of the year, you're going to be discarding, dead discarding, all those snapper.

Like you said, they're thick everywhere, and so it's a dilemma, and they have no ability to go beyond what the SSC says. The cake is baked, and it's delivered to them, and now here's how you're going to eat it, and you're going to gobble it up in three days, and now there is no more cake, and so the -- Every year, there is more and more hungry people wanting to eat the cake on the recreational side, and so it's ever growing, and so, I mean, it's a real dilemma, and they're talking here spatially -- That's why I brought that up, and there's a discussion of, well, you know -- You guys talk about looking at the fishery from way above, and looking at everything in its entirety, and well, yes, you're can't drop a baited hook down for one species and not catch another.

Shutting down one species, because it's overfished and overfishing, that's where we're at, and we've got a problem, and something is going to have to be done, and we have a problem of overcapacity, and we also have a problem of too many dead discards year-round when the fishery is closed, and it's a problem.

MR. CONSTANT: That is exactly why I went there. I feel that, if we're going to look at the big picture, then we're going to have to open snapper up a little bit, because it's the problem with these other species.

MR. HULL: I don't disagree with you. I'm just saying that, until the scientists and the SSC tells them that they could do that -- I'm sure they would open it. They would be more than happy to open it, and I know they would, just like you and me, but the scientists are not going to let them do it, and so they have a different view of where we're at. If you look at the presentation, you can see where they're at, but we can -- Let's move to -- Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: I say a lot of times -- Discarded red snapper this, the sharks, man. The sharks are just eating us alive out there, and there's nothing this council can do about it, because we talk about it, and we talk about it, and we don't have the power to manage the fishery ecosystem based, like we talked about, because the sharks are so bad, and our hands are tied, thanks to some NGO groups that won't let us do the right thing here and harvest as ecosystem-based management should be.

I am sorry, but I've got to say that, because I've seen it happy over and over, but, Jimmy, what do you think about, in the commercial fishery, and we've talked about it before, but if we shaved off a small percentage of our ACL, say 2 or 3 percent for discards when we're outside of say forty fathoms. A boat could bring in a red snapper during a closed season, or a boat could bring in a

tilefish when the tilefish season is closed and he's interacting with fisheries, and it makes sense, to me, that we have some of these things that -- We're fishing in deep water with our bandit stuff, and we're on the break, and we could shave off a little bitty percentage of our ACL to sell those discards that we know are not going to make it in that really deep water.

We do have them occasionally, and it's not a big problem, but it would certainly be nice to have that, and it would come off of our ACL, and that's how I would see the best way for us to deal with discards when we're deepwater fishing, and I'm only talking about deepwater species, and it's not a lot of them. If you're talking about yellowedge, you're talking about snowies and tilefish and some of these species, but, you know, when you're talking about discards, man, it just goes back to -- I hate to pit one side against the other, but we've got an exponential amount of recreational fishermen in the Morehead City area that we don't have any idea how many of them are participating in the fishery.

When I'm out there during the red snapper season, it's not uncommon to see four or five fish behind a boat, red snappers floating off, and it's disheartening to see that, and I don't know how you tackle it, and I really don't. It's just overcapitalization from the private recreational sector, is all I can say.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack, and, to that, we have some private recreational members on this AP, and I really need to hear from you. The council needs to hear from you about what you think we need to do to stop this massive dead discarding.

If you want to use the poster-child, red snapper, I believe the number is two-million pounds of dead discards, or discards overall, from the private recreational sector, and so you see what the commercial side has been doing for a long time to reduce effort, and what can we do to reduce effort, because, ultimately, the only way we're going to reduce discards is by reducing effort. This gear stuff and all this other stuff is knee-jerk reactionary that can't be enforced, and it's best practices, and so good, and I see some names. Let's hear from some of you all. David Moss, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Jimmy. I agree with what Jack had said previously, in that to look at all this stuff, and our focus is not where it should be, and it really should be on Number 7 and outreach campaigns. There's no way that you're going to be able to reduce effort, and that's just not -- I understand what you're saying, and, in a perfect world of sunshine and rainbows, it would be great, but it's just not realistic. More and more people are entering the fishery, and there's more and more money coming into the fishery, and it's just not going to happen. It's not realistic.

We need to really get more accountability from the recreational sector, and we, as an AP, have said this pretty much ever since I've been on the AP and trying to push for that, and it's gone nowhere, unfortunately, but that's the biggest problem that I see, is the accountability from the recreational sector, and we said it time and time again, Jimmy, and you and I have had conversations about even knowing who is involved, and we don't even know, from a recreational standpoint, who is really involved in the fishery.

If we focus our time and efforts on outreach and knowing best practices and knowing what to do and knowing how to properly release fish and so and so forth, that's going to be a huge part of it, and somebody had mentioned, and this is kind of going off a little bit, but about the artificial reefs

earlier, and the only thing that I would say to that is, number one, there is -- I don't believe anyway, and somebody can correct me, but I don't believe there's a ton of science that say that artificial reefs produce more fish, and, in fact, what can tend to happen is that now those artificial reefs are public numbers, and so there's just more pressure on them.

We don't know if those artificial reefs are pulling fish from natural live bottom that was previously undiscovered and is now on these public numbers that everybody knows about or what, but I understand that that's part of a different discussion, but I will leave that there, but, like I said, I just think we really need to focus on, number one, outreach -- Well, number one is accountability, and number two is outreach to really educate everybody on what to properly do out on the water.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David, for those comments, and, yes, ever since I've been on this AP, we have recommended to the council that there be some type of recreational accountability through something, whether it be permits or licenses or tags or something to count the participants, so that the science can be better to begin with, and then maybe to control -- You said that effort can't be controlled, but I kind of get that, but it's going to have to be controlled somehow. You just can't have unlimited access to a limited resource. It doesn't happen. Lawton, go ahead. I will come back to Lawton. Bob.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. I guess, for the bullet point -- This will be a little complex and take me a minute to get through the idea, and it's now time, but, for the bullet point, I would say the council and NMFS should consider using the assessment data, particularly from the red snapper assessment, and I'm going to say to manage fishermen, rather than -- Reduce the focus a little bit on using it for regulation, establishing ACLs and things like that, and now I will explain that, and I may need to articulate this afterwards, in kind of a written statement.

One of the things we have, and I will go with the red snapper, among fishermen is basically there's not a lot of credibility, no matter what assessment is done and how, right now among the average fisherman, and it's that there is plenty of red snapper and why are we controlling them so much, and so there needs to be, and it's been discussed, education and outreach, and so that's one piece.

Then the other piece is intelligently -- I don't know, and we have to find ways to not have people fish when fish are there at a certain time and very vulnerable to being discarded, and so I'm thinking that maybe a start would be a presentation to us as the Snapper Grouper Committee, and then possibly this could be rolled out for outreach to the public, and here's where it is, and it's simple explanations of how the assessments are done, so people get to understand it.

One of the things that you will see is they sample in the certain historical areas, again and again, and they do it by a very standard technique, and I think people need to know that, but then the other thing that needs to come out is tell us, tell the fishermen, some of the reasons there is these very hard management levels, is there are areas that are considered short of fish, or the type of fish, and the age class of fish, mainly the bigger ones, and there are areas where the fish are more abundant, and so I am going to focus on that.

During the assessment, when it was going on, and both Jimmy and I sat in on that, there was a gentleman, and he's in with the South Carolina DNR, that has data, let's say with red snapper, on the time of year where they are, certain populations are, and how there are times where there are

more of them and there are less of them, that they kind of know how they move around inshore and offshore and that type of thing for a center of abundance.

The idea would be that, once you explain to folks, so they get an understanding and you get some credibility from the assessments, how they are done, because there's this need to keep going back against history, where they once were, and try to get the age classes up there, and there's also -- The fish, the snapper, tend to move around, and, at certain times, are more abundant someplace, and maybe more of a pain for bycatch, and, at other times, not as much.

Once that is known, I guess what my thinking is that we can maybe address the possibility of how seasons and retention comes about, and that would be basically we know, if we're going to fish, we're going to discard fish, and so maybe we don't want to be fishing for certain species when a critical species, like snapper, may be abundant, and so we're going to have limited seasons still, but may we could extend them if baked into, let's say for the recreational fishermen, was not fishing certain areas at certain times of year when the snapper are there.

Maybe the closure is a season and an area, and then there's another area that can be opened. That's the thought that I have, and it's a little complex, but I would like to address the fact that there's basically not a lot of credibility with the assessment among recreational fishermen, because they just say the snapper are there.

In order to control fishing, maybe the best thing is we need to know -- One way to start is where are these fish abundant at a certain time, and maybe that's when the closure needs to occur and not at the other times. It's during the times the fish are there, and maybe that's when we can allow a little retention or something like that, and so that was kind of a big-picture thing that I wanted to present, but the bottom line is that using the assessments more to manage us, rather than make regulations for us, and that means a little more control on where we fish and how long and how. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Bob, thank you, and you bring up one of the points and questions from the council, and one of the recommendations and some things they're thinking about is a spatial or time closure to snapper grouper fishing, bottom fishing, either spatially or by time, so that you can reduce discards and have landings on the other side, and that's what they want to hear from us, and so especially on the recreational side, where we have these massive discards and this effort that continues, and it makes possible sense, and there is an awful lot of evaluation that will have to be done as to what you gain by closing a certain area here and another area is open, and then one area suffers, and the other area doesn't, and there's a lot to discuss there, but that is a way that you could reduce the discards, by reducing baited hooks in the water, and so I thank you for starting that conversation. Mike, I see your hand is up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I was just going off of Bob's comment, and I think there were at least a couple others before that that were trending in that direction, and I was going to bring up what you did, that there's another item, and suggest if we want to, as this discussion continues, just scroll down so I can have that pulled up on the screen and people can view those questions and respond in that direction.

MR. HULL: Please do, yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Because I think we've kind of hit what the AP feels, as far as gear modifications, that they could be more suited towards a best practices campaign, but they're not really enforceable, and that's something that we could pursue in that type of avenue, but there seems to be more interest in discussing the time or spatial openings aspect.

MR. HULL: Mike, I appreciate that, and I'm ready to move on, but, in fairness to two members whose names have been up there, I want to go to them, in case they had something on Item 1. Harry and then Lawton.

MR. MORALES: Thank you, Jimmy, and I'm actually responding, at your request, for recreational reaction to this, and, overall, for me, whereas, years ago, size of hook mattered, in the last three years, I will tell you that fishing for trigger and vermilion, using a Number 2 and Number 3, small hook, chicken rigs, and we're catching full-grown red snappers as well as juvenile red snappers.

The bottom line is that the only thing to stop us from catching the red snapper is just moving up in the water column. Otherwise, if the snapper are biting, you can't stop them, no matter what, whether you're using a four-foot leader or a six-foot leader, double hooks, big or small, live bait or dead bait, and it doesn't matter, and that's South Carolina, and we are catching them whether they're twelve inches, as Tony pointed out, to twenty-four-plus inches, on a regular basis, which really, really gets to the recreational fishermen, as to this is bogus science, right.

At the end of the day, if we don't drive a public awareness campaign that is geared toward you bring up that red snapper, and there is the best ways to get him back into the water alive, and sometimes fishermen want to take that red snapper and hold him up, and then the next guys wants to take a picture, and the next guy wants to take a picture, and you're killing the fish before you can get him back in the water.

Handling that fish with a net, getting the hook out, whether you're venting him or -- The descending devices, most of those descending devices are fifty or a hundred or 150 feet. If you're set at the wrong depth, and you're going to end up bringing that damn fish right back up again. If you think the barometric pressure was bad the first time, try doing it twice and see if that fish can survive.

The fishing clubs, the YouTube, the YouTube professional fishermen, are all campaigning toward this is the best way for you to protect the snapper fishery and get us back into fishing for red snapper, sooner versus later, and I think that kind of public campaign may be the only thing that's going to help you, because they don't believe the science. The science, from our perspective, is not reality, and so there was one other point that I wanted to tell you, but I can't remember right now, and so I'm going to just beg off.

MR. HULL: Thank you for those comments, Harry. Lawton, are you there?

MR. HOWARD: Yes, I'm here. I am going to echo every single thing he just said. He's South Carolina, and I'm Georgia, and we're right beside each other. I think our fishery is similar, and it seems like we may have to go a little further out to get the really big ones, but we can catch red snapper in our nearshore reefs. At eight miles, you can still see land, and, now, they're small, but you can also catch pretty nice ones at twenty-five.

We run fifty miles, partly to stay away from the crowds. Everything that I saw on that proposal, and the hook size and all that stuff, I just go back to enforceability, and I don't want to make criminals out of people who are trying hard, for instance like us. We have always used single hooks, and I have never used a double-hook rig for snapper, ever, and so, from -- I just got an email from somebody. Sorry.

That circles back to something that my boat captain said in a meeting that we were in with Spud Woodward and trying to get some public feedback, that it's got to become -- His word was "cool", but it's got to become something that people are passionate about, in terms of our fishery, and this goes back to what Harry just said, that that all is best fishing practices and getting people to adhere to it.

I have no clue how to do that, because I watched a boat captain -- Spud Woodward, who is on the council, was on my boat, and we came up to the same dock, and we're cleaning fish, and we were standing there, and Spud, when he was with DNR here, had put in a program to save the carcasses of red snapper and put them in the freezer, and you put your name or something like that, and I don't know, and we watched that boat -- This was a charter captain now, and we watched them throw carcass after carcass after carcass, and literally the freezer was five or six feet behind him, and I think I've told this story before, and I know Spud was kind of gravely disappointed, but, until we can get participation from the recreational people, this is going to be a never-ending battle.

What Harry just said though, the recreational people I've talked to, and I am going to say that's at least once a week, but they don't believe it, and I don't blame them, because we've talked about this before, and it's fish after fish after fish, if you don't move, and we do. My boat moves. We don't stand there and keep catching them and discarding them, but I would say that a pile of them do, and I don't know what to do about it. We have tried and tried.

I talked to them, and I tried to get my captain to go over and say something to that other captain that day, and he wouldn't do it, and he did -- We were fishing beside him, and my captain did get on the radio and tell him to please do something to descend the fish, and that particular captain was venting at that time, instead of the descending, and we had descending devices on our boat, but he apparently did not, and so he was venting, and so at least he was trying some, but I don't have an answer.

You talk about the recreational sector and how many of us are out there -- Georgia, I said yesterday, is an anomaly, because of our small coastline, and I think we are more limited. I've been told before that much of this actually comes out of Florida, in terms of the numbers, because they're just easier to count them, and there's more of them. There's more concentrated people. It's a tough situation, and I see he's putting up here to become normal, and the assessment has to be accurate to the fishermen, and I just don't think anybody believes it, and so they're not going to participate, and so it's a vicious, vicious circle, unfortunately. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Lawton. I appreciate that. Harry, go ahead.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I did remember, and I had a senior moment for a while, but, to the previous comment, here in South Carolina, for example, I probably travel I would say maybe a twenty-mile radius, and so North Hole, South Hole, Monster, the Hump, Snapper Banks, and R8

area, and so, depending on the time of year, those fish are in one of those six places, or more than one of those six places.

You can go to certain parts, at a certain time of the year, and those fish aren't there. It's that simple, and so they do move around. At least, over fifteen years, that's been my experience, and, depending on the time of year, we will then determine what spots we want to hit, and so I support what was previously said. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thanks, Harry. We're getting ready to move, and I think we've covered the gear. We went over the bait a little bit. Maybe I would make one more comment on the bait. If you want to target big fish, and so, when you do have a snapper season, for instance, instead of having everybody high-grade up, because it's unenforceable to have them keep the fish they catch -- Generally, when I want to catch a big fish, I use live bait and a long leader, and I know that's best practices also, but some people may not know that. If you want to target in on bigger fish, most of the time, you will use a live bait, and you will generally catch bigger fish with live bait, and so let's move on, Mike.

Item 2 is spatial/time/season openings, and they have broken this down into some questions for us. When the snapper grouper discards or release occur in the commercial fishery, what are the most common target species, and what type of gear technique is being used? How does this vary by state and region?

Well, I think that the agency is going to have some of those answers for us, or Chip is going to have those answers. If we're concentrating this question on the commercial fishery, we would need to know what's the discards per fishery from the commercial sector, and we actually have real numbers, and we have observers, and I think that information is available to the council.

If you're asking me, when I am discarding in the snapper grouper fishery, mostly, off of my coast, we don't get to fish for grouper anymore, because we have the winter closure when the grouper live here, and they migrate down, and so we don't have a whole lot of discards anymore, because we're not fishing for grouper. We only get to fish for red snapper when we have a short commercial season, and we don't have a size limit, and we keep what we catch. We have a seventy-five-pound trip limit, and, actually, the market likes the smaller fish, and so I don't think we have a discard problem off of my area, as far as those two species of the snapper grouper complex, and, when we're fishing for vermilion and we're fishing for triggerfish, there's not much discard there either, and so, again, how does it vary by state and region?

In my region of northeast Florida, we just don't have that much discards, because we avoid the red snapper while we're fishing other -- The most important species to us in the snapper grouper fishery now are vermilion and trigger and some of the deepwater species. With that, on Number 1, and on Number 2 -- I'm going to go through this, and then I'll go to everybody that is up.

On Number 2, shorter closed season occur in the summer, I mean, we're controlled -- The commercial fishery, we really are controlled by the ACL, when we catch it, and then we get shut down if we reach that, and so having a season is not something that I can see. We already have a season. I mean, we break down our fisheries into -- Our ACL, we split them up, and so I can't see where having an overall, if this is what this is asking, an overall snapper grouper season for all the

fish, and it's not going to work for us. It's not going to work in the commercial fishery, and so I see, Mike, you want to speak up. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just clarifying that question too, and so that's more of kind of a management priorities type of thing, and would it be the preference that the season be shorter, and occur within like the summer, or would the preference be that it be longer and occur over the winter, when the weather may not be as conducive to frequent trips, and I guess that's more of what it's getting at.

MR. HULL: Well, but what season are you talking about? You say a shorter season, and, well, what are we talking about here? What season?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: As far as what species? I think it's as a general concept, if there were a snapper grouper season.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so that's what I asked, and so you're saying that the council is looking at this as saying, okay, would the commercial fishery prefer a snapper grouper season for all snapper grouper species and that we would have some opening, time-wise, and I don't see where we can have that, from my point of view. We already have seasons in place, because we abide -- We have to fish under an ACL, and we're not fishing for these other species when we're closed. We waste our time, and we go after what's open.

I would -- I don't prefer a snapper grouper overall fishery season for the commercial fishery, and I guess that's how I would answer that. Let me move through them quickly, before we go on. Discards are -- Now we're going to the recreational sector, and we'll let them answer that. Then another recreational.

Commercial aggregate trip limit and retention and no discards being allowed until the limit is met, I can't see where a commercial aggregate trip limit would work in the commercial fishery either, as to there would be no interest from my area, or me, that I can see, and maybe someone else would. Would there be an interest in establishing a season that includes snapper grouper species? Well, again, for the commercial sector, I say no.

Species-specific depth or bottom type, where discards are more likely to occur, and, if so, what are those, where discards are more likely, and, obviously, yes, there is areas where there would be more discards, if there's a certain species that's closed, and you're in an area where that species is biting your hook.

Marine protected areas, and, if so, discuss the pros and cons of establishing such areas, and, well, we have marine protected areas already, and we don't know -- We think they're doing us good, but we really don't have any reports on the effects of marine protected areas. I mean, common sense tells you that they should be providing benefits to us. I am not opposed to marine protected areas, as long as they are fairly distributed and there is some type of evaluation of their performance. I would like to see that, which is going to take money, which is going to take sampling and monitoring. I think I've stated what I wanted to state on this, and I'm going to go to Jack. You're up.

MR. COX: I am going to echo a lot of the things that you were saying. We've pretty much got our fishery fine-tuned, and we've worked on this hard, especially in the visioning that we did in

2013 through, what 2016 or 2017, and fishermen chimed in, and we made a lot of changes and kind of fine-tuned everything, and we do get observers on the boat.

When we're talking about snapper and grouper discards, when I'm shallow-water fishing, I will say that I do see quite a bit of gag, small gag, releases, and I'm usually fifty to seventy feet of water, which is good, because, when I'm able to interact with those undersized fish, you know we have recruitment, and I am able to, on my trip ticket, indicate what I am seeing, and so there's some science being pulled out of that, and we love seeing recruitment.

Of course, we don't get to see what we want in red grouper, but -- Let's see. I walked away from my computer for just a minute, before you called my name, and I had a few things, but I just wanted to say that I echo a lot of what you were saying, and I was listening to you, and I think that we've pretty much got ours just like we want it. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Mike, on the -- I was just reading the bullets, and I wanted to make sure that they were accurate. ACL closures are effective seasons for the commercial sector already, and if you could add the "commercial sector" in there, that will help me clarify what I said and what I think matters. Thank you. Andy, you're up.

MR. FISH: I would say that we do have some interaction amberjack fishing, even though most of our amberjack fishery seems to be going deeper and deeper, but we do have some interactions with the red snapper amberjack fishing, even though we do fish higher for red snapper out in the -- I'm sorry. Amberjacks in the deeper water.

I would also like to say that I think that you could reduce the discards for red snapper if you open the red snapper with grouper on May 1, and I know it's not the prime-time great weather and all that, but it makes sense, to me, that you wouldn't have thousands of people fishing for red snapper in the middle of July, in the peak of the spawn, and that's my opinion on that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: All right, Andy. I would like to ask you a question, in regard to the questions from the council above, and, specifically, they're asking -- I know you're a commercial representative and what do you think about this, a snapper grouper season overall for the commercial sector, as opposed to what we're doing now?

MR. FISH: I guess I don't really understand what changes, and I guess I'm a little confused here.

MR. HULL: That's kind of the point that I made. I mean, we already are being regulated by a season that we fish for these different species, and, when we reach the ACL, we're closed, and so, yes, it just -- It's not going to -- An overall snapper grouper for all these species, where we're going to be closed down for long periods of time and then opened up, and everybody fishes at the same time for all these different species, is not going to work for the commercial sector. It's just not going to work.

MR. FISH: I'm on the same page as you.

MR. HULL: Okay. That's what I wanted to hear from you. I didn't think that you thought that it would work either. Harry, it's all yours.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir. Number 3, if you roll back up to that, when snapper discards or releases occur, what are the most common targets, and so, for us, it most definitely is red snapper, and what we're starting to see are some small grouper that we're catching and releasing, mostly single-hook, single-rod, and at least that's for me, and so we're fishing in South Carolina/Georgia kind of waters.

In terms of closed in the summer or closed in the summer versus the winter, given the fact that snapper are spawning between May and August, or maybe September, and my belief is that a fall fishing season for us, for snapper, probably are good for the fish, and fishing in South Carolina in September, October, and November is fantastic.

I mean, even up to -- Hell, I've been fishing on Christmas Eve in seventy-five degrees, forty miles off the coast, and then I go to Number 7, define specific areas, including depth, and so the shallowest that I fish is eighty feet of water, on out to 150 for mostly bottom fishing. When we go bottom fishing in the Gulf, 200 to 240, we're really -- It's a trolling day, and we're wrapping up with, typically, afternoon bottom fishing, but, generally, speaking it's eighty to a hundred feet that we're fishing, or bottom fishing, and, as far as marine protected areas, in the Caribbean, a couple of places that I've gone to, they will take sections and make them protected areas, which allows the fish to build in that area.

I think, or at least I am warming up to the idea, that we probably have several large areas off the South Carolina coast that could be managed as protected areas, and especially if you were to move them around, so you give each area time to rebuild, and so those are my comments.

MR. HULL: Well, Harry, thank you, and I need to -- You're well-spoken, and I appreciate everything you're saying, and I want to ask you a question. From your perspective as a private recreational angler and as a member of the AP, do you see that there's a way that the private recreational snapper grouper fishery could have a season, and so, in other words, a bottom-fishing season overall, such as, okay, we would be closed for this amount of months, or open this amount of months, and there would be no bottom fishing when it's closed, or maybe spatially, and not just seasonally across-the-coast, but like spatially, and, like you just kind of mentioned, moving around from basically area to area, and is there a way that that can work in the private recreational sector? That is kind of what the council is asking here. Would you prefer --

MR. MORALES: What I would say to you, Jimmy, is, first of all, from an economic standpoint, fishing, or offshore fishing, for a private fisherman, could be considered price prohibitive, and it doesn't make sense for me to be spending twenty-five dollars a pound for a fish that I could spend a lot less by buying it commercially, but the passion of being out there is what is driving everything.

Six-pack charter guys, if you were to shut down bottom fishing as a whole, which is what I thought I heard you say, it would pretty much put them out of business, and so, you know, the only closure that I am living with is the red snapper, and, in my opinion, having a two-day or three-day go-for-it red snapper recreational experience, where you're killing all these damn fish that are full of roe, does not make sense to me.

If you want them to repopulate, then you're going to move that season into the fall, and maybe even winter, but really the fall, which, in our area, is still very good fishing, and, you know, I listen to you and the other commercial guys, and you're always talking about poundage, and Tony

introduced the -- If it's a twelve-inch, it's yours, or if it's sixteen, it's yours, and, if it's twenty-four, it's yours, and that's it.

It might be time for the council to look at a poundage of fish during that open season, versus a fish, because I can tell you right now that, when it's a two-day fishing season, and there is a sixteen-inch fish, and then along comes a twenty-four, and that meets the quota, and that sixteen gets thrown overboard, and so you're just adding to the problem, versus, if it's poundage, now I can catch all of those, to my limit of poundage for the boat, and call it a day.

I have only now recently come around to that thinking, and it's not something that I have ever thought of for recreational, but, at the end of the day, we've got to start thinking differently, if we're ever going to rebuild it, or at least get the scientists to agree to what we already know, that they're already here. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Harry, thank you, and, if you don't mind, I would like to ask you another question, if I may.

MR. MORALES: Sure.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so could -- Let's say that it didn't include the charter boats, or the for-hire boats, and who knows how that would happen, but I think this is a really important discussion, and could the private recreational sector support a bottom fishing closure by season, or by space, to reduce dead discards, so that you could land more fish when the season is open?

That's the question I think that -- That's the avenue they're kind of looking down, and they want to know if it's doable, and I know, regionally, you can go to different regions, and it's going to make a big difference, and it's going to be complicated, but I think that's kind of what they want to hear, and that's why I am doing my job and trying to pull it out, because I want to hear it too, and is there a way that could you say, okay, when does -- Like you said, the time of year, and you're fishing in the fall of the year and loving it.

Maybe you had a season where bottom fishing is open for the private recreational sector for six months out of the year, and when the weather is good for most everybody, and then, the rest of the year, it's closed. I mean, it's a tough pill to swallow, but look at what would result of it. Would you then be able to keep the poundage that you just said, and, hey, let's open this -- Then maybe you could open the red snapper fishery up, possibly, and I don't know. I am just throwing that out there, and I think the point is, if you could gain landings in the snapper grouper fishery, by having a spatial or time closure to all bottom fishing, would you support it? Do you think it's something that the private recs could handle?

MR. MORALES: What I would say to you is that a complete moratorium on any and all bottom fishing would be an absolute revolt. I don't see how any recreational fisherman that spends the kind of money that they do would be willing for a total moratorium on any bottom fishing, even if it would help the population as a whole.

I've been a proponent to purchasing stamps, increasing the offshore fishing license, and doing other things to help increase the population, as opposed to reducing the effort, and I think it's been more than well documented. I mean, the level of boat sales and the increase in technology, the

efficiency that the recreational fishermen have been able to come to the market with, and the economic impact that the recreational fishermen have, as a whole on the market, and it just would never be supported that you would go with a complete shutdown.

As it is, there's incredible angst over the red snapper being shut down, and everyone is looking for a way to gradually open it, and, in my opinion, a fall limited season, even with a stamp and X amount of poundage, would probably be significantly better and would reduce the overall discards, and that's my opinion.

MR. HULL: Thank you very much, and so accountability is much more important on the -- To have a count, to have a permit, to have a tag, to have a stamp, to have a license, to have accountability, to know the universe, and it would also lead to a lot better science and a lot better -- Instead of these assumptions of two-million dead discards, and we might have a much better precision on these things with accountability. I think that's what you're saying, and I would agree with that wholeheartedly. If that's what you're saying, thank you.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I am. I mean, I go -- I spend a ton of money to go fishing around the world, and, right now, I like going to Alaska, and I don't understand. When I go to Alaska to fish for halibut and coho, I also buy a king stamp, okay, and I don't understand why, on the east coast, we can't do what Alaska has been doing for a gazillion years, all right, and, at the end of the day, we need money to support this fishery, and I believe the recreational fisherman, who spends a gazillion dollars on their equipment and everything else, and the virtual anchoring that's out there now and the gyros and everything, and we can afford to contribute more, and we need it.

MR. HULL: Perfect, and all of this would lead to more landings and better stock assessments, if we had accountability, and, as an AP, we have recommended this continuously, and it hasn't happened, but I think the time is coming close. You and I have taken up a lot of time. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, it's been a little bit, but I was just going to agree with you and Jack that our commercial fishery really cannot handle any kind of season, especially in the summer, and it's bad enough that these people, consumers, have to have all this imported seafood, and that would just destroy that.

A lot of these points here, you almost have to get into regional differences and stuff, and I know the council doesn't like to do that, but, I mean, it could be time that some of these things just have to be regional, and, I mean, if we're looking at everything, there is just too much differences between Key West and up here to the North Carolina/Virginia border, and any kind of management measures just have to take that into account. There's just not blanket measures for all these things.

I would reference back to what Andy said about the red snapper, and, if he remembers, the AP voted to have a May opening, but it didn't pass with the council, and I think maybe it was because of the outcry from Florida, but that's where one of those regional differences sure would have saved a lot of discards. Jimmy, that's all I've got at this time.

MR. HULL: Perfect. Thank you. Bob, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. A lot of the comments from the recreational fishermen are a lot better than me, and so I won't have any specifics, but, having been in this game for a long time, I just want to bring up two points of more the political nature that are within what we just discussed, and one would be on the Number 8 question from the council, and then there was also bullet points, and the fifth bullet point down that came about due to Jimmy's comments in the beginning of all this discussion, and I just want to bring up the point about MPAs.

As someone who has advocated for snapper grouper fishing and a love of bottom fishing for so long, at this point, I would like to ask those of us on the committee, particularly the recreational fishermen, to be very careful and a little cautious about pushing for any more MPAs at this time, unless we really know what's going on, and where I'm coming from -- Jimmy made the comment that we would like to see how the performance of MPAs are, and I just want to bring to some folks' attention, and I don't know if you realize, but there was a lot of discussion on MPAs a number of years ago.

There were three established, and the one of interest that probably some people here have been near was the Georgetown Hole off of South Carolina, and it was an MPA established maybe six years ago, five or six years ago, and I know, at the time, the species -- Some of the species seen there was a population of warsaw groupers left around there, and there were some seen there, and there were some incredibly large gags that were at that MPA.

It was a phenomenal place, the Georgetown Hole, for establishing an MPA, and the thing that I want to remember and want to focus on is, one, follow-up, and so one of the things this committee want to state is please report and get the funding for the follow-up on the performance of the MPAs, because the three that were set, and I can't remember the other ones, and one is north of me, and one is south of the Georgetown Hole, but they came with a sunset provision, and we talked about that and worked on that pretty hard, so that, if it doesn't work -- If they don't work out, we eliminate that MPA.

We need follow-up, and we need to press the council, or NMFS, to eventually evaluate how those MPAs work, and are working, with respect to the species there, and I thought the MPAs were established with a five-year sunset provision, and it might be ten. If it's ten, we still have a time to wait, and so I just wanted to bring that up. When MPAs come up, our experience has been that we put some new ones in, some really good ones, but they did have a sunset provision, meaning that, if you keep it going, you must prove that they actually worked and how they worked, and we've got to know that the fish are better managed and are there.

Just to follow-up a little on what Harry said, there's one other political thing, and, for those of us that are recreational fishermen, like Harry or like myself or like I know David Moss, I really think a recreational permit and reporting accountability would be good for the recreational fishermen, particularly on certain critical species, and I can tell you that we have talked about this so long, and there is a motion made every single meeting, and it will probably be made at the end of this one, to do that, and, for some reason, for those of you newer to this committee, it does not happen.

I think there are -- No one is going to take this ball, beyond us, and run with it. There's two things. One, it cannot make a profit, and it has to be just the cost of the program is one of the things, and so some of the states use the money for fisheries management, and that's not how they work, and

so just know that. It's got to cover the cost, but, if we want to push this, there's a group of us that actually has to get together, and I don't know exactly where the block is.

We may have to go to the Secretary of Commerce as a group of avid fishermen and activists and ask for legislation to be implemented, or go to appropriate -- Maybe, if a number of us are from different states, go to appropriate congressmen and get something started, because, for all the years that I have watched, there is no way that us requesting the council or NMFS or NOAA to do this, to me, is going to get this implemented. It just hasn't happened, and there is some reason, and maybe they're overworked or there's no resources to implement this, or nobody knows how they want to do it, and we would actually have to devise that ourselves, with an activist, and lobby and push it from the grassroots from us, and that is just strictly my personal opinion, if we ever want to see a recreational license and accountability, enforced accountability, in the EEZ. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Bob, and I would just quickly say, if that doesn't happen, we are never going to see any relief for our snapper grouper stocks, because the private recreational just continues to increase, and they have no idea what's going on there, as you know, and so it has to happen, or there is no -- That is the silver bullet that has to be fired. Thanks, Bob. Richard, you're up.

MR. GOMEZ: Thanks for that last statement, and there definitely has to be more accountability in the recreational fishery, and we've discussed this numerous times, but can we scroll back up to those questions for a minute? I just wanted to comment on a couple of them. Number 3, we discard -- I would say mostly we discard grouper in May and June, and we hardly target them anymore after June, because anything close has been pretty much wiped out, as far as legal size goes.

Then, with this shorter season, I really don't have enough knowledge to comment on that yet, but I sure would like to think about that one a little more. Number 6, I am kind of -- I think what you're saying is would there be interest in establishing a season that includes all snapper grouper species, and does that mean that we're talking about lumping them all into one group, and is that what -- Could you explain that one a little better? Is that what I'm hearing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There's been a couple of -- Well, I mean, there's been a lot of ideas thrown out concerning like this whole spatial and time seasons type of thing, and so there is one train of thought of lumping them all together, and there's another train of thought of taking associated groups and maybe doing those together and having some type of season for this component, because we have some snapper grouper fisheries that occur in shallow water and some that occur in deep water and some that are a bit higher in the water column and some that are a bit lower in the water column.

Maybe doing some type of a grouped type of format and having seasons for each of the groups, and there are several different trains of thoughts right here, but the one that -- That one is talking about specifically Number 6, and that is referring to a whole everything lumped together, yes, and what I have heard, from the comments so far, is that there are too many different species to do that.

MR. GOMEZ: So my comment would have to agree with that. I mean, so far, it just sounds like it's too far-fetched, kind of like crazy talk, and I don't think we could be behind that at this point, but I don't know, and maybe further discussion at another time, but, so far, that's a no-go. As far

as 7 goes, you know, we can -- I know that one of the things in the charter boat industry is we target grouper a lot less. We may target them in May, a little bit in June, but, after that, we've pretty much given up the notion of being able to get legal-sized grouper anywhere close to where our half-day boats go, and full-day boats have a little better shot at it, but half-day boats definitely -- It's out of range for them.

The other species, the most prevalent in our waters, is the yellowtail snapper. I mean, I could -- Wherever I'm going to anchor up for the day, I can tell you what size fish I am going to catch, and, if I want to stay away from discarding yellowtail, that's a very easy thing to do, and I'm going to go where I am going to catch legal-sized yellowtail snapper, definitely, and I don't think a lot of the recreational people could be that confident when they say that, and that's part of the problem.

As far as Number 8 goes, I mean, I don't think the charter boats of the Lower Keys could ever get behind any more closures of area, and we've been pushed out of so many places, through the years, that half-days aren't as feasible as they used to be. They still are, and we're okay with what has happened so far, but the more protected areas, the further we're pushed away from fishing, from having a good fishing trip, in a half-day, in so much of the Lower Keys -- The charter boats do have half-days. I mean, half-days are very popular, and that's all I have to say for now. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Richard, for those good comments. Jack, you're recognized.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I was just going to say that the recreational season -- To me, it sounds like there's some people that have questions, and they're not quite understanding, but it seems like there could be a lot of benefit in it for them. I know, in Morehead, there are probably some guys that -- In the wintertime, they like to go catch sea bass, and that's a good winter fishery for the recreational guys, but it seems like, maybe with a little more clarification and the benefits of it, there may be more interest in it.

What I wanted to comment on was Number 8, commercially, and we talked about the MPAs, and MPAs are a very touchy subject. Offshore MPAs are very hard, because it's very hard to figure out what's going on in them, and it's very hard to enforce. I want to tell a quick story, and, back when I was very young, and I was eighteen to twenty-five or thirty years old, I would go dive in an area on some rocks about sixty feet off of Cape Lookout, North Carolina, and we would have two different currents that would come together across those rocks.

We would go in there, in May and June, and we would catch anywhere from 500 to 1,200 pounds of gags in about six hours, and these gags were averaging about fourteen to twenty pounds. That fishery lasted for about fifteen years and then got decimated, but, over time, as I became educated in fisheries, and in working with scientists, I understood that there was something really special going on there, in that area, and it's about a four-square-mile area. I see a lot of benefit, and I've said it over and over, in that particular sixty to seventy feet of water, if we cut out a small portion of that and set that aside for an MPA, to rebuild red snapper and gag grouper.

To me, and what I know about that area, and I have taken scientists there and fished it, and I have talked about this for years and years, and there's a lot of commercial fishermen who will tell you how special this place is, that there could be benefits to a shallow-water MPA to enhance some of the fisheries we're talking about at this meeting.

I don't like to see closed areas, and nobody does, but we've got issues here to deal with. We don't have the closed bottoms that Richard is talking about off of Florida, and I don't want to see any, but that place in particular that I am discussing would be very vital to a rebuilding plan for gags and red snapper. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. David, go ahead.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Jimmy. Just to sort of echo what the gentleman a few speakers ago had said in regard to the seasonal closure, and like you had asked about perhaps six months open and six months closed or whatever, and that's going to be a really hard sell for a lot of people, for any number of reasons, not the least of which being that -- My fear is going to be that there's going to be such a concerted effort in the open season, similar to what we see when grouper first opens. Like, down in south Florida, I mean, it's getting to be, and some of these Keys guys can talk to this, but it's almost as bad as lobster mini-season when shallow-water grouper first opens.

If you know that you're only going to have a six-month season to catch all these different snappers and groupers, you're going to have such a concentrated effort that it may do more harm than good, number one.

Number two, which Richard Gomez has kind of spoken to as well, is, down in the Keys in particular, the yellowtail can save a day, or be the only thing available in a given time, and it might be the winter, and it might be the summer, but it just kind of depends on what's coming through, and then the other thing to think about too, and this is really a south Florida issue, from let's say Port St. Lucie or so, give or take, or probably Jupiter, south to the Keys, is probably 90 percent of the snapper and grouper waters are in state waters. At least for the southern region, if you coincide that with FWC, then it's going to be all for naught anyway.

MR. HULL: Okay. Is that it, David

MR. MOSS: Yes. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, sir. Bobby, you're up.

MR. FREEMAN: Two points. The Number 6 item, having a season closure that would coincide with the summertime would just be devastating for headboats in our area. You can watch, and, at Labor Day, the place just dries up, boat traffic and all that, and so I'm sure that we would have some opposition there. We currently have seasons on most of the fish, but, to do something wholesale, just shutting the whole snapper grouper down, that would not meet with wide approval from the headboat crowd, the customers as well as the boat owners.

The other thing is I can't say that I am crazy about MPAs, but a personal experience, and it's probably been I think about fourteen years ago, and we just dumb-lucked into finding a wreck, and I had no idea what it was, but I know we were catching -- The North Carolina state scamp grouper was caught there, but it's a barge, and there's no telling how old it was, but over on the east side of the cape in 160 feet of water, and we were getting twenty-five-pound Americans, and I think the biggest gag was thirty-six pounds, and we had several of the twenty-seven and twenty-eight-pound scamps, and so the fact that that wreck is apparently not very well know, because I'm going

to use the experience of Buddy Harris, who was raised around here and fished all of his life, and he was a mile or so from us one day, and he said, what are you doing over there, and he said there ain't nothing to fish on around here.

Well, I gave the numbers on that to a local dive boat, and he dove it and videoed it, and you could see the very nice-sized snappers and groupers there and amberjack. Some parties want them and some don't, and we have caught wahoo trolling across it one time, but it just tells me the fact that that's not a very widely known -- I don't know whether somebody knows about it besides me, but there is some fantastic fish.

Within the last month, I went there with a fella that had a limited snapper grouper permit, and we had five fish in the twenty-five to thirty-six-pound range, and so that tells me that marine protected areas are probably doing us some good. Quantifying what it is is kind of hard to say, but the fact that I know where that spot is at, and that every time we've been there there's been renewed proof that there is some fine fish down there, but the problem is that it's a steel barge. The framework is still there, and the hull is still there, but, when you drop your line down, you're falling into a booby trap. If you try to get a nice fish out of there, the barnacles and scale from the steel makes it a tough place to fish, but, anyway, limited parties are taken there, and so that's my two-cents' worth on MPAs. Good news and bad news is what they are.

MR. HULL: Thank you, sir. All right. I think that we've got a lot of bullet points here, and I think the couple of things that the AP has agreement on totally, and we have recommended, and we've all touched on it, is that we need some type of licensing, permitting, accountability, a census of the private recreational sector.

It has to happen, and it will lead to much better management and much better science, and why isn't it happening? It needs to happen, and I know that the council, I believe right now, has some efforts -- They have a workgroup I believe that is actively working on it, and Kerry said that earlier, and so we fully recommend that, and have for many, many years. That will change a lot of things that we're facing if we can get that, and it will benefit the private recreational sector and all the other sectors. I think we state that again.

Then the other thing I believe that everyone could agree with is that -- It's been mentioned that increasing the habitat, by artificial reefs -- You know, you can't tell me that free-floating larvae doesn't go benthic down on these structure and start new life there, and it's not just moving from one area to another. The larvae is landing on there, and so increasing habitat is going to increase our fisheries, and that's something that we've stated, and I can remember saying it from day-one, and it needs to be done at the federal level and not just by the states or by the counties. It is being done and it's been taken up by the individual counties in different states, at the state level, but it should be done at the federal level. That is going to really help our snapper grouper fisheries, and I truly believe that they start new populations, just because of the free-floating larvae.

Maybe you take those areas and you turn it into an MPA, and so then you're not taking an area away from people that weren't fishing out in the sand there anyway, and, I mean, that could become something that's really beneficial, and so I think everyone can agree to that. Okay. I see a couple more names up. Go ahead, Harry.

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I just wanted to support what you're saying. While I do agree with the recreational accountability, I do not wholly support that that's going to make a major change in the fish population. Earlier on, last year, I think I introduced -- Beginning this year, I introduced -- Florida had already, over I guess two decades, laid down 3,800 artificial reefs, and there is already proof that artificial reefs are extremely beneficial, not just because they're new fish areas, but they have provided relief to very tired natural reefs, and so that is extremely positive, but, at the end of the day, South Carolina, Waddell Research Institute, has done a phenomenal job in repopulating quite a few different fish, and, at the federal level, I think both of those things have to be considered by the council if we are going to truly make a significant impact on the fish population, and that, ultimately, is going to benefit everyone. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Harry. Then, Mike, on the bullet of efforts needed to increase habitat and increase fish populations, after "populations", if you could add "through artificial reef production at the federal level". Then these could be MPAs, or they could be -- If you create new habitat area, where nobody is fishing, there may be consideration then as being future MPAs, and maybe that's what it says, that MPAs could be considered to protect -- Yes, that's fine. Okay. Thank you for that. Richard, you're up.

MR. GOMEZ: Jimmy, I won't be able to be at the meeting tomorrow, and I'm not sure, but I'm hoping that we get to the yellowtail snapper today, and what do you think the odds are?

MR. HULL: I don't know what the odds are. It's already 12:22, and people are going to need to get something to eat here in a minute, and let me get back to you on that. You'll be here the rest of today, right? So stand by, and we'll get back to you. We'll try to see what we can do.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, and I'll be here the rest of the day, and I'm hoping that maybe we could change the snowy grouper to after that, if that's a possibility.

MR. HULL: Okay. We'll work on it, and I will get back with you on that. Anything else right this second?

MR. GOMEZ: No, and that's it for me.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Richard. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: I wanted to, first off, reiterate that the closed season would devastate the charter captains around the South Carolina area as well, but, on the habitat increase, I was mentioning that our CCA state chapter has put eighteen offshore reefs in, and we have put a nearshore reef in sixty feet of water in every coastal county in South Carolina. This year, we have five offshore reefs going, and these reefs basically cost us, us being the CCA and the South Carolina DNR -- Each one we produce costs us approximately \$90,000.

We've got a half-million dollars invested in our South Carolina reefs this year, just with a grassroots organization that the CCA has done. Our last reef was off of Charleston, and that had a 240-foot barge, and we had twelve containers welded onto that barge, with holes cut in them for both divers as well as fish. The town of Mount Pleasant had a water tower that came down, and it went on the barge and was welded in place.

This made a great relief in the water table, but, typically, what ours are -- These deeper ports, both Charleston and Savannah, because of the larger container ships that are coming in, they are requiring bigger tugs, and they are -- All the old, single-engine tugs are becoming obsolete, and we are purchasing them, and then we have to go through federal regulations, and we have to take them to a shipyard and clean them, and then we pay that shipyard to tow them thirty or forty miles offshore, and then we sink them, all in places that are -- You can't just sink them anywhere, and they have to be placed by the federal government as well as the South Carolina DNR.

In six weeks after they sink, our local DNR dives on them and films them and gets accountability, and, in every case, there's been a lot of fish on these wrecks in six weeks. After a year, these fisheries -- They become fisheries, meaning they have plenty of growth, and the fish have become habitat and home, and the argument with it pulling fish off of another live reef -- Well, possibly. It's not going to pull all the fish off, but it very well could pull part of that family of fish off and then split the family, and then we'll have fish on both sides of the coin, but, in every single case, these offshore reefs have had a lot, and not just a little, but a lot of fish living on these reefs. That's all.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Tony. Yes, I agree, and, as I said, free-floating larvae is dropping on those too, and it's not just shifting from one area to another, and there is new growth. Go ahead, Harry.

MR. MORALES: I'm sorry, Jimmy. I left my hand up, but, to support what Tony is saying, I will try to find -- One of the Florida universities did a long-term study on those 3,800 reefs that Florida did, and it's been absolutely -- It was absolutely amazing, including that whatever the heck it was, the aircraft carrier, that was sunk in 300 feet of water, and it stood up over a hundred feet. I mean, it's massive.

I just feel that the Atlantic coast -- Granted, Tony, I mean, you guys worked hard for the number of reefs that you've done, but Florida itself is the one that has figured it out, and now they're pushing for federal legislation to support more artificial reefs in Florida, and we should be either tagging along, by reaching out to our local congressmen, but, at the end of the day, in the South Atlantic, we need 200 and 300-foot vessels that are dropped in a hundred to 150 feet of water, and we're going to improve our population. It's a proven fact. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Mike, I see you now. Go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, I was just going to kind of highlight, for scheduling purposes, if we want to do a hard stop by 12:30, and take maybe thirty minutes for lunch, and, during lunch, I can give you a call to talk about shuffling the schedule for handling yellowtail and whatever else we need to get through for today.

MR. HULL: Yes, sir. Sounds good. Let's go ahead and have Andy, whose hand is up, and there are no more hands, and then, after Andy, we're probably going to break for lunch. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: I am probably not the popular opinion here, but I personally feel that artificial reefs are a great idea for the fishermen, and they're a horrible idea for the fish. All you're doing is taking fish from other areas, sand included, and sand bottom is not a bad thing, and I just think you're making it easier for the weaker fishermen, and more people are going to those spots. I also

think you're spreading out the spawn and making it harder for fish to congregate in large groups in one area, and that's just my opinion on that.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. I appreciate that. At this time, it's 12:29. Let's take a lunchbreak and be back at 1:00, and we'll dig right back into the next stuff we have to dig into. You all are doing a great job. Have a good lunch, and we'll see you in thirty minutes.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: I probably ought to get started here. Welcome back, everybody. Sorry about the short lunch break, but we really do have a lot to cover, and, if we don't get it all covered, we may have to have another meeting sooner than later to finish up, and so let's try to be concise and address the questions and issues before us and give our comment and our advice.

I would like to go and finish up with about twenty more minutes of discussion on the discard reduction for the snapper grouper fishery, and we got through most of it. The last part of it was red snapper slot limit or maximum size limit, and I think that's worth a little bit of discussion. I would -- You can read those bullet points there, and, currently, there is no size limit for red snapper in the South Atlantic region. Red snapper are the most commonly discarded snapper grouper species, and removals due to discards outnumber removals due to landings.

Minimum size limits can improve survival of smaller fish to mature, and maximum size limits can discourage high-grading and improve survival of large females that exceed the maximum size limit and improve and maintain stock productivity, and so just a couple of my opinions on that is, of course, during the mini-season for red snapper, and I guess is it going to make any difference if you have a slot limit during the mini-season, when you actually can keep a red snapper, and is a slot limit is going to matter? I mean, what is it, a three-day season, and so is the amount of discards during that three days -- Is the effort so high that, with a slot limit during those three days, it's going to make a difference?

If it does, then I think you should consider a slot limit, if it does make a difference and gives you more landings, and maybe it gives you another day of fishing during the recreational opening. That is what we've got to talk about here and know the information, and I think that the question. If you had a slot limit of animals that are readily available, and so when someone catches -- It will end all the high-grading, because I guarantee you that, if you're allowed one animal, you're going to continue to fish until you catch the biggest one possible, but, if there is a slot limit in place, and you catch right up to your slot limit, and it's killed, and it's on the boat, then there's no sense in fishing any further, and so it could make a difference. It would have to be analyzed, but, in my opinion, it's something to look at for the council.

They would have to see the numbers of discards, and I don't know how they would figure it out, but it could make a difference, but the season is -- The rest of the year, it doesn't matter, because you can't retain red snapper, and so you're just discarding them no matter what, and it doesn't matter. That doesn't do a thing for you there, and the same with a size limit. I will just throw that out there, from my opinion, and I would like to hear from someone else what they think about slot limits or size limits. Obviously, on the commercial side, a slot limit isn't going to make -- We don't have the type of discards that you're talking about in the recreational sector, and so, Bob, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, what bothers me with slot limits is this is a catch-twenty-two. A slot limit, by its very nature, means we are going to discard fish on the ends of the spectrum, and I don't know, and I think one goal goes against the other. You're trying to reduce discards and then having a slot limit, and we keep fishing the slot, and, obviously, you're discarding everything outside, and so I'm not hot on this. I think it takes extreme caution and a lot of thinking for a slot limit. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Bob. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I agree with Bob on this, but, to answer the maximum size, I think that's not a good thing. I believe you would end up -- It's going to increase the discards, and I also think that of a slot limit. I think the slot limit is going to increase the discards of fish from both ends of the spectrum. That's it.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so both of you feel that it would have the opposite effect.

MR. CONSTANT: I do. I think it's going to have the opposite effect.

MR. HULL: All right. Thank you. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: The only slot limit that I believe will reduce discards is a slot limit that is based on weight, and so, if you say that there is a slot limit of ten to fifteen pounds per fisherman, and you have four fishermen, and so you have a forty to sixty-pound slot limit, and now, if I catch twelve-inch, fifteen-inch, twenty-four-inch, it doesn't matter. I weigh the fish, and I fill my slot, and that's it, and so, ergo, every fish that is brought onboard is kept, and, when you hit your limit, you stop that fishing. That's the only way that I can see reducing discards. Otherwise, at the end of the day, if it's a three-day fishing experience, we're going to -- Not me, but we're going to discard -- Recreational fishermen are going to discard the smaller fish in lieu of the bigger fish.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, Harry. That's a great comment, and a great idea. Thank you, Harry. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: I agree. I'm totally against the slot limits or anything like that. It's bad enough that these fish need to, if possible, not even brought out of the water. If you're going to keep them, do it, but too much handling a fish, trying to measure and stuff like that, and going to what Harry said also, and it's just not a good idea for this fish.

MR. HULL: Thanks a lot, Randy. Richard, you're up.

MR. GOMEZ: Thank you, Jimmy. I'm with everyone else with the slot limits, and I just think that's just going to create more discards, but, on another can of worms, I'm just curious, and this is something the charter boat industry down in the lower Keys has brought up on more than one occasion, but, with these very short red snapper seasons, if the weather is an issue, then we're pretty much screwed, and I don't know if we could ever do anything about that, but, if we could, I would like to suggest that these limits be based around good weather conditions, I mean these days be based around good weather conditions, and be able to be moved around a little bit, if at all possible. That's all I have to say about that.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you, Richard. All right. If there is no more comment for the council on this, we're going to move on. In an effort to accommodate everyone, we're going to switch up the agenda again, and we're going to move to yellowtail snapper, and then to golden tile, and then we'll try to get into snowy before the end of the day, and so I think we've completed where we're at, and so it's back to you, Mike, for the yellowtail.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy, and I'm going to pass it over to Myra. She's pulling up the presentation for yellowtail, and she'll be walking you all through that.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Mike. Thanks, Jimmy. Thanks, everybody, and so I'm going to do my best to walk you through so far what the council has been talking about yellowtail snapper, and you've already seen the beginnings of some of this. For some of those who are newer on the AP, the council has been talking about yellowtail snapper for some time. Back in 2017, they developed this amendment, Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, through the public hearing stage, and then they paused it, and so now we're sort of regrouping on yellowtail snapper, now that the assessment has been completed, and so that's how we got here.

Here's a little bit of the background of management for this fishery. As you all know, this is basically a south Florida fishery, and the stock is a single stock that extends through the Gulf of Mexico, and so there was an assessment done back in 2012, SEDAR 27A, and that determined the stock was not overfished, nor was it undergoing overfishing, and, at that point, it looked like the catch levels could be increased, and so there was an emergency rule that went into place to make sure that fishermen could access that extra amount of fish, and so that was in 2012.

After the emergency rule went into place, the council started working on an amendment to make it kind of official, an amendment to the FMP that went into place in 2013, and the total ACL and the sectors ACLs were modified at that time.

Then there was an amendment that changed the MSST, and that stands for the minimum stock size threshold, which is the level below which a stock is considered overfished, and they did this for several species, and yellowtail was included, and so, just for completion, I put that on the timeline. Moving along to 2016, there was an amendment that changed the fishing year, and they did that for both sectors, and so the impetus behind that was to make sure the fishing year would -- If there was any in-season closure, that that closure would coincide with when yellowtail snapper were spawning and benefit the stock, and so that was done in 2016, and apparently that's been a good change.

Then in 2017, like I was just saying, Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 was developed through the public hearing stage, and that amendment, just quickly, had several actions considering the total ACL for the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and it had different allocations between the two jurisdictions, and it had a whole bunch of different trip limit options and things like that, and so we did get a good bit of input through that state, and the council is utilizing all of that to continue managing yellowtail snapper.

Fast-forward to 2018, and there was an amendment that was developed to modify the commercial accountability measure to minimize the likelihood of in-season closures. That amendment was developed almost to the end, and then the advisory panel said, you know what, we're doing fine,

and the in-season closures are no longer happening, and, if they do happen, they're happening when yellowtail snapper are spawning, and so we're good with it, and the council said, okay, let's not finish that amendment, and so that one went away.

Then, up to now, and that brings us to SEDAR 64, which is the latest stock assessment, and that one was done with data through 2019, and it utilized the revised estimates for recreational catch, and so, as many of you know, the Marine Recreational Information Program has been improved, and what used to be the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, which was a telephone-based survey, is now a mail-based survey, and it's called the Fishing Effort Survey, and so this change had the result of adjusting the recreational estimates for landings, and, basically, that change has been applied back in time, so that the new assessment includes those updated and improved recreational estimates.

Now that I have brought you to the present time, the council is taking action, because, as I said, there was a stock assessment that was completed, which means the council then needs to adjust catch levels based on the results of that assessment.

At the same time, the council needs to look at how the total ACL is allocated in the South Atlantic, to make sure that allocation between commercial and recreational is appropriate and basically just to revise it in light of the new information. I should also mention that the council has given us direction to develop this amendment in conjunction, or in cooperation, with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and so we are going to continue to proceed that way, but, for now, I'm just presenting you what our council is considering, and I will bring you up to date, probably in the spring, of where we are, as far as what the two councils are doing in their respective jurisdictions.

The amendment is going to have several actions, and it's just getting started, and so we don't know exactly how many, but this is what it intends to do, and so adopting the new acceptable biological catch and the overfishing limit recommendations, and we have to split then the ABC between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and I will tell you a little bit more about how that's done in a minute, and then we have to revise the total ACL for each of the regions for the South Atlantic and for the Gulf and revise the sector allocations and the ACLs for the South Atlantic. The Gulf currently does not allocate between the sectors.

Then look at establishing, possibly, management measures to constrain harvest, if it needs to be constrained, to the revised catch levels, to make sure that we can avoid in-season closures and that sort of thing.

Here are the ABC recommendations, the acceptable biological catch, by year, and this is based on calendar year, and that's how it was generated in the assessment, and so you can see what the current ABC is on the bottom, 4.13 million pounds, and what the ABCs would be starting in 2021, which, obviously, we're a little bit late to implement that one, but starting in 2022, and you can see it's a decreasing stream, right, and so every year it goes down a little bit, and the reason that happens is because you are fishing the population down to that long-term sustainable equilibrium level.

You can also see, on this slide, the allocation to the South Atlantic, which is 75 percent of the ABC, and the allocation to the Gulf of Mexico, which is 25 percent of the ABC, and those

allocations were established back in 2011 and 2012, when Magnuson was reauthorized and the councils were following the mandates for setting ACLs, and I will walk you through how that was done here in a minute, too.

I put this link here, and I don't intend to go over the fishery overview, and you guys already saw this back in April, but, if there's any questions, or if you want to revisit some of that information, there is that link that will take us to that, and you can certainly navigate to that application on your own and do your own exploration, but we did cover a summary, much like what was presented this morning for red snapper, and what you're going to be seeing for some other species later today, and it's just a summary, including landings, what the life history is, and all that background information is available for this.

Here we go, and we'll move into the recommended catch levels and proposed actions, and the first one, as I said, would be to split the ABC. If the council chooses to retain the current percentages, there would be no action, and so they would keep that 75/25 percent allocation, and they would apply it to the new recommended ABC, and so the percentages stay the same. The numbers will change based on the new ABC, and here is how that formula, how those percentages, were derived.

Back in 2012, we looked at 50 percent of average landings from 1993 through 2008, plus 50 percent of the average landings from 2006 through 2008, and so this should be a little familiar to you, and there is a similar way that the council uses to allocate between the sectors, and the idea is to have half of historical catch and half of more recent landings, in order to come up with a fair and equitable allocation that is not constrained by limits, harvest limits.

This table shows you what the total ABCs would be once you apply those percentages to the South Atlantic and to the Gulf, and I have just put in the little square the year there for 2022, and, again, for reference, what the current ABC is is on the bottom, and what that is in terms of poundage for each of the regions. You're seeing a little tiny bit of an increase in 2022 for the South Atlantic, from three million pounds to 3.1 million pounds, and then the numbers, as I said, do go down.

The second option the council has to split the ABC is to use the current allocation formula that I just explained, but apply that to the revised landings, and so the landings that include the new recreational estimates, and so you would just take all those new landings numbers and funnel them through the formula, and, if you do that, the allocation changes, and it becomes 81 percent to the South Atlantic and 19 percent to the Gulf, and so it's using the same rationale, the same methodology, with revised landings, and so that changes things a little bit. For 2022, the ABC for the South Atlantic would go up a bit, to 3.4 million pounds, and you can see what it would be for the Gulf.

The second thing they need to do, after the ABC is split between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, would be to revise the total ACL, and so, of course, the total ACL for our region is going to depend on what chunk of the ABC ends up being apportioned to the South Atlantic, and the same thing for the Gulf, and so what I am going to present here are options that follow -- That assume that 81/19 allocation. It's just too much to put all of those numbers in front of you, but just realize that, if a lower allocation, jurisdictional allocation, ends up going to the South Atlantic, if it's 75 percent, all the numbers, of course, would go down.

Here's what the numbers would look like, and, as I said, 81 percent allocation to the South Atlantic results in the total ACL that you see on your screen of 3.4 million pounds, and the council could always -- They always need to look at a range of alternatives for setting their ACLs, and so we typically also consider setting it at 90 percent of the recommended ABC, at 80 percent of the recommended ABC, and you can see what those numbers would be, and that's just to just leave a little bit of a buffer for management uncertainty, and so all those would be -- These would be developed into alternatives that would be then analyzed, and the council can pick their preferred.

At the very bottom is another option that the council asked us to include for analysis and to get input from stakeholders, and that would be a total -- I'm sorry. It would be a constant catch ACL, and so we would look at what is the lowest level among the recommendations that have been approved, or recommended, by the SSC and set the ACL at that catch, and it would just stay there until the council modifies it, and so that's been added, again, for analysis purposes, and the rationale for that was just to avoid these fluctuating catch levels every year, and so they've asked us to do this for a couple other species, again just to see if having a little bit more stability in catch levels would be better.

Action 3 would revise the allocations and, consequently, the sector ACLs. Option 1 is going to be not change the percentages, and so retain the current percentages and apply those to the revised total ACL. Right now, yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic is allocated 52.56 percent to the commercial sector, and you can see what that poundage is there, and it's about 1.6 million pounds, and the recreational gets 47.44 percent of the total ACL, and so 1.4 million pounds.

For the fishing year 2022/2023, if you apply those percentages, again, to the revised total ACL, the commercial sector would be allocated 1.8 million pounds, and the recreational 1.6 million pounds, and, of course, that would change depending on what total ACL ends up being selected.

The second option the council would have is to revise the allocation based on same formula with the revised landings, and so the same thing that I just explained to you for the jurisdictional allocation would be done for the sectors, using the formula that's been used for this and other species to allocate, and so that would change the percentages. The commercial sector would be allocated 40.73 percent of the total ACL, and the recreational would get 59.27 percent, and you can see what the corresponding poundage is there on the bottom.

Here is some preliminary analysis for how these changes could affect season length, and so, again, to remind you, this is a scenario under 81 percent of the total ABC allocated to the South Atlantic, choosing a total ACL that is set at the same level as the ABC and keeping the sector allocation percentages unchanged, and so keeping that 52 percent to commercial and 47 percent to recreational, and so you can see, across this table, you've got fishing year on the left, what the commercial ACL would be, the projected landings, and so this is where the modeling comes in, and then whether a closure could be expected and what date that would be, and the same thing for the recreational. Under this scenario, the only option that does not result in a closure is for the fishing year 2021/2022.

Then, if you revise the sector allocations, to where the commercial receives less than, 40 percent, and recreational 59 percent, this is what the projected landings would be, and the potential dates for a commercial closure, under these scenarios.

Another thing the council wanted to get some feedback is on whether management measures may be necessary to look at for yellowtail, and so these couple of figures that I am going to show you are actually just similar to what is in that fishery overview that I just mentioned a minute ago, to sort of just highlight where things are, in terms of commercial distribution of trips, and so, since there is a potential for these in-season closures, the council is thinking, well, should we be looking at a trip limit, and so, on this graph, most commercial trips landed, as you can see, 200 pounds or less of yellowtail from 2014 through 2019.

However, there is this notable number of trips over here, this little blip, that landed at least 1,500 pounds of yellowtail snapper during that time period, and, if you look at the cumulative pounds of what those trips represent, there is this very large bar over here, and so that accounts for about 30 percent of the total pounds, on average, that were landed during that time period, and so it's pretty substantial, and so here are the questions that the council asked us to bring to the advisory panel.

Should there be a trip limit, and, if so, should there be one during May 15 through July 31, to coincide with the spawning season? What would be a reasonable trip limit, and should there be a step-down, possibly after 75 percent of the ACL is met, or any other percentage that you guys might want to recommend, and should there be a trip limit for part-time fishermen? Would 500 or 400 pounds be appropriate? Finally, should there be a trip limit for multiday fishermen who operate dually-permitted vessels, and so would 3,500 pounds per week be a potential option to consider? I am going to wrap it up here. If you have any clarifying questions, we can do that for a minute, and then I will turn the screen back to Mike, so he can capture the hands raised and your comments. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Myra, I have a question, if you could back to the slide that shows no change in allocation and the season lengths for both sectors. You can see that the recreational has no closures projected whatsoever with the current allocation, and you do have some closures projected for the commercial side, except for the first year, 2021/2022, but there is no closure for the private recreational sector any under scenario, and, if you go to the next slide below it, where the allocation changes, and then you can see there is -- Obviously, there is no closure again for the recreational sector, yet, of course, when you take away allocation from the commercial sector, the closures come earlier.

I don't know, and that just goes to a really commonsense question of why would you do that, when there is no closure anyway, and to -- I think my point is made there. Thank you, and I just wanted to point that out, and I appreciate it, and let's see if there's some other -- I know the yellowtail fishermen from the Keys are going to want to get in on this. James, you're recognized.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Jimmy, and thank you, Myra, very much for putting that together. I did have a question in the briefing material, and I saw that the -- For both options above, and this was done for the reallocation between sectors, the sector allocation, and, for both options above, landings for Monroe County, Florida are attributed to the South Atlantic, and what does that mean? This isn't in the material that you just covered, but this was in the overview document, I think like three pages in.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for bringing that up, James. That is an important thing that I should have mentioned, and you are correct that it is included in the document, and so there's a little bit more detail in the document that's in your briefing book, and the presentation is just meant to make

it a little bit easier for us to get through that, but the Monroe County landings -- Because Monroe County is -- You can't just really split it down the middle, and, for managed species, landings from that area are attributed to the South Atlantic Council, or not managed species, but assessed species, and I am going to invite you here, Chip, to correct me if that's wrong, but that's my understanding, and so it's just to clarify that those landings from Monroe County are being attributed to the South Atlantic, as opposed to the Gulf.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: The reason for me asking the question in the first place was, if I were a commercial fisherman, based out of Key West, Florida, and I had the appropriate boat and the appropriate licenses to go fish the Gulf, and the appropriate VMS system, and all of the things that I needed to go spend five or more days on the water, to go harvest yellowtail snapper in Gulf waters, I would be a little bit aggravated that my landings that were in Monroe County were attributed to the South Atlantic, and, thus, causing some sort of an issue between sector allocation moving forward, and I'm confused as to why it's like that. When the reporting goes down officially, it is either Gulf or South Atlantic, and so I'm looking for clarification there, and then I do have some other comments, once we move away from that.

MR. HULL: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for recognizing me, and, James, you point out a very -- You caught that very well. For the commercial fishery, it is based on the landings where they report the landings occurring, and so, if they are fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, those landings are attributed to the Gulf of Mexico, and this is looking at attributing landings primarily from the recreational fishery.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay. Very good. So, I mean, it is a good assumption that most of the landings from Key West, or in Monroe County, would be attributed to the South Atlantic waters, and maybe some clarification, when we're going over this, would be nice, because my immediate -- This was the third page I read, and my immediate assumption here was I kind of got pissed off, to be honest with everybody, and it took me a little bit of time to just realize that, hey, this information is being put in front of all of us, and we're supposed to do the best that we can with it, and that's where I sit, currently, trying to do the best that I can.

MR. HULL: Okay. Richard, you're up.

MR. GOMEZ: Thanks, Jimmy. James, I don't know about you, but, down in Key West, I don't think there's many commercial fishermen that would go out into the Gulf to target yellowtail snapper, just because they're so far, compared to where they would fish in the South Atlantic. That's it for now.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, I know five guys that regularly fish the Gulf waters from the Keys, and so, I mean, it does happen, and I would be looking out for those guys when we're talking about a biomass that is one, and we split it accordingly, and we've got to be fair across both sectors, and so that's kind of -- Objectively, that's the way I have to look at it when I'm representing yellowtail fishermen here on the panel.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MS. BYRD: It looks like you're muted on your end, Vincent.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: While we're waiting for Vincent, it sounds like we're kind of moving towards comments, and so I'm going to go ahead and grab the screen and show the questions, so I can take those notes down.

MR. HULL: Perfect. James, you're up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. Just a couple of things that I wanted to kind of throw out there and just kind of get everybody's mind working towards here, is that they did, in the document here, mention a total ACL with a constant catch at the lowest recommended level, and that being 3,041,000 pounds. Currently, with the way the 75/25 South Atlantic to Gulf allocation is, we are sitting at 3,037,500 pounds, and so you're looking at, what, 3,500 pounds difference between the lowest constant catch and where we are now, and the constant catch is a little bit higher, and so 3,500 pounds more.

Noting the graphs and the charts, where, if allocation changed between the recreational and commercial sector, that the recreational sector would not close in either situation, that leads me to believe that nothing needs to change there, as far as the recreational fishery goes, and then, from the commercial standpoint, if allocation was shifted from the commercial side to the recreational side, in the climate that we're currently in, without true accountability measures for the recreational sector, I just think it would be very foolish, just shooting from the hip, and so, basically, what I'm saying is I think we have the yellowtail fishery pretty well managed, from a numbers standpoint, given the science that we're working with.

Now, in the future, I definitely see the recreational side being more accountable, and, at that point, when we have hard evidence to support a higher harvest rate on the recreational side, I think we could make real changes, but, currently, the numbers that we're working with, based on the science, and the closures that we would deal with within some sort of a change would really only negatively impact the commercial sector, and, in my opinion, that's not exactly fair. After a brief discussion, with other comments, I would like to make a motion. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, James, and let's get Vincent. You're up.

MR. BONURA: I was going to just add to what James was telling us there, and there are quite a bit of boats, multiday trips from Key West, that do primarily target yellowtail in the Gulf of Mexico, and there is a lot of them, actually.

MR. HULL: Thank you, sir.

MS. BROUWER: Jimmy, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I was under the impression that James was prepared to make a motion, or did I mis-hear?

MR. HULL: He was, but he said after further discussion, and so that's why I went on to discussion.

MS. BROUWER: Gotcha. Thank you.

MR. HULL: David, go ahead.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jimmy. I just want to echo what James said, and I have a feeling that I know what his motion is going to be, and I'm probably going to support it, but, if the recreational sector isn't really hitting our ACL, number one, why would we shift more allocation in that direction? That's my first question, and it's kind of rhetorical.

Then my second comment is just, again, if we don't have the current accountability that we really need, then, again, why would we shift more allocation in that direction, but especially if we're not hitting our ACL anyway. As James said, the yellowtail fishery is managed pretty well down there, and there's fish, and sometimes they're tough to catch. Like this year, it's been just tough, but they're there, and so I will leave it to James now, because I think he is going to make that motion.

MR. HULL: Thank you, David, for those comments, and so I see no more names, James. If you're ready to make your motion, we're ready.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It's going to be multi-stages, but I guess I want to address everything. **I would like to make a motion that the panel advises the council to not reallocate between the sectors of commercial -- Between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico or commercial to recreational. Within those two notes, I would like to adopt the constant catch, the lowest constant catch, as the ABC for the species.** I think that covers everything that I would like to see happen or not happen, as it may be.

MR. HULL: All right, James. He's finishing it up there, but you may want to consider -- It's up to you, of course, but you first mentioned sectors between regions, and maybe take that word "sectors", "between the sectors of the Atlantic and Gulf", and maybe it's "regions", and does that better describe it?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, it gives clarification on what landings that they were talking about, when it comes to from Monroe County, and it makes a whole lot more sense, to me, when we're talking about where the fish are being caught, because there really isn't a recreational fishery from Monroe County to the Gulf waters, but I would like additional clarification in the documents, when we're reading them, just to kind of give us a better idea of that. Basically, when I say, "between the sectors", I mean between the Gulf and South Atlantic, and so, I mean -- I'm trying to read what's being changed here.

MR. HULL: Yes, and make sure you're okay with it, and maybe you don't like it. It's your motion, and I just thought it made better sense to me, but maybe not. I will read it out loud. **The motion is move that the panel advises the council to not reallocate between South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions or between commercial and recreational sectors, and, within those two notes, adopt the constant catch as the lowest total ACL for the species.**

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That is correct.

MR. HULL: So you like that verbiage there?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I do, and that would be the lowest ABC, wouldn't it? I mean, it would end up being the South Atlantic's ACL, and I don't know what the overall ABC would look like with

that, and, Myra, was that listed anywhere in the documents, what the -- Because we go from 4.13 million pounds as the ABC and what would we go to with the lowest constant catch?

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so a few things that I think I would like to clarify. The stock assessment, the results of the stock assessment, applies to the entire stock of yellowtail snapper in the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and so we have two councils that are managing one stock, and so you have to split that stock between the two, so that the South Atlantic can manage its chunk of yellowtail and the Gulf can manage its respective apportionment, and so the allocation between the two councils actually has to happen, and I don't think the Gulf Council is going to be okay giving us all the yellowtail snapper to the South Atlantic, or vice versa, and so that's one thing.

The ABC for -- If the South Atlantic retains the current apportionment between the regions, and so, if they stay with just the 75 percent of the ABC, which is what I think your motion is suggesting, the ABC for the South Atlantic, for 2022, would be 3.1 million pounds. The options that I presented to you all, the closures, projected closures, were based on the South Atlantic actually getting a larger chunk of the ABC, 81 percent of the ABC, and so, if the council retains the current split of 75/25, those numbers are going to be lower, and so I just want to make sure that's clear.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, but the constant catch at the lowest recommended level would not change, and is that based on -- That is based on the 75 percent or the 81 percent allocation?

MS. BROUWER: The constant catch --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Then, at that, what is the overall ABC for yellowtail snapper, because I don't think I could find that. I mean, currently, it's 4.13 million pounds.

MS. BROUWER: The overall ABC for the whole stock for 2022, according to the new assessment and recommended levels from the SSC, would be 4.2 million pounds. Currently, it's a 4.13, and so it's just a little bump. There it is on your screen.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Correct, but what I'm asking is what would the ABC end up being at the constant recommendation, and so, working backwards a little bit, and just to get an idea of where we are with -- If we were to adopt that, what is the projection for the -- What was the ABC to get to 3,041,000 pounds, and what was the sector's -- What was the regional split? Was it at 75, at 75/25, or at 81/19?

MS. BROUWER: What I presented earlier, the lowest recommended ABC would correspond to 2025, and then the reason the council can't go above that is because then they would be going above the recommended levels from the ABC, and so the idea there is to take whatever is the lowest ABC and put that in place starting next year, so that you don't have to go down as time passes. I'm not sure if I'm addressing your question, James, and I think we've gotten a little bit wrapped up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I don't think that you're answering the question directly, but you're trying to answer the question, and, really, the reason that I'm asking this is that, in my motion, I'm kind of -- I am not asking for no change, because no change would be the exact allocation, the exact everything, the way that we have, but what I am asking for is to change it to the total ACL of the constant catch, and is that just for the South Atlantic sector, or is that for the entire 100 percent of

the yellowtail, and is that -- If it is just the South Atlantic sector, which portion -- Which math was done, the 75/25 or the 81/19?

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I think I'm understanding, and so the 81/19, or the 75/25, really is the apportionment between the councils. What you're talking about is what the ACL would be for the South Atlantic, and you are correct that, if you recommend that the council adopt the constant catch, that ACL would be just for the South Atlantic.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: At that point, that is 3,500 pounds more than what we are currently working with, which is a nominal number, but yet, it would give the appearance -- When we come out the back side of this, it would give the appearance to commercial fishermen and to recreational fishermen that things are indeed status quo and that management has been doing its best to keep consistency throughout this fishery that has been deemed not undergoing overfishing and not overfished, and, I mean, would all of those things line up the way that I am trying to kick them out to everybody?

MS. BROUWER: I am not sure if that was a question for me, James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No, and I mean -- Just that's what I want people thinking about when they vote on this motion, is -- Basically, what I'm saying is we're going to end up going forward and really not changing much, but we do want to make a change to adapt the total ACL of 3,041,000 pounds, and so it isn't just a straight no change and keep it the way it is, but we want to do something within this motion as well, and that really is what I'm pointing out, but it will look like everything has stayed the same.

MR. HULL: I see Chip's hand up. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I do want to caution a bit about comparing current landings with the ABC that is being recommended here. Current landings are used in CHTS, or the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, and, in the changeover from that survey to the better-designed FES survey, landings typically go up, and so I do caution about the comparison of old values and new values there.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chip. James, let's go back to your motion, because I'm a little confused, and I think we should look at it again, if we could. It hasn't been seconded yet, but that's because we're trying to refine it, to make sure it says what you want it to say. This isn't my fishery. This is your fishery, and so why don't you read that again and make sure that it makes sense to you, what you're trying to have the AP vote on, and I will read it again out loud. **Move that the panel advises the council to not reallocate between South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions or between commercial and recreational sectors, and, within those two notes, adopt the constant catch as the lowest South Atlantic ABC recommendation for the species.**

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Jimmy, what I want to add in there is to adopt the constant catch level of 3,041,000 pounds as the South Atlantic ACL, so that, later, when we're discussing this, that we have a number to reference, and not that we're referencing verbiage that was on a chart, and this is the number that I want reflected as the ACL for the South Atlantic.

MR. HULL: Okay. Good enough then. If you're happy with the verbiage there, then I'm looking for a second, and I see David's hand up, and I think that's for a second, maybe. Go ahead, David.

MR. MOSS: It is, but I have a question for you, Jimmy. I wonder, and this might be actually a question better for Myra, if this would be better split into like two, if not three, different motions, and so you've got one motion to not change the sector allocation between commercial and recreational, and then that's kind of hard stop, and another motion to adopt the constant catch level of three-million-plus pounds for the South Atlantic, and then that could be a separate one, and, as much as I hate to drag this out into three different motions, but I wonder if we're kind of trying to put a bunch of different things here into the same bucket that maybe we should talk about separately, and, I mean, I would be happy to second really all of these, essentially, but I just think it might be better if we separate these out.

MR. HULL: Thanks, David. I kind of thought the same thing, but let's go back to James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely, because, I mean, we were presented this information in stages of what they need to take action on, and, like I said, I was trying to cover everything all with one shot, but having this as three different motions, to allow for more clarity on the subject entirely, I think is a great idea, and we can move forward as that.

MR. HULL: Good. I think that's a good idea, and so I suppose we're going to re-write this then, Myra, and the first thing that confused me initially though on it, which makes me want to do it piece-by-piece also, your motion, and, of course, it's yours, but so the information was really with an increase to the South Atlantic of 81 percent, from 75, and so, if you don't want that to happen, then that would be something that you said here, to move that the panel -- Not to reallocate between the two regions, and so it would remain -- With that, it would remain 75 and the other number, and so is that what you want to do?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely.

MR. HULL: Okay. **There you go, and so the motion reads: Move that the panel advises the council not to reallocate between South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions.** Do we have a second on that? David, is that you seconding?

MR. MOSS: It is, and Myra is -- I have noticed her name up there, and she might be able to clarify a little bit better too, but I wonder if we should move -- Like just kind of switch the order, because they are, in some ways, reliant upon one another, and so put the -- Obviously, it's not up on the screen right in front of her right now, but I think that was the third motion, and make that the second one, and I don't know how much that matters, but, you know, as far as not readjusting the allocation between commercial and recreational would be dependent on that whatever it was, three million and -- I don't remember what the number was, but it was just what was up on the screen.

MR. HULL: All right. Well, that's fine. I don't know that it matters which order we do it in, and I think the council is going to get the general idea of what we're doing here, and so --

MS. BROUWER: Jimmy, I'm so sorry to interrupt, but I still think that, for James to -- For it to result in the 3,041,000 pounds, you have to have 81 percent of the ABC allocated to the South Atlantic. Otherwise, that number will go down, and so, James, what you're --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Myra, that's the question that I was asking you, that you were trying to answer, and I asked if that was based on the 75/25 or the 81/19.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear before, and the table that's in front of you shows, as you can see, the 2025 ABC is what would be applied for the entire time series, and that's based on an 81 percent allocation to the South Atlantic, and the other thing that I was going to suggest is you don't necessarily have to have three motions. You can have one motion with three different bullets, one for jurisdictional allocation, one for sector allocation, and one for total ACL, or whatever order you all want, but just to expedite things a little bit.

MR. HULL: Okay. So it's back to --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, I mean, now that my direct question has been answered of which split that's based off of, Myra, currently is the 4.13 million pounds still the ABC?

MS. BROUWER: That would be -- The council would set the ACL equal to the ABC for that catch level to be implemented.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, but currently, right now, if I were to ask what is the ABC for yellowtail snapper.

MS. BROUWER: For the South Atlantic or the Gulf or combined?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: The whole enchilada.

MS. BROUWER: I will tell you in just a second. The current ABC is 4.13 million pounds.

MS. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, and the way that we split that, the 75/25, and the resulting split between the recreational and commercial sector, basically yields 1.6 to commercial and 1.4 to recreational, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: I am scrolling through my presentation to make sure. It would help to let us know what page you're on in the document, so Mike can pull it up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm operating from the top of my head, because I've been studying this in-depth for a week or so now. Does the ABC have to change? How about that?

MS. BROUWER: The ABC has to change because of the assessment. The ABC has to change. The jurisdictional allocation does not have to, but the numbers will change when you apply those percentages to the new ABC, but, to answer your previous question, if you keep the same sector allocation, and you apply that to the revised total ACLs, that will give you --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: 1.596, or 1.6.

MS. BROUWER: Well, but this is based on the total ACL not being that constant catch, and so I don't have those numbers in front of me, James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Okay, and so this is really why I was asking those very specific questions about the numbers. Now, the ABC recommendations, I think in page like 5 of your report, of your presentation that is, that shows, for the entire fishery, from 2021, which has passed us now, all the way down, and that shows what you guys are looking at as a possibility for the ABC, and what I derived from this information here was a 4.09 million pounds per year, which is slightly lower than the current ABC, and so, if we were to adopt a constant number throughout the recommendations provided for us, it would be a number worked from 4.09 million pounds per year instead of 4.13, which every level would drop very -- You would barely even notice it, but, I mean, I think this would be the platform that I wanted to build the constant catch around, is the ABC recommendations that were made initially.

MR. HULL: Mike, I see your hand is up, and, obviously, speak up anytime you want.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think Myra covered most of it, but I was just going to point out that, with the current wording -- I will scroll on up here, but, with the current wording of the motion, that the panel would advise the council to not reallocate between the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions, this would end up with the Option 1, the 75/25, whereas I think the intent here is to go with the 81/19, which would be Option 2, and it may be helpful to state it as moving the -- That the council adopt Option 2, or something of that nature.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: That's not -- I don't want the allocation to change at all. I am firm in that, but what I am asking for is to iron out the ABC for the entire fishery, to put a number on it, instead of this sliding scale that we have in like page 5, with the ABC recommendations, at 4.65 to 4.24 to 3.99, and then it says the current ABC is 4.13.

If you averaged all of those 2021 through 2025, you're going to come up with a 4.09 million pounds per year for this species. From that number, and I wanted to adopt that as a constant catch, and then, from that number -- Because where did the constant catch come from, and what was the ABC for the 3,041,000 constant catch? Do you see what I am trying to do here? I am trying to work the 75/25 from 4.09 million pounds per year, and then --

MS. BROUWER: I see what you're trying to do, James, and I think I understand. What you're trying to figure out is whether all these ABCs that you have on your screen can be averaged to one number that can be applied to each year.

MS. PASKIEWICZ: And to the current formula.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and the reason that can't be done is because the council can't go above the ABC recommendation from their SSC, and so, if they were to set 4.09 million pounds as the ABC for 2024, for example, that would be above 3.8 million, and so they would be going above the recommended ABC for that year, and that's why we have to go with whatever is the lowest, or at least that's the option, to take whatever is the lowest and apply that for the entire block of time, and does that make sense?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and this is why getting into the numbers is so important, and, honestly, the people that I represent in the Gulf fishery here in the Keys, they want their 25 percent of the split, and, like I was saying initially, there is no reason that the guys that spend all the money on the big boats and the equipment and spending a week away from their families and all that --

There's no reason that their allocation should go down just because the South Atlantic wants more. If we were to do no changes, we would be looking at a step-down structure like what's in front of all of us on our screen right now, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: For ABCs, correct, but the council could still set their total ACL at a constant number, and that's what I presented to you, but, unfortunately, I just don't have what that would look like for a 75 percent jurisdictional allocation for the South Atlantic. I only presented what it would look like with the 81 percent, which is the number that you mentioned, the 3.4 or whatever it was.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It's 3,041,000.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, exactly, and that's based on the 81 percent allocation to the South Atlantic. It would be lower, obviously, if the South Atlantic were to receive only 75 percent of the total ABC, and so the council can't change the ABCs. They have to adopt the ABCs that the SSC has recommended, but they can set the total ACL at a constant number from now until whenever they decide to change it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Even without that allocation shift, or the regional allocation shift, and I would still like to -- In my motions, you can take out the mathematics, the numbers there, because they're meaningless until we have the new calculation, but I would like to adopt the lowest ABC and work the numbers from there, really because we talk about this so much, about staying ahead of our fishery, and, in my opinion, that's the best way to do that for this species, is to get the overall number that we're taking right now and get it down to a limit that both sectors can still work with.

Commercial fishermen are not going to be put out of business because of this, and the recreational and charter -- Nobody is going to be put out of business because of this, and I think that, at the end of the day, that's the most important thing here, is fisheries management that makes sense, and so that's the direction that I want to move in.

MR. HULL: Okay. I understand a lot more about all of this, after all that, and so I'm going to go back to your motion, and, right now, we kind of had one motion, and now we've got several going, and we need to -- James, we need to get your motion straight here, what you want to do and what you want to say, and then we got a second, I believe, or maybe we didn't.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Jimmy, the only thing I would like to change is the last portion of it, to reflect the lowest constant catch.

MR. HULL: So get rid of the actual number and just describe the -- Whatever it's going to be with the new calculations. Okay.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and, I mean, initially, what this means is everybody's numbers are going to go down, and everybody's ACL is going to go down, but I think this really helps us stay ahead of our fishery, and, if we are overfishing and don't know it yet, at least we're making some steps here to do our best for the fishery.

MR. HULL: Okay, and I think we need to take Myra's advice, maybe, and put it all back together in one, and we can maybe squish it together. Myra, go ahead.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy. I just want to restate what I am understanding, just to make sure, and so, James, what you are wanting to do is to recommend that the council retain the current jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, 75/25, retain the sector allocations for the South Atlantic as they are, the same percentages that we're under right now, and adopt the constant catch as the total ACL for the South Atlantic, and is that correct?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely.

MS. BROUWER: Gotcha. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Myra.

MR. HULL: I like that, and I'm going to read it out loud and make sure we had a second on it and go from there. **The motion is move that the panel advises the council to retain the current jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico; retain the current sector allocation for the South Atlantic; and adopt the constant catch level of the lowest recommended ABC for the South Atlantic as the total ACL for the South Atlantic.** Did we have a second, or we'll have to have a new second for the adjustment, and does the seconder still -- David, is that you?

MR. MOSS: Yes, I'm still here, and I'm fine with that. That's kind of -- Just as FYI, and not that it matters, but that's why I was saying that, in some ways, the order mattered, because, if you were going to change -- You were doing these things on the assumption of keeping the constant catch level at a certain point, and that's why I was saying that, but, if you're going to put them all in the same, that's fine with me, and I still second it.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Okay. We have a second, and we have been discussing this. Is there further discussion? Harry, your hand is up?

MR. MORALES: Jimmy, I just wanted to, I guess, say that bullet number -- If we're saying Bullet Number 1, keep the jurisdictional allocation between both entities, the constant catch, by default, is going to end up being the same for the two entities and not just the South Atlantic, and that's the only point that I wanted to make, but, if you want to leave it as-is, it's fine by me.

MR. HULL: I think that we probably should leave it as-is and let the council see the intent.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Jimmy, if I may, real quick?

MR. HULL: Yes, sir.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I just wanted to point out that constant catch was derived from a formula that was different than what is current, and so that was the 81 percent formula, and the current one is 75 percent, and so we only had one option to choose from when it came to looking at what the constant catch would be, and that's all I wanted.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. All right. **Is there anyone that is opposed to this motion? Raise your hand. I see no hands, and so the motion carries unanimously.** Back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy. Just to make sure we cover what the council asked us to do, I was going to ask Mike to go back up to the questions and see if anybody had anything, any feedback, for the council on these questions that are up on your screen.

MR. HULL: Go ahead, James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. As far as the trip limits are concerned, I think that we would have to be getting into a situation where we were very quickly hitting our ACL, and, as a sidenote, I wanted to kind of put out there that, for the 2020 and 2021 fishing season, the commercial sector left about 400,000 pounds of product unharvested, and it's unclear yet whether that was due to the pandemic, but initial catch rates for the 2021/2022 season are -- They may be slightly better than last season, and so I just don't think that we really need to discuss trip limits in this fishery until we are hitting it early a couple of years in a row, and that's my thoughts on that.

MR. HULL: Well, it's your fishery, and your thoughts matter, and so responding now that trip limits may not be necessary, since not hitting ACL. The next question was what would be a reasonable trip limit, and we don't need that, and that's not applicable, since we don't think we need one. Then should there be a trip limit for a part-time fisherman? Would 500 or 400 pounds be appropriate? Then should there be a trip limit for multiday fishermen who operate dually-permitted vessels, South Atlantic and Gulf? There's two more questions. Should there be a trip limit for part-time fishermen? What say you, James?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, just thinking to our discussion earlier, when we were talking about number of permits in circulation and how these permits are being used, and what we're doing to help get new people into the fishery, and it might really hard if there were trip limits for part-time fishermen, and let's say somebody who is a schoolteacher and goes out and invests in an unlimited permit and a boat, and they're only able to fish maybe on the weekends, or in the summertime, and that might be very complicated, if we entertain something like this. Initially, I would be opposed to doing that for part-time fishermen, and I don't know. They still own the same access to the fishery as anybody else, and so they should probably be able to get their chunk, if they can. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I agree. As to the last question there, should there be a trip limit for multiday fishermen who operate dually-permitted vessels, what say you?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Again, I think that, since we're not hitting the ACL anywhere, that it's kind of a moot point. A lot of those trips on that graph, a lot of those 1,500-plus-pound trips, those are guys making trips from Key West to the Marquesas, and that's usually like a three-day turnaround, and the reason that they do that -- You can get away with a little bit smaller boats, and you don't have the same reporting criteria that you do with your Gulf permit, and the quality of the fish, on a shorter two or three-day trip, and if there's weather problems, but that's why you're seeing that 1,500-pound spike at the end of some of those graphs, and it's people making the most of a twenty-five-mile run, or something close to that, and so, once again, I think, if you make the commitment to spend two or three days on the water, you shouldn't have the same -- You shouldn't have a different set of rules than the guy who goes out every single day and only runs seven to ten miles. I think that's really not fair.

MR. HULL: Perfect. Thank you, James. I think that you've answered those questions about the yellowtail fishery. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy, and thank you, James. I appreciate all the input. That will do it for me.

MR. HULL: Okay. It looks like we got through yellowtail successfully, and, at this time, we're going to move on to golden tile.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, this might be a good time to take maybe a five-minute break. That will give us a chance to switch staff over and give folks a chance to use the restroom or grab a snack, if needed.

MR. HULL: Perfect. Okay. Let's take a little break. It's 2:23. Let's meet back here at 2:30. See you then.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: Roger, we're ready to go when you're ready to go.

MR. PUGLIESE: Good afternoon, everyone. Today, we're getting ready to start up on Snapper Grouper Amendment 52, and it's looking at catch level adjustments and allocations for golden tilefish. With golden tilefish, we go all the way back to SEDAR 4, where the first stock assessment was accomplished, and it showed that the stock was neither overfished nor overfishing at that time. Moving all the way on into SEDAR 25, the stock was found to be not overfished, but overfishing was occurring.

When there was an update to SEDAR 25 that occurred in 2016, the stock, at that time, was not overfished, but was undergoing overfishing, and that resulted in Snapper Grouper Amendment 28 being developed to provide the foundation for the allocations between sectors, the ACL that is in place now, and the step-down from the ABC to the ACL.

That brings us into where we are today and the accomplishment and completion of the latest stock assessment for golden tilefish, SEDAR 66, and, coming out of that assessment, we're showing both that the stock is neither overfished nor overfishing.

That moves us into why the council is moving forward with action for golden tilefish. The newest stock assessment has been completed, and the catch levels must be adjusted based on the recommendations from the SSC. The new assessment is using the revised recreational landings estimates, and so allocations must be revised, and the way the council has set it up is, whenever we review sector allocations, whenever a new assessment is completed, and consider modifications.

That brings us to what this amendment will accomplish, and the intent is to adopt new ABC and OFL recommendations to consider revising the total ACL and to revise the sector allocations, as well as the ACLs, and to establish management measures to constrain the harvest to revise catch levels in the South Atlantic, and, with that, what I will do is transition over to Chip, and he was going to run through the golden tilefish fishery overview.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Roger. All right, and I will go through this pretty quickly. Mike gave you a brief introduction on what these fishery descriptions look like with the red snapper. What you will have to do, Roger, is you will have to pull that tab out, and you'll have to separate the tabs, in order to show them both at one time, or you can just give me control.

This first page, the welcome page, really just gives you the highlights about what's included in this, and, if you go to the -- If you just go to that second tab there, what this is is it's a PDF of all the regulations related to golden tilefish, as well as regulations that affected all species, and you don't need to scroll through it, and I was just letting them know that, if they want to look for a specific regulation related to tilefish, or something that impacted the entire fishery, they can look through this history of management, and it should be present.

If you click on that fishery performance report, this is your fishery performance report from 2018, where you helped to describe the golden tilefish fishery, and so we're not going to go through this at all, and it's just there for your reference, if you would like to look at it, just to refresh your memory on what was said back in 2018, and, if you click on that last tab there, the graphs, this is where we get into the meat of the fishery overview.

This first tab looks at the results of the assessment, and so, if you scroll down just a little bit, so you can see that F plot, much like what Mike said, the fishing mortality plot is one of the bigger pieces of information coming out of the stock assessment. This indicates whether or not your stock is -- If your stock is experiencing overfishing or not, and, in this population, if you look at the last three years of the assessment, and you take an average of those three years, it is below that FMSY, indicating that the stock is not overfishing. It is about 95 percent of the FMSY, and so it is pretty close to that level, but it is not experiencing overfishing.

If you scroll down a bit more, to the biomass plot right below it, and then, if you look at this plot, this is the spawning stock biomass relative to the spawning stock biomass at MSY, and you can see it's slightly below the spawning stock biomass at MSY, but that's not how we actually evaluate the overfished condition. It would be relative to MSST, which is the minimum stock size threshold, and so this stock is neither overfished nor overfishing. There is other plots below this, and we don't need to go through them right now, if you want to see additional information.

If you scroll back up, we can go into projections. Here are a couple of different projection scenarios. If you scroll down to the top one, you can see what the catch levels were historically relative to what they will be based on the projections. In the solid blue line, that is historic catch levels, and that dotted line that is there is the start of the projection period, where they're having to use average landings, in between the end of the assessment and based on when management would go into place, and then, in the teal color there, that is the actual projections going forward. The gray line represents the overfishing limit, and then we have the yellow line, which represents the ABC recommended by the SSC.

You can see that, over the past few years, if you're looking at maybe 2019 to 2020, that looks about right in between those last two years that the projections are looking like there's not going to be much change going forward in the catch levels, although it is a little bit lower than it was maybe from 2010 to 2018.

If you scroll up, we can go into combined data, and the first plot is probably the only plot I will go over today, or we can potentially go into other ones, but looking at how the stocks have been managed relative to their ACLs, and these are percent ACLs, and we do have the allocation given there, in kind of the middle of the plot, the middle-left of the plot, where it indicates it's 97 percent commercial and 3 percent recreational.

You can see the blue line there is highly variable, and that is the recreational percent of the ACL that's being caught. In some years, it greatly exceeds the ACL, and, in other years, it doesn't get to the ACL, and the gray line represents the commercial fishery, and that bounces right around 100 percent, meaning it's constrained right around the ACL, since it's been established since around 2004.

We have additional plots in here, and ignore the 2019 point. I did not have finalized commercial data when I was making these plots and so ignore that, but you can see the overall landings in pounds, and you can see it's predominantly a commercial fishery. If you scroll down a bit further, this is the time period when landings generally occur. The commercial fishery generally occurs - - At least in the last decade, it's generally been occurring in the first part of the year, and that is when the longline fishery has been open, and they get over 75 percent of the commercial ACL. Then, if you look at where the landings are coming from, it's mainly a Florida/Georgia fishery, with some harvest occurring in South Carolina and North Carolina.

You can go into the commercial data, and I've covered it a little bit. Because this is so dominated by commercial fisheries, we've already covered quite a bit, and the first one is just the landings in the commercial fishery. Within the stock assessment, they did not report discards, because they were minimal, and so the discards are not provided for this fishery in this plot. If you scroll down, once again, this is the seasonal landings, and you can scroll further, and you can see state-specific landings for commercial.

We also have some length distribution provided, and there is minimal length distribution in the last few years, and then you can look at the overall catches by trip limit, or by trip, similar to how Myra had presented it for yellowtail snapper, and this looks at -- The top one is looking at the pounds landed by each different let's say bin size, and so we're binning these by hundred-pound trips, and so all trips within let's say 1,200 to 1,300 pounds would be summed up, and this would be the total landings. Then, if you scroll down, you can see the total number of trips that would account for that level of landings.

Then, for recreational data, this is a data-limited species, and so it's -- The recreational data is highly variable, and you can see that in the plots here. I do provide the landings in numbers of fish, because that's how they're tracked annually against their ACL, and I do provide releases, and that is provided through the MRIP program, and so that was incorporated, and you can see the seasonality of landings. It's highly sporadic, as would be expected with a data-limited species, even though the landings are generally somewhat constrained, or I guess they appear to be, at least in some years, towards the wintertime.

If you scroll down, it's different than the commercial fishery, and we do have what appears to be a change in where the recreational fishery was occurring. If you look at the early time series, from 2000 to about 2008, it appears most of the catch was coming from the Carolinas, and, since then, most of the catch has been coming from Florida.

I have the size distribution of golden tilefish that were reported through the MRIP program, and they're separated out by the mode, the charter boat mode and the private mode. This does not include length distribution from the headboat fishery, and then, finally, we have landings per angler, and so this isn't per vessel, and this is per angler. You can see, as regulations ratcheted down, you get a fewer and fewer number of golden tilefish landed per vessel, or landed per angler, and those regulations went into place, I believe, around 2010 to 2013.

Then, if you are a fish geek, like I am, we also have some of the age and growth information, starting with the length-at-age. You can see, for this fish, it's highly variable as you get up into older age classes, and then you can look at the length-weight relationship as well as the maturity.

You guys have discussed hermaphroditism for some other species, and this species is not a hermaphrodite, or at least on the Atlantic coast it has not been identified, and there has been discussion in the Gulf of Mexico of whether or not they are hermaphrodites over there. There are two stocks along the Atlantic coast, and they were originally differentiated using allozyme information, and I believe it's being reinvestigated now.

Then one other thing to talk about with golden tilefish is they do burrow. The males make burrows, and they will attract the females into them, and so they do have a very different behavior than normal fish, where they are typically in mud bottoms, where they are able to burrow into the ground. With that, that is a quick overview of tilefish. If you have any questions, please let me know.

MR. HULL: Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: The males, of course, get bigger, and so that's a good thing, that they make the bigger burrow to share with the female. One of the scenarios that I am looking at with these golden tilefish is I see what's up north, with that ITQ system, with the seven boats that predominate up there, and they only pay like 1 percent tax, is what it's got up to, but, as we're moving forward with golden tilefish, one of the things that bothers me is that, whether we're dealing with blueline tile or golden tilefish or snowy groupers or yellowedge grouper, anything that a recreational MRIP intercept might do, it multiplies into just a fantastically large number.

An example is some bluefish right in supposedly Florida state waters off of Miami a couple of years ago, in February, during the off-season, when we weren't supposed to have them, and one boat had one, and one boat had twenty-one, and it expanded to such an extraordinary number. This is problematic, and this deepwater stuff, anything offshore of the big ledge, should have a census and not an estimate based on an intercept that might happen or might not. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Rusty, thanks. Any other questions at this point? I don't see any other hands right now.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. I will go ahead and move on. What that does is bring us into the main things that have come out of the stock assessment and things to address. The ABC recommendations are shown for the years 2022 through 2026, and so the current ABC is 342,000 pounds gutted weight, and the ABC recommendations for 2022 would be 418,000 pounds, or 51,000 fish. The OFL recommendations that were developed for 2022 was 426,000 pounds gutted

weight, and that actually moved up to 573,000 pounds, with a landing number of fish at 70,000 pounds.

That brings us to what we're considering today of recommending catch levels and potential proposed actions, to look at adjusting catch levels, or the annual catch limit, and revising the annual optimum yield, new annual catch limits are needed because of the updated ABC and OFL recommendations that I just highlighted. The current total ACL, as noted earlier, is 342,000 pounds, and it's equal to the current ABC.

The original SSC recommendation on alternative methods for calculating ABC has pushed it to use a larger P*, and the more recent recommendation is really more in line with the standard application of the control rule. SEDAR 66 included the MRIP data, and a new ACL would be based on the SSC's recommended ABCs in the most assessment, and what that does is bring us to, given the total ACL may not exceed the SSC's ABC recommendation, what total ACLs or ACL-ABC buffers should be considered? I think we'll go through all of these, and I would assume go through everything, and then we'll come back to the overview and address these same questions.

MR. HULL: Roger, it's still hard to hear, and maybe just as loud as you can. You are a little bit hard to hear for me.

MR. PUGLIESE: Sorry about that. I've got it maxed out.

MS. BYRD: I'm not sure if you turned up the volume on the speakers or the microphone, but it may help if you do it on the microphone in the audio toolbar, but you may have already done that, and I just wanted to throw it out there.

MR. PUGLIESE: Let me double-check. Let me jump back in. The next is to look at revising the sector allocations, and sector allocations need to be revised due to the updated total ACL and changes in MRIP-FES data. The current allocation was established back in I think it was Snapper Grouper 28 has the recreational sector specified at 3 percent and the commercial sector at 97 percent. These allocation percentages were based on the formula of selecting the annual catch limit based on the mean landings from 2006 through 2008 times 50 percent and mean landings from 1986 through 2008 times 50 percent, and that established the dataset that was used.

The current commercial ACL is 331,740 pounds gutted weight, and the current recreational ACL is 2,316 fish. Applying the same allocation methodology to the data used in SEDAR 66, including recreational FES data, where applicable, would result in allocations of 96.7 and 3.3 percent for the commercial and recreational sectors, respectively. Then, ultimately, what we would be asking is are there additional allocation percentages that should be considered?

Beyond addressing the ACL establishments, or modifications, the opportunity to consider other changes in management, current regulations for the recreational sector, the season is basically a standard year season from January 1 through December 31, with the in-season closures that would occur once the ACL is met or projected to be met. The bag limits are part of the aggregate grouper limit, where you're at a limit of one golden tilefish per person per day with no size limit, and the gear requirements are really tied to the hooking requirement, the descending device requirements, as well as the use of non-stainless-steel hooks north of 28 degrees North. In addition, the sale of recreationally-caught fish is prohibited.

That moves us on to the current commercial regulations. Again, it's the same season, January 1 through December 31, with closures during the year, in-season. Trip limits, the longline trip limit is at 4,000 pounds gutted weight, and the hook-and-line trip limit is at 500 pounds gutted weight. There is no size limit, and, similar to the recreational, the dehooking tool requirements and descending device requirements as well as the non-stainless-steel hook north of 28 degrees.

The other area of consideration is looking at current recreational accountability measures, and these essentially are established where, if the ACL of 2,316 fish is exceeded, there would be a closure in the fishery, regardless of whether the stock is overfished, and that's essentially similar to the commercial accountability measures, which basically are an establishment of the hook-and-line landings, and, once those ACLs are exceeded, the in-season closures also, as well as the longline landings for golden tilefish, and you would have closures associated with those, once exceeded.

This gets to some of the numbers and potential options for looking at ACLs. The ACL -- The base would be ACL equals ABC, and, at that level, you have the new assessment that shows 418,000 pounds gutted weight. The two options beyond that would be a step-down from that, and ones that have been used in the past are 95 and 90 percent, and that would move it down to 397,100 pounds, or, at 90 percent, 376,200 pounds, but all of those still exceed the current total ACL of 342,000 pounds. In years past that, there's an increase all the way up to 2026, potentially going up to 466,000 pounds, and, even at the ACL of 90 percent at that stage, you're already up to 419,400 pounds.

Now, revising the sector allocations, the current allocation of 97 percent commercial and 3 percent recreational, the commercial numbers are at 331,740 pounds and recreational at 2,316 fish. If you use the current percentages and apply them to the total ACL, with the revised ABC, what you end up with is commercial at 405,416 and the recreational at 2,831 fish. Looking at the numbers here, you see the change over time from the ACL equals ABC at 418,000 pounds, going all the way down to 376,200 pounds at 90 percent, and it steps down, and 97 is the 405,460 for commercial and 2,831 for recreational.

Moving forward to revising the allocation based on the same formula that was used, the commercial allocation, as mentioned previously, would end up being 96.7 percent and recreational at 3.3 percent, and those translate into a commercial allocation of 404,206 pounds gutted weight and a recreational increase up to 3,111 fish, and you see this translated here then with some potential additional options, if you want to look at step-down from the ABC equals ACL, as the numbers as mentioned. If you drop down all the way to 90 percent, you would go from the 418,000 down to 376,200 pounds, and then it would also move down on numbers of fish for the recreational from 3,114 down to 2,802.

That gives you the range of the ACLs, all of the different actions, et cetera, that are being considered, and we can move into getting member input on some initial guidance as we move forward with this amendment.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Roger. I have some hands raised. Randy, you're recognized.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, I'm sorry, but I couldn't hear him, and I still can barely hear him, but I sent a message, and so take my hand down.

MR. HULL: Okay, Randy. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Roger, I have a question with regard to what is the current OFL compared to the current total ABC/ACL versus what the new OFL would be, in comparison to those same two numbers, because I think a lot of us would like to see ACL equal ABC, and that would be a motion that I would be glad to make, but I would like to know what the buffer is between OFL, and I always heard that it was fairly large.

MR. PUGLIESE: I'm going to jump to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. I'm looking at SEDAR 66, and they have a table in there indicating the past levels, and I am looking for the OFL limits, and so it would have been 560,000 pounds was the previous OFL, and Roger had presented the previous ABC, if you go to that slide that's shortly after this, and I think it might be Slide 9. The current ACL is 342,000, compared to that 560,000.

Now, if you go to the next slide, all those values are provided right here, Rusty. I think, if you continue to go down, you have more information on the annual ABC, but you had talked about the buffer between the OFL and the ABC, and you're right that there was a very large buffer in the previous stock assessment from the update of SEDAR 25 from 2016, and one of the reasons for that is there was a large difference between the --

There was a large range of uncertainty in the natural mortality estimate, based on new techniques, and they reduced the overall range of uncertainty associated with that natural mortality estimate, and, therefore, the buffer decreased quite a bit, and, if you look at that fishery overview tool, and I know Roger doesn't have it pulled up right now, but it is much smaller than it was before, and I think it was around a 40 percent buffer from previous values, and it's nowhere near that case right now. Sorry that I don't have exact numbers for you, Rusty, but we could get those for you, and I will email them to you.

MR. HUDSON: That would be fantastic, Chip, because it would be nice to know. You know, a special recreational permit for offshore of the big ledge, for these rare-event private recreational intercepts, would be very useful, and the amount of animals per animal, two-thousand-whatever-three-hundred-and-sixteen, currently, jumping up about another 500 fish -- I mean, that way, the private recreational that mostly fishes that, probably with deep drops and whatever, would have a better ability to show exactly what they catch, and that could be useful in future stock assessments, and so I wanted to say that.

I would like to make a motion to be able to -- Let's see how I want to do this. Personally, I would like to stay with the current distribution, although the 3 percent -- Three-tenths of a percent difference might not be that much, under the circumstances, particularly if we reduce the buffer between the OFL, and so, on a motion, on being able to go forward with the acceptable ACL equals ABC, we like that. I don't think we need a buffer, after we've had such a big buffer on the OFL, and I'm just saying. Thank you.

MR. HULL: **Okay, and we have a motion being made, being written, and the motion is to recommend that the council make ABC equal to ACL. Recommend that the council set the total ACL equal to the updated ABC.** Does that reflect what you wanted there, Rusty?

MR. HUDSON: Yes, it does. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Vincent, did you want to second that motion?

MR. BONURA: Yes, and I was going to go with Rusty on the retaining the allocations as-is.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so you didn't want to second this motion?

MR. BONURA: I thought he had that included in this motion, to retain the allocation for recreational and commercial.

MR. HULL: No, that's not in there, and this hasn't been seconded. Rusty, do you want to --

MR. HUDSON: It was a remark, and it would be nice, if it makes it cleaner, to put it all together. Thank you, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Yes, you've got it.

MR. HULL: Go ahead and tell Mike what you want to have there.

MR. HUDSON: **Well, we have the -- There we go, the 97/3.**

MR. HULL: **Retain the current sector allocations.** Okay. **The motion reads: Recommend that the council set the total ACL equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations.** Now, do we have a second on the motion? I see Vincent's name still up there and Chris.

MR. BONURA: This would add the 80,000 extra pounds, but keep the allocations as they are, at the 97/3, and is that correct?

MR. HULL: Correct.

MR. BONURA: Okay. Yes, that sounds good.

MR. HULL: Okay, and you seconded it. I see Chris's hand up also, and so we can have further discussion now, before we vote on it. Chris, you're up.

MR. MILITELLO: I was going to second, but I'll be third, I guess.

MR. HULL: Okay. We have multiple seconds. All right. Any further discussion on this? All right. I will read the motion one more time. **Set the total ACL equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish. Is anyone opposed to this? Raise your hand. I see no hands, and the motion passes unanimously.** Now back to staff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Roger, if you want me to, I can just scroll to the questions within the document.

MR. PUGLIESE: That's fine.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and I think that motion kind of addressed some of these, or at least provided a recommendation on the allocations that are desired, and so I don't know that there is anything further for this question, Jimmy, or just move on down?

MR. HULL: I would just move on down to the recreational sector.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: These questions would address management or accountability measures other than changing the total ACL and the sector allocations, and if there are any comments related to these.

MR. HULL: David Moss, you're up.

MR. MOSS: Thank you, Jimmy. I mean, I'm fine with keeping the ACLs and everything the way they are, but I just wanted to make comment that this particular fishery is -- Rusty said it at the very beginning, but this is one that just absolutely needs to have a census rather than an estimate, and I know -- I want to say it was the second wave, or something like that, of last year, that they showed zero intercepts, and I can tell you that that's not the case. Well, I'm sure it's the case that there were zero intercepts, but I can tell you that it's not the case that there were zero fish caught, and it's very accessible, especially down here, and then, if you fill in all the new technology and the high-speed boats and blah, blah, blah, it's going to get overfished in a hurry, and we really need to pay close attention to it, if it's not overfished already.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so that's kind of a recommendation. I think the AP, in the past, has made the recommendation to the council that they develop a deepwater fishery stamp, or something, to identify the deepwater snapper grouper fishery for the private recreational sector, and maybe somebody wants to make a motion to that effect again. Chris, you're up.

MR. MILITELLO: I just wanted to back up what David just said. I mean, in Palm Beach, it's no problem to catch them here. I mean, not no problem, but you can get a little Daiwa reel and catch three or four of them, for sure, five or seven miles offshore, and we're into them here, and so nobody really knows who is getting them and who is not getting them. That would be it.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that is the problem with the recreational sector not having some type of licensing or permitting or stamping or something. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: The shelf is a lot closer, as he said, down to the south and east. I used to fish down there, and there were some nice fish, and you've got a lot of current, but, once you start getting to Fort Pierce north, you're going to get in -- You have to have the mud bottom for these golden tile, and so I like the idea of finding a way to narrow down the private recreational so that there is a real census of what they're doing with the deepwater species offshore of the big ledge, from down there all the way up to Carolina, because I used to fish golden tile right on up to North Carolina, but you have to be a long ways offshore, once you're getting up that way.

Down there in southeast Florida, that's different, and I really hate it when I see an intercept multiply into some kind of unbelievable number, and so I think a recommendation of a vote on trying to be able to get the census would be useful at this time. Can I make a motion to that effect, or it's already there on the board, and I would like to support it.

MR. HULL: You can make a motion. That's not a motion at this time. That's just a note, a bullet point, answering the question. If you would like to make a motion, you can certainly make a motion.

MR. HUDSON: **I would like to make the motion that the recreational, private recreational, have a census.** In other words, some type of stamp, some type of way, to identify who we are, and then they have to report, so that they can help the stock assessment in the future, because, if we have those numbers, that's going to be a good day in the next stock assessment. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. **The motion reads: Recommend that the private recreational component have a census.** For deepwater? Do you want to add for deepwater?

MR. HUDSON: **Deep water, offshore of the big ledge.** In other words, we're talking 220 just for snowy grouper and blueline tile, and then you move on out there to the 450, to the 900 foot, and then you're going to get into that golden tile component in that mud, as long as you've got the mud. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. So we have that in the motion now. Is someone willing to second the motion? I do see a couple of names, and they may have already been there, but do either one of you want to second this motion, Tony or Bob?

MR. LORENZ: I will second this motion.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you, Bob. Now we're going to go right into further discussion. Tony, you're first on the list. Go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: That kind of worked out. I was going to elaborate on this, and, like Rusty was saying, in our South Carolina fisheries, there's not a whole lot of people going after them. They're very deep, and my son-in-law probably catches more of them than I have seen anybody, and he runs out to 400 to 900 feet for them once in a while.

We have spoke, in the past, if I'm not mistaken, about an app that the recreational angler could use, and, now, that could coincide with a permit, that you say buy a permit, and then you go to an app that was created, and it seems to me like the council was in the process of creating something like that. I know you do on the commercial side, but then the recreational fishermen could actually have that app with the species and plug it in, and it might work.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. That's a great point. If we can get them to do the first step, then we can probably recommend the reporting app, which he's putting up there now. Of course, we all know what the first step is. David, you're up.

MR. MOSS: I think Bob was actually ahead of me, if he wants to go.

MR. LORENZ: David, I will, and mine is quite simple, and I would just like to advocate asking the recreational fishermen to support this motion of Rusty's, and there are good reasons for this in fisheries management. We get burned periodically, from time to time, on these fisheries that have a low participation rate, either due to nobody knowing who they are or being in deep water like this, and we did have something near and dear to me earlier, where an MRIP intercept, one or two, gets extrapolated, but it seriously impacts the management measures they want to put in place, and it would have negatively affected our recreational fishery. There was a case, five or six years ago, with hog snapper, and one or two intercepts made it look like there were a bunch of them, and so I certainly ask for support for this motion.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Bob. David.

MR. MOSS: Thank you. I was just going to respond to the app thing. There is no shortage of apps out there, and the council has worked on a scamp release app, and they've worked with MyFishCount, and they've got a new app coming out actually soon, I believe, and I might be speaking out of turn, but a general release app, but it's more focused on shallow-water grouper. That's not the issue. The apps and the capability are there, but it's getting people to use them, whether it's mandatory or voluntary, and it doesn't matter. I mean, it does, and, obviously, it should be mandatory, in my opinion, but it's getting people to actually use them consistently, and that's the issue.

MR. HULL: Yes, sir. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: To David's point, I personally have an iPhone, and I do not use Siri, and my wife gets all upset with me, and I believe that there's a lot of people that won't use the apps to report, and that's why we need, in my mind, to see some type of census, so that the people that are going out there and legally fishing already are known who they are, and they then can provide the information, as reporting, and that would be so good, and you're only talking 2,800, or 2,300, whatever it is currently, and then what it could become.

It's just a thought that this will help the stock assessments for golden tile, and any other deepwater animals, like snowy and stuff, and believe me that there's a lot more animals out there than people want to give credit for. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. I see no other hands for comment. Let's have a vote. **The motion reads: Recommend that the private recreational component have a census method of reporting deepwater catch.** It's sweet and simple. Okay. **Is anybody opposed to this? Raise your hand. No one is opposed, and the motion carries unanimously.** Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy. I guess the last question is whether -- Just kind of touching back on the questions at the top of the page, and is there anything else that the AP wants to comment on related to management or accountability measure changes for the golden tile fishery?

MR. HULL: Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: The accountability measures are already easy for our commercial, because, you know, we do a census. Once you get the AMs in place with a census for the private rec that wants to do the deepwater stuff, that small group of people will probably appreciate that, because then

they don't get slammed the following year, and they actually have more real-time data, instead of having to wait a half-a-year, or a year, to really know what's going on. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I've had a few calls and recommendations from a couple of the hook-and-line fishermen, that they were looking to change the seasons of the hook-and-line to be not in the same time as the golden tile longline endorsement holders, and I guess they had recommendations of September and October or after the longline closes, and I have heard a couple of people that were looking into a hook-and-line endorsement as well. Then one more thing the council could look into is if anyone has any ways to extend out the golden tile longline, if anyone has any ideas or options for that.

MR. HULL: Okay. He's put that up there in a bullet, Vincent. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Our longline is coming in right around 97 percent this year, and the bandit reel commercial guys are 99 percent this year, and we have the census, and they do have the ability to have them locked down, but, as we get a bigger biomass, and a little bit larger allocation, and get rid of that buffer between the OFL and the ABC -- Quite honestly, our longline could extend further into the future, and so you don't want to be shoving your season all into the worst weather that there is in late fall. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you, Rusty. Any other conversation here? I see Karla Gore.

MS. GORE: Sorry. That was a mistake. I didn't mean to raise my hand.

MR. HULL: Okay. Rusty, is your hand still up?

MR. HUDSON: I thought someone lowered it. Never mind.

MR. HULL: Okay. So I don't see any other hands. Mike, it looks like we're ready to go back to you. Never mind. Vincent is there now. Go ahead, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I had in there too, before, and I guess another bullet point would be to figure out how to extend out the golden tile longline. I'm not sure how to do that, but, I mean, a quarter-million pounds of fish on the market here in one month, and hook-and-line fish that are also there, and it's kind of not -- I mean, you get flooded out, and the market gets flooded, and the prices drop, and you're fishing in January and February, when the weather is bad, and it kind of has its issues there, where people are going fishing when it isn't very good for the boats or the crew or -- You know, it's a tough thing going on there, with everyone just racing for the fish, and, if we could figure out how to extend it out or make it more reasonable for everybody.

MR. HULL: I think he's got that in there.

MR. BONURA: You've got that in there? I mean, ITQ and IFQ and all that is a bad talk, and everyone thinks that, but that also could be a good thing for this fishery, possibly.

MR. HULL: Well, why don't you have them put, right there, possible IFQ fishery?

MR. BONURA: That, or, if they could figure out another way to do it, and I guess reducing the trip limit is not a very good idea, but all the guys I've talked to are not into reducing the trip limit.

MR. HULL: No, because they have talked about this amongst the, what it is, twenty-some-odd -- Whatever the number is of longline endorsements.

MR. BONURA: There are twenty-two endorsement holders, is what we have currently.

MR. HULL: Yes, and so it would kind of be up to them to chime-in on this, and you must be one of them. Okay. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, and keep in mind the twenty-three endorsements became twenty-two, and we're dealing with a January 1 start date, and it's called the white-meat fishery, when we don't have shallow-water grouper. We have a trip limit, and we're very happy with that trip limit. We don't want to go lower.

In fact, once the quota starts going up, when it reflects the science that the stock is a lot healthier, then that will extend this out, and that's really what we need, is better science, because there are lots of places that are unfished, and it's just the reality of getting further and further offshore, and you get more of the area north of Port Canaveral and north of Ponce Inlet, et cetera, and so I have fished a lot of golden tilefish, bottom longline and bandit, back in the early 1970s et cetera. I think we should leave well enough alone, with regard to the commercial, at this moment. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Very good. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy. Looking at the time, we were scheduled today through 4:00, and I don't know how deep we could really get into snowy grouper. One thing that we could do, if it's okay with you, is that we could move vermilion snapper up into this last little thirty-minute slot, because that should be a quicker discussion, and that's just reviewing -- You guys taking another look at recommendations that you've already made and saying whether you stand by them or want to amend them a little bit, and, that way, we can address gag first thing tomorrow, followed by snowy, and then the updates. Is that something that would work for you, schedule-wise?

MR. HULL: It works perfect for me. Let's do it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. I will switch gears, and we can maybe do like a five-minute break, so I can get the right stuff on the screen, and then we'll finish up the day.

MR. HULL: Right on. Okay, guys, and so it's 3:32 now, and so 3:40. I will see you all back in about eight minutes.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: Okay. It's 3:40. We don't have a lot of time, and hopefully we can at least get well into this, and, if we have to finish it off tomorrow morning, quickly, we can, and so I think we ought to go ahead and get started, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. This is an item that came before the AP in April, and it's something that you all provided recommendations on, and I will get to those in a second. Just as a reminder, the vermilion snapper commercial trip limit was temporarily changed, through an emergency action that went into effect on September 17 of 2020, and it ended on March 16 of 2021. This emergency action increased the commercial trip limit from 1,000 pounds gutted weight to 1,500 pounds gutted weight during that time.

The question was raised of whether this increase from 1,000 to 1,500 should be considered as something long-term for the fishery, and so, scrolling down to kind of the historic landings you have in the document that's in your briefing materials, the information about the catch history for the commercial fishery, the commercial landings, with respect to the ACLs, going back over time, and the comments that were provided by the AP from the last time -- There were only a few, but there was the comment that the distances traveled to the fishing grounds for vermilion can be forty to sixty miles in some areas, particularly off the Carolinas.

A larger trip limit could make trips more efficient, and there was a desire from the AP that, if the council considers increasing the trip limit, that they should consider reestablishing the step-down, and there is a suggestion there for a 1,000-pound limit at 50 percent and a 500-pound limit at 75 percent of the seasonal quota, but that was what was put forward.

This information was presented to the council, and we'll talk a bit more about gag grouper tomorrow, but just kind of indicating the reason why the council is kind of double-checking with the AP on their recommendation is because we have the information about red snapper, that it's been recommended for a significant reduction in the ACL, and we have the information for gag grouper, that gag grouper is overfished and overfishing is occurring, and is going to need to go into rebuilding, and gag grouper is required to rebuild within ten years. It is able to be rebuilt in less than ten, and, therefore, we're under a requirement from Magnuson that our rebuilding plan takes no longer than ten years.

That means that the reduction that happens for gag grouper can't be spread out in the same way like say red snapper or red porgy, where it's over -- I think red porgy was twenty-six years is being talked about for that species. With red snapper, the rebuilding plan that we're currently in goes out to 2044, and it can't be spread out over that time, and that reduction is going to have to be taken within that ten-year timeframe, and so it will be a significant reduction in gag grouper.

I don't want to turn this into the gag grouper talk, because we'll do that tomorrow morning, but that's just setting the context that the council was operating on of, well, we know that these reductions to these fisheries are coming, and so, with that being the case, and with the potential for an increased trip limit to shorten the season for vermilion snapper, they came back with these questions of whether the AP still recommends having the increased trip limit, whether the AP still recommends having the step-down, in the way that they've described there, or if they would like to have the current trip limit with no step-down or an increased trip limit with no step-down, and so whether the AP wants to keep that recommendation.

Then, if the AP wants something to change in the vermilion fishery, how high of a priority is that? There are a lot of -- As you saw when Jessica presented kind of those intro slides, there are a lot of projects going on right now in snapper grouper management, and, if we're going to take on

vermilion snapper, and if we're going to do it in a timely fashion, then other things are going to need to get reshuffled or dropped.

If the AP wants a change to how vermilion snapper is managed, how high of a priority should that be? How quickly would you be hoping for such a change to occur, and then just commenting that, if you all want a change in vermilion snapper management, commenting on the potential benefits and risks and your preferences of having either a longer season or having a higher trip limit, and this can be demographic-specific to different areas or different portions of the commercial fishery, and so that's all I have for an intro, Jimmy, and I will take notes as folks need them and answer questions, as needed.

MR. HULL: All right. Thank you, Mike. I will start in by commenting how important the vermilion snapper fishery currently is, and has been, and how important it's going to be in the future, and that it's been a success. It has been managed successfully. On the commercial side, we've done a lot of management, and I believe it's been successful. As far as the emergency rule, the 1,500 pounds, that was put in place because of the pandemic, and nobody was able to get out and get crew, and so we were trying to harvest as much ACL as we could to provide food.

I think, currently, we're back to a thousand-pound trip limit, and I think that's a good place to be, but I do agree that we should have step-downs. That's my point of view, and I am good with -- Even if, for some reason, they wanted to keep the 1,500 pounds, you still need to have step-downs, and so that's where I'm at on it, and we'll see what other people think, but it's been a successful fishery. We have good current management in place, and I don't think that it's the highest priority, as the council asked, that they need to something crazy immediately, but I believe that step-downs are a really good idea, because this fishery is going to become very, very vital, even more so than it is now, and so those are my comments. Randy.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, I definitely agree with you, and I did not like that 1,500-pound trip limit. I know, for us up here, even that -- The ten-box is perfectly fine, and I think it's worked out good. We don't catch just the vermilion snapper, and you're going to have the triggerfish, and you're going to have grunts along with it, and I think we should definitely go back to the way it was and have a step-down to 750 at about 50 percent and then go to 500 after 75 percent is met.

The worst thing in the world is to ask people to sit at the dock, and, with all these other things we're facing, I just can't see anybody would want to hurry up and have it fished out and then have to sit at the dock. If all the stuff goes through with gag, there's just nothing else to fish for, and so it's too important to not go back and just keep it at a thousand pounds and definitely put the step-down in. That's it.

MR. HULL: Right on. Thank you. Tony, go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: Jimmy, I agree with what you said. I agree with the thousand pounds, and I also agreed that the 1,500 pounds was a good thing last year, as well as the step-downs. We have a good management program, and we need to keep it, and something else to think about, like we're saying, is, as many things that are going on in these snapper grouper, and the private sector is going to pound this fish, if something else is taken away, and so, I mean, I realize that's their sector, but we have to watch the species for that alone. That's all.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Jack.

MR. COX: I never understood the purpose of the 1,500-pound emergency increase anyway, and we had the best year that we ever had because of the pandemic, and I don't know it affected other people, but fishermen got the highest prices they've ever seen for vermilion, and we're paying in the neighborhood of \$4.50 to \$5.00 on vermilion, but, back to this, I think we need to stay at the 1,000, and I think you're going to see more increase in pressure on it, as fisheries are trying to rebuild, and the step-downs are extremely important. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Everybody so far -- I mean, does someone want to make a motion, as far as -- If we do that, then we're asking the council to do something right now, which it sounds like they've got enough to do, and so the fishery is actually being managed pretty well right now, but at least they see, in the future, when they get time, that they ought to consider putting in some step-downs, and so maybe we just leave that alone without a motion. Okay. Any other further comment? Jack, go ahead, sir. I just saw your hand, and maybe it's a mistake.

MR. COX: Okay. Yes.

MR. HULL: Then back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, if what's shown on the screen is the way folks feel, and there's no objection to that, kind of the take-away here is that it's not a high priority to change anything for the vermilion fishery right now, and so that would keep the 1,000 pounds in place, but there is a desire to put the step-down back in, and it's just not placed as a higher priority than some of the other things going on in snapper grouper, and does that seem like an accurate summary?

MR. HULL: I think it is, and we all feel that the current management has been doing a good job, and we feel that it's successful as-is, and it's not a high priority to mess with it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Well, then that is all that I need for the vermilion snapper item, and so we're done with that. Coming back to the agenda, I will just point out what we still have to cover, because I know we've done a lot of bouncing around in this meeting, but the thought process is for us to do gag grouper first thing tomorrow morning, and then we'll do snowy, and then we have our updates before we adjourn at noon, but I think we're all set for today.

MR. HULL: I think we're doing real good, and I am surprised at how well we're getting through this, but that's because we have really good AP members, and good staff, and so all right. If that's it, that's it, and 9:00 tomorrow morning, and we're going to wrap this up tomorrow morning at 9:00. We'll see everybody then. Have a great night.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 20, 2021.)

OCTOBER 21, 2021

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar on October 21, 2021, and was called to order by Mr. Jimmy Hull.

MR. HULL: Good morning, Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel members. Welcome back to the last session of this version of the Snapper Grouper AP meeting. We're moving along pretty good. I wanted to -- Before we jump into gag, I was thinking about our discussions yesterday, and I wanted to revisit, for clarification, a most important issue, which is the discard reduction for the snapper grouper fishery, and I only want to take ten minutes on this, and so, if we get further than that, then we'll have to carry this discussion to the council, at the council meeting or something like that, or offline, because, right now, discards, due to effort, are one of the most important things that the council has to tackle and we have to tackle, is these dead discard fisheries that we're developing.

It's due to effort, and the only way to reduce discards looks like it's due to effort, especially on the private recreational sector. You know, they have an ever-growing unlimited access to stocks that are, frankly, dwindling, and we have stated -- What I heard is that we don't think that gear modifications, slot limits, size limits, spatial and time closures, are going to work, as far as a regulation, and we think that best practices we talked about, and we did agree that licensing and permitting and a census, some way to identify the private recreational sector, was something we can all agree on, and we think that should happen, and we've said that for a long time, and we continue to say it.

All of these other short-term measures that the council is thinking about to do in a quick framework, the ideas that we threw at them, and then they threw back at us some more, and we just don't think that they're going to work and help. You know, this is the 800-pound gorilla in the room, and we have to tackle this somehow, and somebody is going to have to tackle it. We did agree that, also, we thought, from my recollection, that artificial reef production would help, by enhancing habitat and growing the habitat, so that it would handle the increased effort, and that's something that we said too, and that will take a long time.

The one thing that I did hear that I thought that I would like clarification on was that we don't want to reduce private recreational effort. I heard that statement made, and I want to make sure that that's how you really feel, that we don't think -- That we don't want to reduce private recreational effort, and we just want to continue to let it go and that it should be uncontrolled, and so I guess I will stop right there, so that we can get right to the meat.

Is that how the AP feels? Is that how we feel? Is that the message that we want to send to the council, that we don't want to reduce private recreational effort that is causing dead discard fisheries, such as red snapper, and eventually, if left unchecked, will probably close and destroy the entire snapper grouper complex, if it continues to grow? That's what I wanted to clarify, and we've only got a few minutes, and so please make it short and sweet. Bob, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. For any of the recreational fishermen on the committee, I would like you all, at least in the next six months, to think deeply and hard about what Jimmy mentioned and what we do -- It's an ever-exploding number of us that is not really in control, and my concern is not in the document, and I kind of just wish everybody -- I am rolling back out of

this, and I'm aging out of offshore fishing in an area where you have to go forty or fifty miles, but others are coming in, and I hope that they enjoy that, and so I would like everybody that is a recreational fisherman to really think deep and hard about it.

One thing I will bring up is we continually have talked up at least the recreational license, or a registry, to try to know who is out there, and maybe some minimal reporting, and you heard me state it yesterday, and I am dedicated in this, in my mind, and my mind is made up, that it will not happen from our suggestions from the AP, and so some of you own a business, and I know Jimmy does, and many of you have been in management in large systems, and you know there is two ways to run things and to advance a business or an operation.

There is top-down, where enlightened leadership tells you what to do and the staff steps in place and does it, and that's often the most common way that things are done. Sometimes, and occasionally, very enlightened organizations can go bottom-up. You can get a suggestion from the bottom, and you can implement something like from the AP, and I am convinced, and I'm in my last term here on this AP, that a license and an accounting for the recreational sector, at least the private, will not occur during the time I am still on this AP. I would like to see us move somewhere towards it, and I think what ultimately is going to need -- The bottom-up of us recommending to the council, and wherever the council takes it, and it just kind of sits there, and they're not sure what to do, because it pushes into NMFS.

For some reason, it will not be executed, and I don't feel that we can give them and NOAA a job and they will do it, and I don't think it's going to happen, and so, at the very least, and I've been a little long-winded here, what I would like to suggest is, at an appropriate time, I would like to make the motion, because -- In fact, I will tell you, and I don't think any recreational NGO is going to take this on and say license us, license our people, because I think it's going to be very argumentative among private recreational anglers, and then we're going to have the charter and for-hire section weigh-in, which historically has said put the burden on the individual versus on them.

I would love to see, and I may make a motion later, but I would like to see, at this point, just to get started, would the council consider doing a polling of the recreational anglers, a very considerable poll, in the South Atlantic, the individuals, and not through NGOs and things, but the individuals, to see what their acceptance would potentially be of being licensed or registered, because that's the first start.

I would just love to see how many of us there are and get that first documentation down, but take a poll of who would go for this, potentially, licensing the private recreational anglers, and I have a funny feeling that it's going to be a 50/50 battle, and that's the reason why, even if it is introduced, it will never go, and maybe that's why we haven't been able to bring this in the nine or twelve years that this thing --

MR. HULL: Bob, thank you. That's what I wanted to hear, is some recommendations like that, and that's something new, to poll the anglers, and I like that. Obviously, we all want the license and reporting, and we've said that for a long time. What that usually leads to is some type of limited entry to control it, and so that's the first step, but I like the poll. I've got to move quicker here, and so try to get your bullet point in there quickly.

MR. LORENZ: It's done, Jimmy. Thank you very much.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Bob. I really appreciate that, but the question is -- We've stated that we don't want -- The statement was made that we don't want to reduce private recreational effort, and so is that true? If it's not true, then what do we need to do to do it, and so just some recommendations quickly. We can -- This isn't going to happen instantly, and we can talk about this, and we're going to have in-person meetings soon, and this is a great time to discuss these things, but, Randy, go.

MR. MCKINLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. I mean, for North Carolina up here, I'm telling you that, if -- All these things are good, and even the recreational license polling, and none of it is going to matter if there's no enforcement.

There's some bad players out there, and I see it every day that I'm on the water, and I talk to all these people recreational, and there's a lot of them that they don't care, and they're catching Americans, and they're keeping them, and they don't care about the one gag per person, and they're keeping them, and, no matter what we do with the gag situation -- You could give them a one-week season, and it doesn't matter, because they're going to catch them year-round when they come out. North Carolina Marine Fisheries has no teeth whatsoever, and all these things, no matter what we do and we come up with, if there's not enforcement, and not some people made examples of, it's not going to matter, and our stocks aren't going to be rebuilt, and that's what I've got to say.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you, Randy. I see better enforcement to make any license matter at all, or any type of closure or anything. Okay. We've got to keep it quick, guys, please. Thank you. David. David Moss, are you there? I will come back to you, David. Jack.

MR. MOSS: Can you hear me, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: Yes, I hear you now, David. Go ahead.

MR. MOSS: Sorry about that. I mean this with all respect, but you oversimplified this a lot in your opening statements, in that the discussion yesterday wasn't that we don't think that effort is an issue. Effort is absolutely an issue, at least from my -- I shouldn't say "we", and I should say "me". I think that effort is absolutely an issue. However, curbing effort I don't think is going to be the solution, and I don't think it's realistic.

I do think, and I will hold up a couple of species as the prime examples of how we just need to be better stewards of our resource, and the two examples that I will hold up, especially for south Florida, are sailfish and tarpon. Sailfish and tarpon stocks are better than they've been since I've been fishing anyway, and it's perfectly legal to keep it, and obviously you have to have a license to keep either of them, but it's perfectly legal to keep either of them, but we've kind of become our own police amongst the anglers. If somebody is bringing home a sailfish or something like that, they get lambasted that there's really no good reason to do it, and we just need to be better stewards about it.

It's very difficult for me, as a recreational fisherman, to hear that we're going to curb, in some way, shape, or form, access to a public resource like this, and I shouldn't even say "curb access",

but eliminate access and stop more people from coming in, and there's more people fishing for sailfish now than there has ever been as well, and the same thing for tarpon, and yet both of those stocks are thriving and have done better now than they have in recent memory. I do think that --

MR. HULL: We're losing you, David. Are you there? We've lost you now, and so, if you can hear me, write this down and send it in, because you've completely -- You're not on anymore. Okay. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Good morning. I want to say that I agree with everything that Randy said, that enforcement is a huge issue in North Carolina, and we continue to see, no matter what laws that the council puts in place and how hard we work, to have a sustainable fishery, we're not getting support from the law enforcement, federal or state, and I don't know what's going on, but we see it non-stop.

Listen, and, in 1992, we determined how many participants there was in the commercial fishery, and we talked about that. In 1998, we realized we had too many, and we put a defined number on it, and we said this is what we have, and we can't support any more than that, and then we started consolidating, and we went with the two-for-one, and there were losers and there were winners, unfortunately, and that was twenty-three years ago that we've been doing this, and I advocated to continue to still do it, to be a steward of the resource and to say that I think, on the commercial side, that we could continue to take a little bit down to a lower level.

I am standing up and doing the right thing here. We have a resource that cannot handle the amount of pressure that is being put on it, and it's time for the recreational sector, the private recreational sector, to do what I'm doing, and I'm just frustrated. I've been doing this for twenty-three years, because I was told to do, or because I was asked to do it, and it just frustrates me, because the resource -- We're not talking about sailfish, and we're not talking about these other species, and we're talking about snapper grouper that takes many, many years to grow, and somehow, in some way, we have said, over and over, to the council, that they have got to get -- They have got to figure out how many recreational participants are in this fishery, and they won't do it, and we've been asking this for a long time, and that's why I'm frustrated in being on the AP, because they won't do it.

It's going to have to be done with a license. Now, if I go out and I break the law, and I'm a commercial fisherman, my license can be taken away from me, and I have something to lose, and they have nothing to lose, other than getting a violation, and so, when you have something to lose, and you have a license, you think about it a little bit more, when you're looking at a violation. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Let's keep this as tight as we can. Give your thought, and let's move quick. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I hear a lot out there that I agree with, and, as a recreational angler, charter/for-hire, as well as I own a tackle shop, I really don't like seeing anything closed, and I think taking things away from a public resource is not the way to manage. I do agree that we need to do a recreational license, and let's say that we charge \$25.00 for it, and those funds go directly to the management of grouper snapper, and I also think that -- I heard the words "polling people", and I think Bob was talking about it, at the gate.

It is a little easier to get the public to get onboard when you at least give them a heads-up before you shove a new license down their throat, but we could easily petition each state to get the saltwater licenses that are purchased, and so, right there, it gives you your database of people to poll.

I know it's a simple thing to ask South Carolina DNR to give you their saltwater licenses, and they come up right away. Poll those people, and ask them what they think, and tell them it's imminent, and then, in a month or two, or six months, you could put a saltwater license into place, but to close it, I just can't say -- Or try to deter somebody from a public access, it just isn't right. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Dick.

MR. BRAME: Good morning, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Good morning, sir. It's good to hear from you.

MR. BRAME: I beg to differ with how you're characterizing the recreational fishery. You're thinking of it like a commercial fishery, where you limit effort and you limit the number of people who get into the fishery, and the way you limit effort in the recreational fishery is with seasons, bag, and size limits. That's what works, and so you're not going to get people to agree, I don't think, to decide who gets to go fishing and who doesn't. You can have open access, but you can limit effort by having a season or a size or bag limit.

MR. HULL: Okay, Dick. Thank you for that, and the difference, of course, with seasons is we have seasons for the recreational sector, and you have a red snapper season of three days, yet we have two-million pounds of recreational animals that are discarded, and so that's really not controlling the fishery, because, in the snapper grouper fishery, it's different. You put a baited hook down, and you're going to access all these things, and it's just a very difficult situation, but thank you for that. James, you're up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. You know, I agree strongly with Randy and Jack about enforcement. You know, we can go round-and-round about that all day, but I just wanted to put that out there. Something else that I think might be useful overall here is to further educate the general population when it comes to the state of the fishery.

I think that most fishermen may not understand how delicate the balance is to really manage this fishery between the recreational and commercial sectors and to keep everybody viable and to keep people having access to this resource. Maybe, for some of the species that can tolerate being caught and released, maybe you try and adopt more of a catch-and-release situation, and, through that polling, maybe find out the anglers who would be willing to participate in catch-and-release, as opposed to catch to keep, and, therefore, seeing what portion of the recreational fishery is taking.

You know, I did hear that the price point to harvest a fish for food value -- It isn't really logical to go out there and recreationally harvest for food, because of how expensive it is to get out on the water. People do it because they love it, and, if we support that love of fishing, and maybe promote

some catch-and-release, where it's applicable, we might gain some ground, when it comes to conservation. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, James. Harry, you're going to wrap it up, and then we've got to move on.

MR. MORALES: Thank you, Jimmy. First of all, let me say this. As much as the commercial sector wants to promote enforcement, it's actually education and public outreach that is going to make the biggest difference for the recreational fishermen. It is that which is missing the most, especially -- Like, in my case, if I have to take a couple of people out on the boat that aren't really experienced fishermen, I become a charter captain almost, by putting the bait on the hook, and taking the fish off the hook, and trying to educate them on what it is they should and shouldn't be doing.

Generally speaking, for us, in the Carolinas, and I believe it's the same thing in Georgia, in order for us to go for red snapper, you're going thirty-plus miles. There are closer reefs, artificial reefs, and I pass those boats all the time, and so, for me, I've got to go two or three hours in order to begin my fishing experience, and the people that go out there are extremely responsible in what they do. In Florida, I can't talk about that. I'm not able to go out six miles and all of a sudden be able to catch snapper. That's not practical here, but education has to be the number-one enforcement tool.

Now, in Hilton Head, we recently got the DNR that nailed some young fishermen that were selling illegally to the restaurants undersized fish, which is what the restaurants really wanted, and, in South Carolina, every single fish was a violation, and these boys -- I mean, you're talking about losing your boat, and you're talking about tens of thousands of dollars in fines, and it hits the newspaper, and that gets people's attention, when you have that kind of enforcement, but, at the end of the day, the primary thing that has to happen for the recreational fishermen is the education.

How do you handle that fish, and how much time do you have, and how do you either vent them and/or send them down, the kind of devices that you use, and the fact that you use -- What kind of net, and these are the things that have to be pushed, and, like I think David said, at the end of the day, catch-and-release isn't a terrible thing, if you know how the hell to do it, and that's what we have to push.

MR. HULL: Okay, guys. Thanks a lot. That helps some, and I think it will help the council, and this is the big issue, and this isn't going away, and so keep on thinking about it, and keep on pushing for your ideas. That's great conversation, and thank you. Okay. With that, Mike, when you're ready, I will throw it back to you, and I think gag is on the menu.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I'm going to pass it over to Allie Iberle, and she's going to lead us through gag.

MS. IBERLE: This presentation is Attachment 7b, but you also have the gag discussion document. All of the details are going to be in this document, but I'm going to run through the presentation, just for ease, and so a little bit of background, to get us started for gag, and the current ACL was set in 2015, through Regulatory Amendment 22, and there was a 5 percent buffer between the ACL

and the ABC. The current sector allocations, right now, are 49 percent to the recreational and 51 percent to the commercial, and those were set in 2009.

The season for gag, both for commercial and recreational, is May 1 through December 31, and so that spawning season closure was put in place in 2009, through Amendment 16. There is a recreational bag limit of one fish per person per day within that three-grouper aggregate, and there is a commercial trip limit of 1,000 pounds gutted weight until 75 percent of that ACL is met, or projected to be met, and then that trip limit steps down to 500 pounds gutted weight, and that was put in place in 2009. There is a size limit for both sectors of twenty-four inches total length, and that was put in place in 1999.

Before I go into SEDAR 71, Amendment 53 will aim to establish a rebuilding plan for gag. It will modify the annual catch limit and the sector allocations, and then, depending on recommendations from the AP and the decision of the council, it may modify commercial and recreational management measures.

SEDAR 71 is the most recent stock assessment for gag, and the assessment indicated that the stock is both overfished and experiencing overfishing, and the terminal year for that assessment was 2019. I am going to jump to the fishery overview in a minute, and you guys have seen that before, but there is some really great projection graphs in that. Some figures from the assessment that I wanted to show you guys are this first one, which is the F over $FMSY$, and so this is indicating that overfishing is occurring, and so anything above that red line is indicating overfishing, and this is taken straight from SEDAR 71.

The next figure is the spawning stock biomass over the minimum stock size threshold, and anything below that red line indicates the stock is overfished, and so, as you can see, we're currently in that overfished status, and then the next figure that I wanted to show you from the assessment is the biomass by age class per year, and so I think this figure is important, because it really shows the truncation of older age classes, and so, overall, biomass kind of looks like it increases from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s. However, overall, biomass starts to decrease around the mid-2000s, but, as you can see, that older age class is never really recovering.

The rebuilding timeframe, and so this is kind of the meat-and-potatoes of gag at this point, and we're still really early in the process, and an options paper will be going to the council in December, and they will have the opportunity to approve the amendment for scoping, and then this will come back to you guys in April.

Gag does not have a rebuilding plan currently, and so, because of that status from SEDAR 71, one will need to be established. At the September council meeting, NMFS gave clarification that, if F equals zero, the stock can rebuild in seven years. Therefore, the council is limited to a maximum timeframe for rebuilding of ten years, and so, to account for this timeframe and dead discards, a substantial reduction is needed in the allowable harvest.

The council has requested additional projections to determine kind of different options for the total ACL that will meet these rebuilding requirements, and then, to give you guys an idea of the step-down, the SSC has provided an OFL of 367,000 pounds gutted weight, which would be implemented in 2023, and that's the first year of that OFL, and that is approximately 185,000, or 34 percent, lower than the average estimated landings from 2015 to 2019.

Now, that is the OFL level, and so that will increase when we're given the ABC, which will be, inevitably, lower than the ACL, and so this is kind of just where we can imagine it now, until we get that ABC, which we should be getting, and I believe the SSC meeting is next week, at their October meeting, and so we'll be getting the ABC at that time.

Then I wanted to review the fishery performance report that you guys did about a year ago, in September of 2020, just to refresh your memory on some high-level points that were made during that report. On abundance, you guys noted that higher abundance is seen in deeper waters, and there has been notable decreases in certain areas, and you guys noted that that might be because of an increase in recreational diving. Some people saw no change, or even an increase, in abundance.

Observations on size -- Again, I'm going to move through this quickly, and you guys have access to that fishery performance report, and so, for bigger fish, you need to go further offshore, and there's been a decrease in size of fish seen in the commercial sector and that the charter industry is also consistently catching undersized fish.

You guys noted that both sectors are discarding smaller fish. However, not many discards are seen during the closed season, and then observations on demand and dependence, demand for gag has been increasing. However, there is major concerns about a loss of fishing infrastructure, which has been noted during this meeting, and that a hook-and-line survey and an annual estimate of abundance would be very beneficial for this fishery.

Some environmental observations, you have noted that hurricanes have been disrupting ledges and other bottom habitat, and it was noted earlier in this meeting that that estuarine habitat is very crucial for gag and that the degradation of that habitat is a major concern for this species. You noted, again, those fishery-independent surveys are crucial, and that enhanced enforcement is needed, and we just heard that, and, again, that a hook-and-line survey would be extremely beneficial.

Then, finally, and kind of most important for where we're going, is recommendations on management, and so you guys recommended extending that spawning season closure to include May, and possibly also December, and you recommended increasing the minimum size to either twenty-five or twenty-six inches, and the rationale for that is that 50 percent of female gag mature at twenty-five inches, and you also noted that you would like to see some shallow-water SMZs at around thirty to fifty feet.

With that, I am going to actually flip back to the document, which has these same questions, so that we can discuss those, and, really quickly, if you would like to see the OFL levels, they are in this document, and so some questions for the AP -- We kind of have them separated out into commercial and recreational, and so what should management priorities be for the commercial fishery during this rebuilding timeframe? Should changes to commercial management measures other than catch limits be considered? Then those same questions for the recreational sector.

Really quickly, before I hand it off to you, Jimmy, we do have this gag Shiny app that has graphs for projections that are really great, and you guys have seen them before, and there is two scenarios here for the projections. They are both based on recruitment levels from SEDAR 71. The first graph assumes that F equals $FMSY$, and this black line here is the rebuilding probability, which

coincides with this right-hand axis. The dark-blue-shaded area is landings, and the red is dead discards. Then this graph on the bottom assumes that F is equal to 75 percent of F_{MSY} , and you can see a change in the rebuilding probability there. With that, I will hand it off to you, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Allie. I think that, for me, I would need to ask where do we have to be? What type of reduction -- I mean, you showed those graphs there, with the probabilities of rebuilding with different F scenarios. However, for simplicity, for me, it's like, okay, what is the ACL? Do we have that? I mean, what harvest levels are we going to -- If we have to rebuild within ten years, what is it? I mean, can we catch anything? Is there anything -- Is there anything there for us to manage?

I just don't know how to answer the question, in the short-term, not knowing what's coming. I mean, if we're going to get -- If the SSC provided an OFL of 367,000 pounds in 2023, it's approximately 34 percent lower than the average estimated total landings, and so where does that get both the private recreational and charter boats and the commercial sector? I mean, maybe it's too much for me to try to understand right now, and I'm asking to understand too much before I answer the questions.

MS. IBERLE: If you don't mind me responding, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Please.

MS. IBERLE: Right now, we can't give an absolute answer on where the ACL will be, because we don't have those ABC levels, and so the OFL is always going to be higher than the overfishing limit, and that's just the limit to make sure that we're not overfishing the stock. The reason that I provided that OFL level is because it gives us kind of a baseline of how the reduction will look. That 34 percent will increase once we get the ABC, because it will be lower, but, at this point, we don't really have a good idea of what that ACL will look like.

We do know that we have to rebuild the stock in ten years, and so those additional projections that the council requested, they were projections of different probabilities of rebuilding and different recruitment scenarios, and so the recruitment scenarios I believe were those of the assessment and then lower recruitment, and so just to -- The council wanted to see kind of what wiggle room they had within that rebuilding timeframe, and so that's kind of where we're at now, and I think Mike might chime-in, and so anybody can correct me if I'm wrong, but this is kind of where we're stuck at right now, and, Mike, I see your name, if you want to jump in.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure. Allie described it pretty well, and the SSC didn't have a definition of the timeframe for rebuilding at the time that they received the stock assessment. They knew that rebuilding was going to need to occur, but we didn't know, at that time, if we were restricted to the ten years for the rebuilding timeframe or if we could use a longer timeframe, and so we went through the process and got the clarification from NMFS that we are restricted to the ten years, and so now it's coming back to the SSC next week, and the council also wanted the SSC to consider different probabilities of rebuilding.

The SSC initially recommended a 70 percent probability of rebuilding, but the council -- Kind of the minimum requirement that the council has to fulfill under Magnuson is a 50 percent probability of rebuilding, and so the SSC will look at the projections under different probabilities of rebuilding,

and what that means is, with a lower probability of rebuilding, that means that it would allow for a bit more harvest, if you have it lower at 50 percent rather than at 70 percent.

The SSC will look at the different projections that have been provided next week, and they will give a recommendation to the council of what the ABC should be under the rebuilding timeframe, and then the council will review that in December, but that's why we don't have the hard numbers right now. We can at least give kind of -- Like we were trying to give at least this reference, this relative directional number that, okay, we have an OFL that came out of this assessment for 2023, and we found out, after that, that we're restricted to the ten years for the rebuilding timeframe, and so we're going to -- We know that it will be lower. We don't know how much at that point, and it depends on which projection is selected by the SSC and ultimately the council. Does that help clarify it, Jimmy?

MR. HULL: Thank you. It does, yes, and so now you can go back to your questions, Allie, and I will start the ball rolling. For me, the priorities for the commercial fishery, and pretty much for all fisheries, is we need to do whatever we can to keep some kind of fishery open for all sectors, through reduced trip limits or commercial boat limits or recreational limits. I think the recommendations that we made -- As I said, I think we need to ensure that there is some type of fishery. We can't close this fishery down, and it's going to end up never getting opened, ever, if we do.

We need to have some type of fishery under the circumstances we're dealt, whatever we have to do to have something coming, as a discard fishery, and not a dead discard fishery, but a bycatch fishery somehow or something, and I think the recommendations that we made previously of expanding the spawning closure on either end could be helpful, and so, I mean, that's my point. We need to do whatever we can to try to have some type of harvest. Otherwise, the science from fisheries-dependent will disappear, because, when you're discarding, there is no capture of anything. We need to keep this fishery open, in some way, shape, or form, during the rebuilding, and that would be the main priority, whatever we're dealt with the science. The council needs to figure a way to do it. Okay. I'm going to move on. I see Randy. Go ahead.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, thank you. Man, I could talk all day about this, but just a couple of things. It's just this reactionary management is absolutely killing us, and I know that our problems up here -- We had a lot of hurricane problems that has disrupted the bottom, but I know that -- I'm talking about Onslow Bay, from Frying Pan Tower up to Sneads Ferry, and there's only about a dozen or so boats, and we're not the ones that caused this problem, and I can tell you that.

I know what everybody catches, and we've been screaming for years that there's just too much pressure, and I don't understand. Even going through this whole process, it's going to be two years before it gets enacted, and that ten-box limit has been too high forever. I mean, when the red grouper disappeared, grouper really became more of a bycatch, and I don't know, but it just seems like there should be some kind of emergency action that we could go ahead and drop this limit, while this is being done, because, two years from now, when this thing gets implemented, or whenever it is, man, it's going to be so late that it's just going to be terrible. I think we should have had these limits in place a long time ago, and they should have been dropped, and I've got a lot more to say, but I will hold off and let other people comment.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Randy, and, whoever is taking notes, if you would please add to the first bullet that I made, that the importance to science, to data collection, that we have the fisheries-dependent landings, and it's -- I mean, you can use the red snapper as the perfect example of what's going to happen if we close this fishery down and there is no harvest, and so it's crucial to inform science with fisheries-dependent. Thank you. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir. I am beginning to feel like a broken record, but, first of all, if our only management tool is going to be less, then I don't understand why we would be going for a 50/50 probability versus a 70 percent probability. I mean, basic business tells you that 50/50 is nowhere, and so, if this is the only tool that's going to be used, you don't have a choice but to go with a higher probability, so that we can get back to fishing.

However, this as the only management tool, I absolutely object to, and I believe, if we're looking at a ten-year plan, and maybe it has to be a motion, but I would like for this AP to support two things that have been brought up, the aquaculture of grouper and snapper back into the population and copying Florida with an extensive artificial reef program, both of which will help rebuild our stocks and a lot of byproduct as a result of it, and so, if we're going to think outside the box, then, dammit, let's do it. Thank you

MR. HULL: All right, Harry. Thank you, and those notes are taken, and, of course, later on, I recommend to you that, if you want to make a motion later that we can all vote on, that would be great too, but let's get through this. Thank you, Harry. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: I have made a lifetime living off of gag fishing, and, I mean, that has been my bread-and-butter fishery, and I've been commercial diving on them and deepwater hook-and-lining and bandit fishing and the whole deal, and, unfortunately, I am seeing, where I live, and we may have a difference of opinion where you are down in Florida, but I have not seen a fishery beat up as bad as our gag grouper fishery in Morehead City.

It is something that I've seen coming for the last five years, and, unfortunately, I hate the way that our scientific team works, and we get so far behind the eight-ball, and we have so much damage to repair when we get in this situation, but here we are, and so not only for this fishery, but other fisheries, we've got to figure out how to move forward without getting ourselves into these situations, because, in my opinion, we are where we were with red snapper ten years ago. That's how bad it is.

The only way that I know to fix it, and I totally agree with you, Jimmy, that we have to have access to the fishery to collect data. I don't want to see the fishery completely closed, but I want to see it pretty close to it, to rebuild it, and we are going to have to do something like the shallow-water MPAs don't need to be in thirty feet of water, and that's not where the gags are. The gags are in sixty feet to eighty feet of water, on the shallow-water side, and the big freight-train groupers, that we call anything over thirty-five to seventy-pound groupers, are going to be out on the break, and those are those big spawning fish, and they're coming out of about 250 feet of water.

I would suggest that we look seriously at doing some shallow-water MPAs off my area, because we don't have any. When I say shallow water, I'm talking just like I said, that sixty-feet to eight-foot range, and have a limited access on the commercial side, or at least let's have a fifty-pound trip limit per boat, but the law enforcement is going to have to do their job, because, if we don't

do fifty pounds, and we come in with a hundred pounds of these things, that I see going on with snowy and other species, we're not going to get anywhere to rebuild the fishery.

Then, as far as the recreational side, if I were a recreational fisherman, I would certainly want a permitting process, because this would be a perfect opportunity for those guys to have a tagging program, where they could allocate some tags to the recreational sector, if they had a way to identify who they were, and they could participate in the fishery, to help collect data. It's terrible, and I've seen this coming, but the fishery, man, is in bad shape, and we've got to figure out a way to move forward with it. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I am going to agree with Harry, and Jack as well, but Harry's mention of aquaculture and things, and I've got a lot of experience with hatcheries, from shrimp to cobia to redbfish and so forth, and even flounder, and I don't see why we could not start some hatchlings, and we have an estuary behind Edisto that is one to three-pound fish, gags, are caught regularly in the fall. They're breeding in there, and so I don't see why we couldn't hatchery raise fish up to say a one-pound range, or whatever the science tells us we can release them, and release them into these estuaries during that time of year that is normal for them and put them with the stock.

I think that's a very feasible thing, and I don't know if anybody in this group understands what's going on right now with South Atlantic flounder, and I know that North Carolina has shut down their season, but, in South Carolina, we just spent three-and-a-half million dollars on hatcheries for flounder, to get the stock back up, and we had to come up with a 71 percent reduction, and a 71 percent reduction was hard to do without closing the management, without closing the species fishery, and that's what I keep saying, is we cannot keep closing, and that's not a tool. Closing the fishery is like throwing up a white flag that we surrender, that we give up, and now we just hope that they do it on their own, and that just creates tremendous mortality rates.

I mean, like you said, snapper is a good example of that. If you close the season -- I mean, we've been grouper fishing the last year, and I quit counting at forty-two red snapper that we put in the boat. Now, we all vented and released, and we had one floater out of the, I don't know, maybe fifty fish, but how many of them got eaten by sharks or died anyway? Probably three-quarters of them, but, while we were fishing and moving around constantly, we caught over forty-two red snapper, and that is not going to stop if the season is closed.

You have to vent and release, and, with this fishery, the offshore structures are directly involved with the habitat and the way they breed. If you go to North Carolina, and a diver goes down and sticks his head in some of those World War II ships -- I had one diver, and, as a matter of a fact, it was Dick Henry's son, and he said you could stick your hand in there and shoot a spear and come back with two grouper, and there were so many inside the ships.

Well, I mentioned to everyone yesterday how South Carolina and CCA have put in eighteen offshore reefs in the last five years, and, well, there is another group that is aligned with the South Carolina Governor's Cup, the billfishing guys, and they are sinking a 250-foot ship in 350 foot of water in an MPA, in about a month or so, and I think it's during the winter months, but they're going to create a 250-foot reef in an MPA right now, so that it won't be bottom fished.

I think that we're going to have to ante-up and start writing a check and getting some of these structures built of. Of course, you coincide that with some permitting for the recreational side, and I think that education, along with the licenses, and some kind of reporting on the recreational side, will tremendously help that mortality rate, but I think it's going to have to coincide with some structure, and why not start trying -- Is anybody trying to hatchery raise a grouper? It seems to be an easy fish to do, but, to my knowledge, nobody is trying it right yet. I know of three facilities in the South Carolina area that are capable of doing it. Thank you, guys.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and I agree with, and like, everything you said. My question would be to the council, a council member, possibly Kerry, and can the council do artificial reefs, and can the council do aquaculture and releasing into the nursery? Is that something the council can do? That's my question there, and, I mean, we can recommend it to them, but I don't know that they can even do such a thing.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, Jimmy, could I ask this? Could the council sub-contract it out to a private company?

MR. HULL: Well, that's the question, and so maybe we can get an answer from a council member, or from staff, if that's something that they can even do. I mean, they can recommend it, just like we are, and we have recommended a lot of things to the council that the council can't -- That's not in their ballgame, you know, their wheelhouse, and so that's the question, and so I will move on, and maybe we can get an answer on that. Randy, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: Jimmy, I agree with everything that's been said, but all these things, like the aquaculture and reefs and all, is more for an extended time, but this is an emergency now, and whatever changes come up on this gag grouper fishing is going to definitely put some guys out of business.

I mean, there's not many left of those dayboat gag fishermen, but it's going to put the hammer in the coffin for those guys, but, as far as what measure needs to be the biggest priority, to me, it's ensuring that we have fresh, local grouper in the markets during the summertime, for us in North Carolina and South Carolina during the tourist season. I can't stand the thought of having to import grouper to sell off of our beaches. I mean, there's got to be some kind of minimum that we can keep fishing, and that's what the priority should be, I think. Okay. That's it, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: No, I like that comment, and we need to get that written, I believe. Seasonally, possibly on the commercial side, during the peak seasons for all of us. I mean, in Florida, it's pretty much year-round, but, in the summertime, having that fresh fish, fresh, local grouper, is critical, and so, if there is any harvest, let's do it then, and I think that's what you're saying, and is that correct?

MR. MCKINLEY: Yes, Jimmy.

MS. IBERLE: Jimmy, did I capture that?

MR. HULL: Yes. Seasonally, ensure there is summer harvest of grouper for the market. Yes, I think so. During the busiest season, which is the summer. I mean, that's the busiest offshore fishing, except for south Florida, which is year-round, probably, but, I mean, everybody, the

private sector, the charter boats, it's summertime, I mean, June, July, August, and that's when everything happens. I think you did. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: I see that Myra is there, and do you want to go to her first?

MR. HULL: Thank you, sir. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy, and thank you, Rusty, and good morning, everybody. I just wanted to address the question about the artificial reef placement, and that is something that the council partners with the states, and so artificial reefs are placed in state or federal waters through the individual states' artificial reef programs. Then, through the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, what the council can do is designate those artificial reefs as special management zones. That is currently, as far as I know, what is utilized through the council process, in terms of placement of artificial reefs.

As you know, we do have a deepwater MPA that was created off of South Carolina, with the specific purpose of allowing artificial reef placement in that MPA, and so that's something else that the council has participated in, and I guess I'm not too sure about the aquaculture, and that is something that other councils have looked into, and I have not really kept up with where we are. I keep seeing different bits of information come through NMFS and guidance on how to approach aquaculture, but I guess what I can tell you is that there is discussion, and there is some movement, in that respect, especially in recent years, and I will just leave it at that. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Myra, and so, at least on the artificial reef, there is -- The council does get involved in that, especially in the areas that are promoting special management zones. This is all good stuff. You know, we are at a critical point here with gag, and we really need to -- These are long-range solutions that we're talking about, and I think they're great. I love them. They are great ideas for the long-term that will help all of our fisheries. As far as gag, it's coming our way like a runaway freight train. Are there suggestions on gag and not long-term, all the way, but short-term suggestions that will help us in this rebuilding, and possibly keep us all viable and help science and commerce? Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Jack brought up this term of freight train, and, of course, that's our blackbellies. These gags are sex-changers, from female as they're young, and then they get mature at whatever size you all had up there, 50 percent, and then, later on in life, they become males. Offshore of Florida, we've got two oculina coral areas, and the first one is a lot bigger, off of 600 foot, and it starts about 220 or 240 foot, and a lot of those blackbellies like to lay up into that oculina, all up and down through there, and I used to fish them pretty well and catch them right beside the speckled hind and some smaller warsaw and some other animals, but they were mostly males out there.

We have a benefit going now, from Fort Pierce all the way up to dang near St. Augustine, with these coral restrictions that you can't anchor anymore. I used to have to anchor in order to seduce the gags and big red snappers, the thirty pounders, up to my bait on my bandits. Now, back inshore, we used to see quite a bit of blackbellies, into 140 foot of water and things like that, but I think part of the real problem is back in the rivers and the estuaries of the state waters, inshore of the inlets, because that's where the little gags, the ones that you're catching with pinfish, and, every once in a while, you're catch them little gags, a couple or a few inches long.

I honestly believe that this red snapper explosion -- They bigger they are, and they can get a mouthful in, but they love baby sea bass, historically, and that little baby grouper ain't far different, and so, as the red snapper keep expanding its range, it keeps on doing its thing with eating the little guys.

We have another big problem, whether it's the little bit of a red tide we've got, but we've got a real big nitrogen problem with fish kills, and there are a lot of examples, like with Indian River Lagoon, right there at Port Canaveral, and, of course, we've got the Gulf Stream, and the Gulf Stream helps protect them animals too, but the inshore stuff is the problem, and I don't know what else you can say about it. The sewage is a problem in the river, and it's got to be addressed, and it's got to get solved. Otherwise, we're not going to have some of the fisheries that we used to have, because of too many people. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Rusty. Andy Fish, you're up.

MR. FISH: I agree with Rusty. There is a lot of talk of, obviously, the Lake Okeechobee and all of our estuaries in south Florida, Stuart, and our lagoons, as they say, is a big issue, but, for the most part, on the gag, I would be in favor of anything but an altogether closure, like most of everybody is talking about, and I've been saying that they are hurting as well, and, unless I was wrong, I think, in the last AP meeting -- The most recent stock assessment before that had said that the gag was fine, and I was completely miffed by that comment, and it just seems like one stock assessment is one way, and then the very next one is the complete opposite, and it just really scares me, and I just think we need to avoid anything but a complete closure, and to be in a red snapper situation, like we are, would be terrible. That's it.

MR. HULL: Andy, if I can ask you a follow-up question, and I know that you commercially target gags, not only in Florida, but to the north, and what would you recommend, if we could have some type of a trip limit, commercially, for some harvest? What would you recommend as a trip limit, commercially?

MR. FISH: I myself, I consider myself a spoiled diver, and I am doing -- When I'm in North Carolina, I do two to three-day trips, just because that's what I'm used to, but I don't want to handcuff anybody, or insult anybody's other way of fishing, but, I mean, I think I could live with 250 pounds a day. Do I think it needs to be more stringent? I really don't know, but, I mean, or a 250-pound trip limit, and I think I could live with that, as long as I can still go. I can live with anything, but I just know there's a lot of guys that do five and six-day trips up there, and I think that would really impact the other guys' fisheries, but I think everybody still needs to go fishing, and so they're going to accept anything that we get at this point, to not be at a full shutdown, like red snapper.

MR. HULL: Right on, and so that begs another question of you. So what do you feel about, in order to be able to maybe make a 250-pound trip, and like what Randy said and, for him, in the summertime is the most important, about a time -- A time where you don't harvest gags, an expanded spawning season closure, so that you could maybe have a short opening to where you could have harvest at the prime time for everyone. How do you feel about that, expanding the spawning season closure and/or other measures? Let's just do time first, time-wise, so that you could actually have a small season where you could harvest maybe 250 pounds.

MR. FISH: Right, and, well, I was catching groupers and spearing groupers before the -- It used to be just January and February it was closed, or, I'm sorry, and March and April it was closed, and then it went to January and February it was closed, and, ever since that four-month closure, I personally, and my guys in my area here in Canaveral, haven't really seen much difference when we go out in May.

I don't know how long it's been, but it's been a least fifteen, I guess, years since it's been -- I haven't seen it, and so I think they're getting caught somewhere else, because, in the wintertime, all those fish are here, or in south Florida, or Canaveral, when we see them, and then they all kind of -- We get a couple of weeks, and then they all kind of go back where they came from. For my area, here in Canaveral, I think those fish just -- They get a couple of months before they go back home, and then somebody else is allowed to catch them, but I am not sure that I answered your question there.

MR. HULL: No, you didn't, but it has to do with mathematics, and so, if you're allowed a certain amount of catch, of F, harvest, that you can actually catch, would you be willing to narrow that down to a month, or a few months, out of the year, rather than have -- Then be able to bring the gags to market the rest of the year, and how they would do that -- I just mentioned the spawning closure as a way to do it, but think about it. Of course, this conversation -- There's plenty of time to continue to comment on this to the council. Thank you. I appreciate that. Jack Cox, you're up.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I just want to say the reason that I'm on this AP is because I -- As I'm getting older and aging kind of out of the fishery a little bit, I really want to give back, and I feel like, after thirty-eight years in the fishery, I can -- I would love to be able to see my son and other young people, like Andrew Fish and people, have opportunities to see the fishery like I saw it, and that's why I'm here today, and that's the only reason, is because I want to give back to the fishery.

I would love to see those guys see an average inshore grouper that was a fifteen to twenty-pound fish, like I saw in the 1990s, and, today, it's an eight to twelve-pound fish, but, going back on some of the things that I have heard here, I think aquaculture is a great way to provide a protein for the fishery, but we're talking about hatcheries and things, and I think there's a lot of potential there.

I think somebody could reach out to Scott Baker with Sea Grant and put together something, because he's done some work, I think, with black sea bass in this department, and I would love to see somebody try to do that, and there could be a business opportunity as well, but I wish -- Just like -- I think a slot fishery would be really nice, in a perfect world, and I don't think it's possible that we could put these big females back into the ecosystem, to where they could keep having babies and the chance to spawn, but I would say that I do see quite a few groupers in May that are still spawning in my area.

If we had a small ACL, and if it opened in June and ran with a small trip limit, hopefully, like Randy said, because I provide to retail markets, and that's when we get the biggest bang for our buck with our fishery, is in the summer months, when the tourists are here and they want to eat that good, local seafood, and, if we extended our spawning season through May, maybe that will enhance the fishery and allow more animals to produce, and then we have a small trip limit and an ACL that will allow us to capture a nice price for our fish when we do have them. Thank you, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you and so I think we already have written up expanding the spawning season closure, your comment, and we already talked about the other items that you brought up, and you did bring up a slot fishery as possibly something that would work, and I see that's under recreational, and so thank you. Randy McKinley, you're up.

MR. MCKINLEY: I think it's time to ask this question, and maybe it's to the council, but, if we do shorten these seasons and the trip limits, there has to have been talk about including other shallow-water grouper. I mean, these break boats out there, the bandit boats and stuff, they can't distinguish between scamp and red grouper and the big blackbelly gags and stuff, and so, I mean, is that -- I am just afraid that we're going to have to tie it together. I mean, the last thing we want to see is a bunch of big gags floating off, and has then been -- I mean, it hasn't been brought up yet, but I'm assuming that's been in the talk, I would think.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I see Myra. Go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think you're seeing me, Jimmy, but, just responding to Randy's comments and questions, I think that that's a very legitimate question to ask to the council, especially with respect to the direction that they talked about going just the last meeting. At the last meeting, they talked about having this more holistic approach to management, and, yes, one of the things that was talked about is, when you close down one fishery, if you're still fishing in the same area, you can catch that fish, and you're still pulling them up, and then you have the issue of discard mortality affecting that.

The question about how this affects other shallow-water grouper species, and if there's going to be something a bit more widespread that would need to be done to have an actual impact from changing the season, or the trip limit, and I think that's a fair question, and that's something that the council will have to address as they try to shift their thinking a little bit from single species snapper grouper to more of an entire fishery type of mindset.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: There's a lot of comments here that are going on that are very good, and, for the immediate future, I would be in favor of the May -- Extending the spawning season closure to May, and I think that would -- I think I see fish still spawning in May, and I just heard someone else say that.

Also, if we had to go up another inch or two on the minimum size limit, I don't think that would kill anybody, and I don't know, in the commercial sector, if you went up to that slot limit, how would it increase, but what I also wanted to talk about was how successful some of these aquaculture situations have been.

The Waddell Center, which is in Bluffton, South Carolina, has had plenty of -- They were hugely successful with inshore redfish, but they also had a grant for cobia. A lot of folks, especially locally, confused it with a stocking program, which the stocking of the cobia was actually a byproduct, and the grant was to find out how they could -- How quickly they could raise the cobia for a food source, and what DNR did locally was they shocked the local breeding stock, that we have a very -- It comes into the river, and there's a lot of cobia in April and May that come in, and

so they shocked them and had the young there, and, for instance, they shocked a 101-pound female that had over 5,000 offspring, which almost all of those offspring survived.

You're talking about one fish that just raised 5,000 offspring in a hatchery, and they were able to raise these hatchlings to eighteen to twenty pounds in eighteen months for a food source, and that's an incredible success rate. If you took grouper and had these hatchlings, and you didn't have to take them to eighteen pounds, and you just take them to one pound, and possibly you could have two seasons a year that you could turn, one in the spring and one in the fall, to release these one to two-pound fish, if that truly is as good success rate as cobia is.

Flounder, on the other hand, is not nearly as successful, and there's been failures in a lot of places, and it actually takes a lot of money to raise them, but that's due to the temperatures. Flounder actually changes sex early on, and they will convert to male or female depending on the water temperature, and so, if you end up having a whole spawn of nothing but males, then you're not helping the estuaries too well, but these hatcheries have proved to be very, very successful, and, like I said, I know of three in the South Carolina area that I'm sure would be glad to look at a grant that came from the government to go towards gag. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Tony. Yes, we need an influx of investment at a big level. Maybe it could be put into the infrastructure bill. Thank you. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Back in the 1970s, late 1970s, and into the early 1980s, historically, off of Daytona, we would go out, because we would want to commercial fish, and we would commercial fish on the gag grouper in January, halfway between Daytona and St. Augustine, seven miles off, and they would be all piled up, twelve to eighteen-pounders, and all females, and then the other thing that I noticed during that time period, and I was running a shrimp boat, and I was using a turtle excluding device voluntarily, but I would catch a fifteen or twenty-pound gag in my try net, but anything that was getting in my big nets was going out the dinosaur cage, at that time.

Essentially, those are benefits our way, because of the fact that we already have a closure in January, and I believe that most spawning individuals in these aggregations like that is probably over by April or May, in our region, and I think we've had this discussion a bunch in the past, and, since 2009, we've had the shallow-water grouper closure in place, and so that's twelve years, and it really begs to wonder what is going on there, because, if indeed we're not getting the benefits of the spawn while they're females, and that's the part where I heard the hatchery stuff, and then we're going to be bringing in females, and they already have to be fertilized, and so you're going to have to have a male to do that for the females, and I just don't see how easy that's going to be in a hatchery for this particular animal and their slow growth at their younger ages. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty, and I think the idea of expanding the shallow-water grouper closure reproductively -- I mean, yes, it doesn't look like it's done a whole lot, but I think that using it to reduce effort is one -- That's kind of what we're talking about here, so that we might be able to have some harvest later on in the later months. Robert Lorenz, you're up.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. Actually, Rusty covered a lot of what I wanted to say, and I know all these things are coming up under Number 1, and I was going to try to say it under 3 or 4, which is my wheelhouse, but I guess I'm just going to reiterate a little bit of what's been said. I

think there could be a focus on establishing MPAs or SMZs where these animals have spawning aggregations, and so they do engage in spawning aggregations, and so, therefore, the assessment should know where that is, and maybe we can set up a few more properly-placed SMZs, or MPAs, where these aggregations occur.

Then, as Tony had said, maybe that's an area where we focus on putting some more structure, and so just adding a little color there that these are fish that go into spawning aggregations, and then, to also make a point and note what Rusty said, and these are not a fish, I don't think, and no scientists are chiming-in, but, in these aggregations -- If you're going to try to do hatchery fishing, you're going to have to get pretty ripe females and pull in males from offshore.

You're going to have to go out in the wild to grab them and bring them in do scientifically what you need to artificially get them to spawn. Then you could raise them in tanks, but this is not going to be as easy as we've seen with flounder and redfish and those kind of inshore fish, because they aggregate and aggregate on structure offshore, and you're going to have to go get wild species in order to form any hatchery effort, and I think that's going to end up making this way too expensive to do, but I just wanted to add that. I didn't hear any scientists weighing-in on this, and we can essentially grow them out, but, for long run, we're going to have to think of something else, where the management stays out there in the ocean, and that's what I kind of favor, is SMZs and marine protected areas where the aggregations are. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Robert. Andy Fish, you're up.

MR. FISH: I just wanted to touch on my 250-pound trip comment. If that includes all the groupers, like your scamps and your red groupers and your strawberries and all that stuff, that would definitely hurt me and my fishery and most of the commercial fishermen. If that's just gag, that would be okay, but, if it's all the groupers, that would definitely be a huge impact on all commercial fisheries. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thanks for your input. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir, and I just wanted to say that the grouper aquaculture has been well established. The only problem is it's in Asia, and so China already represents 61 percent of that market, and Taiwan or Vietnam another 15 or 20 percent, but it's a very lucrative market, and it's already there, and so, however it is they're doing it -- You don't need to reinvent the wheel, and so the science is already there. We just need to start. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Harry. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I just wanted to add, in talking about extending the spawning closure for gag grouper, I would have to put in there that the region of the 28 degrees further south, down to the Keys, and we don't have the gag grouper that you guys do up there, and I would like to exclude the extension of the spawning closure within that area, if you're in the region further south of Cape Canaveral and to Key West. Then, also, the 250 pounds, like Andy Fish, I would have to agree with him on that, to just make that the 250 pounds gag only and leave everything else as-is. That's all.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. James, you're up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. I just wanted to kind of ask -- Not that I'm opposed to the aquaculture idea, but I just kind of wanted to ask what that looks like for potential water quality hazards, through nearshore areas to where aquaculture is happening, and I feel like we can't go deep into that without looking at what the possible negative side effects might be, and that's just a thought. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: The last thing from my past. In the 1970s and the 1980s, we used to go down in January and February, and even in December, and fish like from Rebecca Shoals out past the Tortugas, and that area is mostly South Atlantic Council, and we would get into nice aggregations of the gags with the carboritas, and also the mutton snapper is not far away, in that twenty-fathom region, and they would be thick. I mean, you would catch them as fast as you could, and so they are spawning at that time down there, in that region. I can't speak for the areas where the tail fishing was, from Key West and up into that area, but I always stayed offshore, twenty to forty fathoms, and so there's stuff out there that has been protected now, and so thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty, and I see that somebody had mentioned the slot fishery, and if you could tell us which sector and what size slot you would recommend for the gag fishery, and I don't remember who it was. Vincent, go ahead.

MR. BONURA: Just on what Rusty was talking about there, I wasn't saying that it's not a spawning time of the year, but I just was trying to put in there that we primarily have black grouper, and the gags just aren't around anymore down there.

MR. HULL: Thanks for that clarification, Vincent.

MR. COX: Jimmy, that was me, about the slot.

MR. HULL: Go ahead and further -- A slot fishery for the commercial, and probably the recreational, and what size limit, and what are you suggesting there, further than that, or are you just suggesting overall?

MR. COX: Jimmy, the rationale for it is to protect some of those spawning females. It hurts to see sometimes that these big -- These freight trains that we're talking about, that are the spawning fish, but I don't know, and this is a scientific question, and so my question would be to the scientific community of what would be the best size to protect of a spawning female, when she's most active and producing? Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that clarification, Jack. Okay. I am not seeing any other hands at this time. I think a lot of what we said applies to both sectors on these questions, and they kind of have it divided between recreational and commercial, this is a problem we're both facing, and a lot of these answers are for both sectors, and so I think what we have here looks good. You all -- If you're done with this discussion, I'm going to go back to staff and see where we go next from here, and so I don't see any other hands. It's back to staff.

MS. IBERLE: Mike, do you want me to go ahead and jump right into snowy?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think this might be a good kind of natural breakpoint, and so maybe take five, for a biological break. Then, when we come back, we can go into snowy, and Allie will be leading that as well.

MR. HULL: That sounds great to me. It's 10:27, and so 10:35 we'll be back in action. 10:35. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. HULL: I think most everybody is back, and let's go ahead and get started. It's off to snowy grouper.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and you guys are stuck with me again for snowy. Just to kind of get you up-to-speed with snowy, we're not too much further along than we are in gag, and so there was an options paper brought to the council in September for snowy grouper. That was only two actions that the council saw, and they requested your input on some potential other actions, and so we'll go through that and get your input and get this rolling.

Just a little bit history on snowy, and the most recent assessment was the update to SEDAR 36, which was completed in 2020, and that indicated that the stock is both overfished and undergoing overfishing. There is a rebuilding plan for the species in place, and it's a thirty-four-year-long plan established in 2006, through Amendment 15A, and it has a terminal year of 2042. This amendment will not be modifying this rebuilding plan.

Really quickly, this is Attachment 4b, this presentation, and you do have the full options paper, and that is Attachment 4a, and so, again, the same thing with gag, which it's a little easier to move through it, but feel free to get me to switch back to that options paper.

The timeline for snowy, like I said, it went to the council in September, and you guys are seeing it today, and then they will review your comments in December and possibly approve for scoping, and so they wanted to kind of get your input before they approved this amendment for scoping. It will come back to you guys in April, and, tentatively, a final draft amendment will be considered in March of 2023.

We do have an ABC and an OFL provided by the SSC for snowy grouper from their April meeting. We received the ABC in removals in pounds whole weight and removals in numbers of fish, and we converted the pounds whole weight to pounds gutted weight, using a 1.18 NMFS conversion factor. Then, to get these removals into landings, we went to the SEDAR 36 update, which indicates that 95.4 percent of total removals of snowy are landings and 4.6 are dead discards, and so we were able to, from those total removals, calculate the landings for the OFL and the ABC, which are those green columns, and so that's what we're going to be using throughout this amendment.

The first two actions were brought to the council in September, and these are kind of, at this point, still -- They need to be fleshed out a little bit more, and we just wanted to kind of show them to you, and so the first one is revising the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield, and this needs to be done because the SSC did recommend that new OFL and ABC, and then, going back

to those different units, currently, the commercial sector, the ACL and the trip limit, is specified in pounds gutted weight, which is why we converted those pounds whole weight to pounds gutted weight, so that it can be used to compare the current regulations.

Then the recreational sector, the ACL and the vessel limit, is specified in numbers of fish, and, in September, the council did indicate that they wanted to keep the recreational sector specified in numbers of fish, and so you will those units continue throughout the amendment.

Really quickly, to review the options that we kind of presented, it was no change to the ACL, which we have the current ACL specified here, and then Option 2 would be setting the ACL equal to the ABC. The current ACL is set equal to the ABC, and then Options 3, 4, and 5 were creating a 5, 10, and 20 buffer, respectively. Then here is how that would flesh out according to that ABC. Again, I don't want to spend too much time here, because we have specific questions that the council has asked you, but I just wanted to show you guys kind of how this is shaping up.

Then Action 2 is revising the snowy grouper sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and so the allocations need to be reviewed, because the method for determining, or estimating, recreational landings has switched from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, and so the current allocations for snowy were determined using an average CHTS landings from 1986 to 2005, and they fleshed out to be 83 percent to the commercial and 17 percent to the recreational.

For the options that the council was shown in September, the allocations are reflective of setting the ACL equal to the ABC from Action 1, and so these allocations will most likely change. These are preliminary, and they could change based on how the council decides to set the ACL as well, and so keep that in mind.

They were shown three options of no change, which would use that 83/17 allocation, but it would apply that allocation to the new ACL, and then there was Option 2, which uses the same method previously used, but in MRIP FES landings instead of the CHTS landings, and so that kind of shakes up the allocation a little bit, and then the third option they were provided was to apply the allocation formula, similar to red porgy, and that uses a mean landings from 2006 to 2008 and then the mean landings from 1986 to 2008.

Then, again, this is just an estimate, using those allocations, and these will most likely change, but it kind of gives you a rough idea of what the ACL will look like. The current recreational ACL is 5,315 fish, and then here is how the commercial will flesh out. The reason that I separated them, again, is because of the units, since the recreational is specified in numbers of fish and the commercial in pounds gutted weight. This middle column is the total commercial ACL, and then, if you'll note, the snowy season is split into two seasons, with the first season receiving 70 percent of that allocation and the second season more incidental catch, which receives 30 percent of the total commercial allocation. Currently, the total commercial allocation is 153,935 pounds gutted weight.

Now we're going to get into the meat-and-potatoes of what the council is wanting you guys to discuss today, and so these are Potential Actions 3 and 4, and so the council brought up two options for the commercial sector, and so either reducing the trip limit or establishing a commercial spawning season closure, and so they kind of wanted you guys to weigh these options and discuss

whether or not you think either or both are feasible, and so, starting with Potential Action 3, the current commercial trip limit for snowy grouper is 200 pounds gutted weight, and that was implemented in Regulatory Amendment 20 in 2015, and it was stepped up from 100 pounds gutted weight.

The commercial landings of snowy grouper have averaged 106.6 percent of the commercial ACL, and there's been a closure each year from 2015 to 2020, and then, for Potential Action 4, and we're going to get a little bit more into Potential Action 3, but I just kind of wanted to lay them out for you here, and so Potential Action 4 is establishing a commercial spawning season closure. We looked into some literature regarding snowy grouper spawning, and it was noted that they spawn January through October and that their spawning is closely tied to the cycle of the moon, and so there were papers indicating that increased effect on spawning probability occurred during the new moon, and so that's one thing.

I know that you guys are on the water, and you're observing these fish, and so we really want your input here, and then a little bit more on Action 3, and so the IPT conducted a preliminary analysis of stepping down that trip limit from 200 pounds to 150 and 100 pounds, and here we have the predicted change in landings, and so, stepping down fifty pounds, we would expect to see about a 16 percent reduction, and then, stepping down to 100 pounds, you would see about a 38 percent reduction.

Then Table A2 is, again, from that preliminary analysis, and it has the seasons separated out here, and so these first three rows are Season 1, or the last three rows are Season 2, and so, for this table, this assumes that the council would set the ACL equal to the ABC and that the allocation would be the current 83/17 split applied to that ACL, and so I hope that made sense, but this kind of just shows you an estimated closure date for each trip limit option, and so the current trip limit, the 150 pounds, and the 100-pound trip limit, and, again, this is a preliminary analysis based on that specific ACL and allocation, and so this will change depending on both the ACL and the allocation.

Some discussion questions for you guys on Potential Action 3, which is that trip limit reduction, is the AP should consider a reduction of the trip limit to 150 or 100 pounds. First of all, is it feasible? Does it make sense to the AP, and how will the reduction in trip limit affect different areas? Would a reduced trip limit during different times, similar to blueline tilefish, would that be considered, and, if so, at what times of the year?

Then Action 4 was that spawning season closure, and so are you guys seeing the same thing? Are you seeing increased spawning around a certain cycle of the moon? Would you consider creation of a spawning season closure? If so, when? Then should the spawning season closure be put in place for both sectors, and I will point out that the recreational season is May 1 through August 31. To record your discussion on this topic, I am going to flip back over to this options paper, and I'm going to get to where I can record this for you guys. All right. You guys can take it away, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Okay, Allie. Kind of like in the gag discussion, the final numbers really aren't set, but, overall, I think the opinions that we have on how we need to -- How are we going to manage this fishery are something that we can provide. I think that, from my perspective, we need to keep the fishery open as long as possible, and so we would need to adjust the trip limits to reflect that goal for the commercial sector.

I think it's important that we keep it open as long as possible, and we, obviously, see a reduction is coming in ACL, and so you do have some preliminary analysis of time closures of all those different limits, and so I would just recommend that the council chooses what is necessary to keep the fishery open for some type of limit, as long as possible, for both seasons, commercially, and, recreationally, you already have a very short window of opportunity, and so I don't know. The recreational will have to chime-in, but I think they want to keep it open as long as possible also, and so adjust it to what's necessary, but it needs to stay open as long as possible through the year. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. An observation from my own history of snowy grouper fishing, from as far down as southeast Florida all the way up to the South Carolina/North Carolina line, back in the 1970s and 1980s, and we have a cryptic population of snowy grouper, predominantly males and big females. It's found on what we call the snowy wrecks, and all that starts down here in Florida, and we used to work it all way up to the Carolinas.

We would catch 4,000 to 8,000 pounds usually in a day, and then we would come home, and this was the type of thing that we turned on the scientists to these numbers, and, as far as I can tell, they have never gone out to check it out. The only things they came close to checking out is the inshore component of snowy, and that is from 220 foot to 330 foot, and we have them in the Oculina regions, and we have them in that rolldown just above the Oculina restricted area, near St. Augustine, twenty miles of good rolldown, but those animals were predominantly immature females, and some mature females, and, every once in a while, a big male, usually on the 300-foot side.

This trip limit of 100 or 200 pounds makes it so that virtually no one is going to go all the way offshore to any of the snowy wrecks that we know between 330 foot and 660 foot and go and catch 100 pounds or 200 pounds. It's just not going to happen, when you can get the smaller ones in that 240 foot, predominantly, to the 280 foot and just drift along, and so we have to motor fish those big wrecks offshore.

That worked good, especially when you're getting five snowies on each bandit reel, and you're fishing two or three of them at a time, and so I wanted to put that out there, because these cryptic populations, whether it's the red porgies males or the snowy grouper males, is extremely important to the stock assessment, and it's thoroughly lacking in the stock assessment, and so thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Allie, you're recognized.

MS. IBERLE: Thank you, Jimmy. I should have made note of this before we went into this discussion, but I am going to hop back to that presentation after we're done talking about this either commercial trip limit or spawning season closure, and we will dive into specific recreational recommendations, and so just keep that in mind.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you. While I've got the mic, as far as the spawning season closure, from my perspective, it looks like they spawn pretty much year-round, and the only thing that is enticing the spawning behavior to increase is on a full moon, and so I don't know how you could ever address that, and I don't have much recommendation for that, but the fact that they spawn pretty much year-round is a really good thing. Andy Fish, you're up.

MR. FISH: I don't do much snowy fishing, and back to the 2021 numbers, and I catch roughly 2,000 to 3,000 pounds a year, and I seem to notice, from my observations, that the ones in April and May have -- I find the roed-up females, and I generally fish from 400 to 600 foot of water for them, and, here in Canaveral, that's roughly thirty-five miles, if you straight out, not counting your north and south perspective. Anything less than 200 pounds I think would not be worth it for me to go out there.

I don't catch them, and I don't catch my limit, every time, but to go out there for basically a snowy grouper price of \$6.00 a pound at 100 pounds, and \$600 for me to go basically forty miles is not really -- It doesn't really make financial sense, and, yes, I could go thirty miles to our twenty-seven-fathom reef, but then it's still another ten miles just to get to the snowy grounds, and so, for me, I would rather close the -- Catch them at 200 pounds and close the two seasons and move on, but that's just my opinion. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Andy. Jack, you're up.

MR. COX: Okay, Jimmy. You're going to hear me say some of the same things over and over in different things that we're touching on, just because we have some of the same issues. With snowy, what I am seeing is some of the dayboat guys -- They get out there, and they get on the snowies, and we don't have enforcement. Yes, you can't make it on a couple hundred pounds, 200 pounds, and so you know what you do? You go over the trip limit. Trip limits don't work if you don't have enforcement, and we don't have enforcement, and so trip limits don't really make a difference, at the end of the day, especially on the go-fast boats.

Our last stock assessment on snowy said it was doing really fine, and doing good, and so every year we were increasing our -- For the last five years, we were going up 10,000 pounds on our ACL, and we thought we were really moving along really nice and good, and the council now is saying that we made a mistake, and we shouldn't have done that, and now we're in a situation where we've got to go take it back.

One of the reasons that we're having to take it back is because, when I'm out there snowy fishing, I am seeing lots of charter boats, lots of recreational boats, more so than I have ever seen, that are participating in the same fishery. That's okay, but the problem is, when I get home from fishing, I have got to report everything that I caught that day, and so what that does is -- What I am doing, and doing my part, is it helps the scientific team figure out what we can take and not take. When you've got an unaccountable fishery that's out there with the Daiwa Tanacom, and I'm talking private recreational again, and we've got increased effort in the fishery, this is a prime example why we get in these situations. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. I see a question-mark on one of our -- Do you prefer a spawning closure to retain the current 200-pound limit? Which months would you prefer for the closure, and I think that goes back to what Andy said, maybe, that he would, in his area, go ahead and have the 200-pound limit, and, when it closes, it closes, and is that -- I didn't think he said a spawning closure.

Does anybody want to chime-in on that, do you prefer a spawning closure to retain the 200-pound limit, and I didn't hear that, but maybe somebody did say that, and is that something that we would

prefer, a spawning closure to retain the current 200-pound limit? Is there a time that we would prefer to close the fishery for whatever reason, whether it's a spawning closure or whatever, to retain the 200-pound limit, and so, in other words, a season? I mean, it is closing. Every year, it has closed, and, commercially, we went over the ACL, is what was presented, and so it obviously is closing, and so just let it go like that, when we catch it, and, when the agency closes it, they close it. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. If you remember a lot of the discussion when we were trying to work out this snowy two-season thing and being able to deal with the shallow-water closure that's been in place for twelve years, the idea was the white-meat market, and snowy is a white meat, just like the golden tile, and it's a big deal in that time period between January and April, and I believe we have a rollover ability, and so, even if you did go to a lower trip limit during the period of January through whatever date it ends, you would be able to, I guess, carry over the unused portion into the second part of the season, but keep in mind that, a lot of times, we've had some pretty bad weather the last couple of years, and it makes it tough for people to go out there and pound themselves into that period right into December 31. I, again, believe that there is a larger population that is just not entering into the equation here, and that's sad, but it needs to be reexamined somehow, the science, and it's just not right.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Andy, go ahead.

MR. FISH: I think any fishery needs to be closed during the peak spawn for a certain time standard, and that needs to be determined by somebody higher than my pay grade, but I do -- From a selfish standpoint, I like having them open in April and May, but, from my point of view, if I'm looking to better the fish, I think any fishery needs to be closed during the spawning season. That's it.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Andy. I am looking for more hands, and I don't see any. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: I think we're going to have to drill down on this gray literature or whatever they had for January through October, because, if you're going to do a spawning season closure for the entire time, then you're talking about November and December, and you probably won't even be able to fish that kind of weather at that time, and so, somehow, with that white-meat market there in January through March or April, and I know you're going to hear a lot of folks that are near those snowy areas on the east coast of Florida complain, and so you might have to really think about this.

MR. HULL: Harry, go ahead.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir, and I think I have maybe more questions than answers. I don't target snowy, and the only time I have heard of snowy being caught in our waters is a spot we call the Triple Edge, which it takes probably sixty-five or seventy miles to get there, and so I am listening to this more recreational effort, and I'm going to assume that that's Florida, because, for us, to get into 200 to 400 feet of water, it's one hell of a ride.

Typically, if we're going to go out there, we're really trolling, and so our fishing effort is going to be March to August, and so I think, to some degree, recreational is almost being painted as the red-headed stepchild here, in many cases, but, at the end of the day, I think you've got to start paying attention to recreational where, because it's not something that the people I fish with, and people

I know, target snowy. Tony, you're a charter guy as well, and, I mean, in South Carolina, do you see us fishing for snowy? Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Harry. Cameron, go ahead.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Where we are in the Carolinas, we usually use snowy as what we call like a top-off fish. We'll go hit our vermilion, and then, if we're close enough to the snowy grounds, we'll go try to put a hundred or 200 pounds on, to sort of top the trip off, but keeping them open during that January to May 1 timeframe is absolutely crucial, because, if you have a bad day on vermilion, and you can get 100 or 150 pounds of snowy, at least it keeps you going forward and not going backwards, and so anything with a spawning closure would have to be tied very closely to when it's not going to negatively impact us when we have to have some other type of fish besides just vermilion out there. That's it.

MR. HULL: Okay, and so that's being written now. Make sure that's what you wanted to say. Keeping them open early in the year is crucial. If there's a spawning closure, it would be better to have it later in the year.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Correct.

MR. HULL: Okay. Good. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: What Harry said is basically true. Most snowies that we catch in the Carolinas are a good ways off, but we are typically -- A lot of my friends fish out that far, and could we go back to -- What is the peak of the snowy spawn? Didn't it say May through August? Like you said, it shows that they're spawning year-round, but I believe the peak of that -- I mean, it's showing all the way, but the peak of it is May through August, I believe.

MR. HULL: Can you scroll down just a little bit, please, or up just a little bit, maybe, wherever we show the peak. Right there. The darker color, and it's May through August, as you said.

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, and when the recreational sector opens is May through August. It seems to me like the recreational, and at least that's what I am looking at right now, that the recreational side opens on September 1 through April 30, and it seems like we may have that a little backwards on the recreational side, and I don't know the science behind that, but I am like a lot of folks have said, and I think, if you're going to have a closure, have it during the peak spawn, and so maybe we should readjust the season for recreational and keep it closed during the peak of the spawn.

MR. HULL: They are writing that right now.

MR. CONSTANT: I see that, and that would -- That really wouldn't correspond with gag, but I think that, if anything, that helps. I don't think this is a big recreational species, and I can see it in the numbers, with an 83/17 percent, but, like I said, we do catch snowies, and we do fish the ledge, on the bottom, and we do run out for tiles once in a while, to the 300 or 400 or 600 or 800-foot range, and so, yes, we do pick them up, but it would make sense to close in the peak of the spawn. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you for those comments, Tony. I have been told, and I do not know it, but that, in North Carolina, the recreational fishery for snowies is quite large, and I don't know that that's true, and someone would have to respond from North Carolina. I also see Kim. Kim, is your name up?

MS. IVERSON: Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. Really quickly, I received a text from David Moss, and he is continuing to have connection problems, but he sent me a text and asked that it be read on the record as part of this discussion on snowy, but David said that I understand that enforcement is going to always be an issue. However, this is an example of a fishery that is prime for some sort of a stamp or permit entry for the recreational sector with reporting requirements. He also noted that to remind the AP members that there is a snowy fishery within state waters off of south Florida, and so thank you for letting me read that on the record. I appreciate that.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Kim, and thank you, David, for those great suggestions, and maybe you can copy-and-paste that in there. I appreciate it. Jack Cox, you're up.

MR. COX: I would just -- Bobby Freeman is really one of the -- He used to make a living off of snowies, and I hope we get to hear from him a little bit, if he's online, to talk a little bit about it, but, in North Carolina, I would like to know when Bobby thinks the peak spawn is, because this is not my expert fishery, and my boats do catch them, but I will say that, if we have some kind of closure, that this fishery would very important to the consumer in North Carolina in April and May, and that's when our visitors and tourists start showing up and pay a premium for those fish, when we don't have access to other groupers, especially if we want to extend the gag closure through May. April and May would be a super important couple of months to have them, and we get a lot of good money for them, but we're fishing -- We have to run fifty miles to get to the break, and that's 600 feet of water.

We are seeing a huge increase in the private recreational sector out there fishing for them, now that they have the trolling motors and they can hover over these deepwater places and no anchor like we do, and a lot of the guys are snowy fishing, and then they run on off and go swordfishing, and swordfishing is a very up and coming fishery in our state, but I just wanted to put that out there. I don't know what's going into April, but, when the dogwoods start blooming is when we start catching a lot of snowies, a lot of good-sized snowies, off of Ocracoke, just south of the big rock. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Jimmy. Like Kim noted about the comment with regard to the peak of the recreational stuff in the summertime, again, this is a rare-event animal, like golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, and it expands out like crazy when they do an intercept, in-season or off-season or whatever it is, and it begs for a census for that area that's offshore of the big break, from 200 foot, 220, whatever, offshore. Then, that way, it will be a lot easier to count the fish and then be able to turn around and use that in a stock assessment, as opposed to these estimates of estimates that get re-estimated. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, and that's a good point. I know, in the literature, the recreational MRIP data, there was, on average, sixteen intercepts, both charter and private combined, for over the four or five-year period. Sixteen intercepts, and that's it. Okay. On to Robert Lorenz. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, thank you. Quickly, I just want to endorse -- I am going to back others here, and I am in southeast North Carolina, a private recreational fisherman, and so I'm going to back what David Moss provided, and also Rusty, and reiterate all those three things in red under Number 5 about the stamp and then the census needed.

Here in southeastern North Carolina, let's go back maybe about ten to fifteen years ago, and there wasn't that much snowy grouper fishing, and people had tremendous catches, but, among the private anglers, no, because, like it was mentioned by Harry down in South Carolina, here also, it's at least fifty, and, in many cases, off the last county in the state, it's seventy miles offshore. There were some very good charter captains in Brunswick County that would run out there, a lot of them in the Ocean Isle area of North Carolina, but, very recently, why we want the census and why we need the stamp, or at least a registration, of who is going out there is I think the ability for private boat fishing to go out there is growing tremendously.

I myself the other day, just out back behind my house red fishing, there was a boat on the island that's on over there, somebody that lives over there, who had like a thirty-six or thirty-eight-foot Regulator with four 400-horsepower Yamahas on the back, and I think that's the most you can get on any boat. Obviously, that gentleman can start to get out there, if he so wishes to fish, and so this is another one of those fisheries that may explode, and the ability has grown so rapidly in the past ten years, and so, a decade ago, not a big deal. Right now, I think it's going to become a big deal.

Maybe an idea would be, and I don't know if the council -- They have done these things in citizen science, but what about a group that monitors some of these fishing publications, and, up here, we have *Fishermen's Post*, and you will see some beautiful pictures of snowy grouper catches and the name of the captain and the name of the angler, and also, in some cases, if it's a private angler, you will be able to glean that. I am just wondering, informally, if there's a way to just kind of see who is catching them and the names, and maybe, in a nice way, you can follow-up and get information from them on how they're fishing, and maybe that could be considered in the fisheries management process, mainly to start assessing participation in this fishery when have no way of formally knowing precisely what it is. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. Robert, thank you. Robert Freeman, you're up.

MR. FREEMAN: Okay. Jack threw me a curveball, but, yes, the snowy was my bread-and-butter for thirty years or better, and we seldom targeted anything else specifically until the limits on the snowies got so crucial that you couldn't justify taking a party out there for one fish per person and that sort of thing, and then you would back up and go for the triggers, but it just puts additional pressure on them.

I never spent that much effort to determine whether we were in a spawning season or whatever, and I would have to rely on the scientists to do that, and we weren't gutting the fish anyway, and it belonged to the party, but I still feel like there is more fish out there than we're giving credit for, and I released I think it was about 125 or so of the hotspot numbers to Marine Fisheries, and I don't know whether they ever explored any of those places that I said there's fish, and maybe they were having a different opinion, but I think the season, so far as the recreational, is when you can get the party to come down and fish, which means it's going to be comfortable months of the year,

and I ran from April through early November, was my season, and so you get the party to come, but, when the limits got so restricted, then it pretty well dried up that charter fishery there. That's about all I can say without dragging it out.

MR. HULL: Well, you said a lot of good there, Robert, and I would have a follow-up question for you. This isn't for the charter boat side of it, which is what you are, but how do you feel about a private recreational stamp or something needed for this deepwater effort from the private recreational?

MR. FREEMAN: I totally support it, and, if the folks that are into the science more, and know whether it's feasible to do the aquaculture, I think that taking the money that could be derived from these recreational permits and funnel that into the aquaculture effort would be a step in the right direction.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that, and I know, in the past, this AP has made a motion and recommended this, just this stamp for the deepwater, and so maybe we can get another motion before we're done today. Andy, go ahead.

MR. PILAND: Has there been anybody looking at the charter boat reporting data, as far as who is catching what? I know, in Hatteras, we're fishing for them almost daily, when the season is open, for snowy grouper as well as the blueline tile, and the Oregon Inlet group is doing the same thing, and I was just wondering if anybody had looked at that catch data recently. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Well, I see Allie's name here now, and I'm sorry, Allie, that I didn't see it earlier. Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: No worries, and so I don't want to derail conversation, but I did have some slides to kind of get us into the recreational items that the council did discuss, and so, if you want me to, I can flip back to that presentation, really quick, and review that, super quick, and then we can come back to discussing recreational suggestions.

MR. HULL: Yes, please do.

MS. IBERLE: Okay. Do you want me to go ahead and do that now?

MR. HULL: Yes, ma'am.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Okay. Potential Action 5 deals with just that, and so modifying recreational management measures. Just really quickly recapping, so you can get back to conversation, the current recreational bag limit is one snowy grouper per vessel per day, with no size limit, and that was reduced in 2006 from one per person per day, and so it went from per person to per vessel. The recreational landings of snowy grouper averaged 63.8 percent of the recreational ACL from 2015 to 2020.

I have this slide in here just to kind of show you, really preliminarily, what it would look like for those ACLs and those preliminary allocations and how many waves would be anticipated for the recreational sector. I don't think it's super important to sit on this slide for very long. If you have questions about it, let me know, but I want to kind of jump to the discussion points here.

The council -- Well, first of all, Jimmy provided the AP's recommendations to the council in September, which, like he mentioned, was recommending that stamp or endorsement for deepwater species, and so the council has heard that recommendation. They have formed the recreational workgroup to kind of explore how to build some kind of stamp or endorsement program, and so this definitely has been heard, and the council did seriously consider it, and there has been discussion on this at the council level.

Then they asked if there were any other recreational modifications that the AP would recommend, and so, again, there's not much wiggle room, as far as the bag limit goes, and you did have discussion about the season and where that season falls, and then to consider kind of any gear restrictions, single-hook recommendations, and so, with that, I will kind of jump back to that document, to kind of record your conversation as we continue talking about recreational modifications. Thanks, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. That helps out and reminds us of where we're at and what we already have recommended, and it also reminds you of the recreational bag limit, which is one fish per vessel per day, and so I think that Andy said that, off of his area, the charter boats go do that, every day, and they get that one fish, and so it's important to them. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: Along with the stamp and so forth, and it kind of goes with something that Harry said, and a lot of these abundance of go-fast boats that we see -- They all run through a lot of the public numbers that are on everybody's state charts, and they run and they hit these structures, but, like Harry said, once you get to that fifty-mile mark, and you run out to that sixty and seventy and thousand feet of water, most of these guys are pretty well informed, and they're also pretty good fishermen, and a lot of them have been commercial or -- Anyway, they're just really good fishermen, in general.

I don't think we're going to see any really reluctance from these guys on buying a stamp or reporting, and I think most of them would be glad to report now, if there was something out there available, and I know that most of the people that I know that -- When they go out -- Like I don't start fishing until I am fifty or sixty miles offshore, and a lot of that is running from the crowds.

In South Carolina, honestly, we don't have a lot of crowds, like a lot of you other guys are dealing with, especially Florida, but, on the stamp, if the recreational side has a snapper grouper bottom fishing stamp, it would probably -- My guess is it would be in the \$25 to \$50 range, and I say that, and I know, on the commercial side, you all think that's nothing, and, well, it isn't, but we don't sell our fish, and so, as a matter of a fact, a charter captain now can't even sell his mahi to the local restaurant, which are pretty much in abundance. If we have a \$25 or \$50 range stamp, that coincides with reporting, I really don't think -- You're going to get a little bit of standoffish, but, from the majority of the quality fishermen, I think that will probably be applauded. Thank you.

MR. HULL: That's good to hear, because that's what we have recommended happen, and so the council will be glad to hear that, and, of course, this will all go out for more comment from the general public, too. Harry, go ahead.

MR. MORALES: I would like to support what Tony is saying, although my belief is a stamp all the way up to \$100 doesn't matter, and, again, in our area, I've got to go -- I mean, thirty is the

bare minimum, and I am typically going fifty miles out there, and so my trips are between \$600 and \$1,000, easily, every single time, and adding another hundred dollars is irrelevant, and I have asked several of our recreational fishermen of would you pay \$50, yes, and \$75, yes, \$100, yes.

At the end of the day, we are killing so many red snapper in just trying to get to some of the fish we can keep that, if you pay the stamp and had something in the box, you can call it a day, and you've got something, and so I think, from the charter side, if you're talking about a guy that is willing to pay \$800, or \$1,000, for that trip, if it's \$50 for four guys, \$200, whether they catch it or not, we're putting money in the till, money that we need for everything else that we're talking about. That's how we're going to end up with artificial structures and aquaculture, is the fishermen are going to pay into that fund, and so that's what I have to say.

MR. HULL: Chris, you're up.

MR. MILITELLO: I mean, I think the part of it that's helpful is that, yes, we can't get exact numbers on how many guys that have stamps caught fish, but it gives us some kind of an idea of who is going for them. Like I don't know who said it earlier, but we went out last week to the Bahamas, and we stopped, and we picked one up, but I will say that, once you catch one, you've got to stop fishing, because any fish that comes up is not going to -- I don't care what you do to it, and it's not going to live. That's just my feedback on that, but I'm in favor of a stamp, for sure.

MR. HULL: Good. Thank you. Yes, they're not that hard to catch, and, if you get one, you've got to stop, because no matter what --

MR. MILITELLO: Yes, and they're all blown up. All right. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you. I would like to see some analysis on the administration cost of these stamps, on a state and federal basis, because it would have to be a cooperative thing, and then figure out how much to charge for the permit, because that's an important factor here, and so I really -- I know it's going to take a while to get it done, but the council needs to embrace this idea for these rare-event animals offshore, and then, that way, they can at least -- Because they have the manpower, I mean the ability, the fishing power, now. They have the gear and the numbers and the deep pocketbooks to go fifty or a hundred-mile round trips and stuff like that, but, right now, at one fish per boat, that's not a lot, and, like I said, once they can define the universe that's going to fish out there, it's going to help the next stock assessment a lot. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Yes, and it's pretty much like on the commercial side, and it's a box-topper, or it's a day-saver. You're there in that area trolling, maybe, and, okay, let's catch our one snowy. If I'm a private recreational guy, that's how I would be looking at it, because you certainly don't want to sit there and keep catching them.

Now, on the charter boat side, I mean, it's a very small limit for charter boats too, and then we do have -- You're not going to need a stamp on the charter boat side, and we have charter boat permitting, and we have charter boat reporting, mandatory, and so it would be interesting to see what reporting has happened so far on the charter boat side. I think it's been in place for a year now, and I don't know if there's any of that available.

That is something that, on the charter boat side, is a totally different issue than the private rec, and they already have -- Not limited entry, but I think that's coming, but they have reporting, and they have permitting, and we know how many there are, and now we're going to know how many they catch and how often they fish for them, and just like the commercial side, and what kind of bait did you use and all the economics that go with it, and how much fuel did you burn, and, hey, on and on. I just wanted to make that statement, that there's quite a difference between on the recreational sector, including the charter boats, that they are permitted already. Rusty, go ahead.

MR. HUDSON: Jimmy, I can't remember the fella's name, and he was part of the black sea bass pot fishing, but he did some experiments with the State of North Carolina, and I think they were perhaps both venting and using descending devices, and they had animals that were recaptured after being released, and so some of those snowies do make it, but it comes back to careful handling and release techniques. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I was just going to add that, down here in Florida, in the Florida Keys, Miami, Broward, Palm Beach, everyone down here has a triple-quad engine boat, and these fish are very easily accessible, and the cost of going out there -- I think the cost of permit wouldn't even matter at all, the cost of the permit, because the cost of fuel and everything else, and I think having the permit is a great thing.

MR. HULL: I think we all concur with that. Okay. I am looking for more discussion, and we're kind of into the private recreational side here, and we've covered a lot, and we've made an awful lot of recommendations, some of which we have previously made, but anybody else want to add to this? Allie, it's back to you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Do you want to take Jack really quick, before I continue?

MR. HULL: Yes. Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: I was just going to say, under the recommendations we talked about, it seems like the one that stands out the most to me is the one that was about the private recreational stamp, and we've just really got to figure out what's going on there, and I would like to see that in bold, if possible. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Yes, I think that's good, and we've already recommended it by motion in the past, and so I don't know that that's necessary again, and I think just the recommendation here in bold is very good. Thank you, Jack.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Jimmy, if you're ready for me to --

MR. HULL: Well, here's Rusty. Let's go ahead and get Rusty, and then that would be it, and we're going to go back to staff. Go ahead, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Okay. I am worried that any federal money that is received for stamps or permits or whatever for the recreational sector could wind up in the general fund at the U.S. Treasury and

not utilized in certain ways, and it would be nice to also report on that, where does the money go and where can it stay. Thank you.

MR. HULL: That's being put up here now, that monies from the stamp may end up in the general fund, and we would like to know that it is a line item, so to speak, and it's going to be used where it's going to address the fisheries and not everything else, like coloring books. Okay. I think it looks good. Allie. Hold up. Dick, go ahead.

MR. BRAME: If the federal government does it, they can only do it for the cost of the administration of the stamp, and all the funds go back to the general fund, and it can't be directed toward any specific item. The states can do that, but the feds can't, I believe.

MR. HULL: Okay, Dick. Thank you. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Thank you so much for that discussion, and so we've got potential Action 6, and I believe this is the last one, and the council would like feedback on possibly modifying the recreational accountability measures, and so they requested a review of the post-season accountability measures, and we kind of took a look, more holistically, at the recreational accountability measures as a whole.

Currently, there are three triggers that need to be kind of checked off for the accountability measure to be put into effect, and so the recreational ACL needs to be exceeded, the total ACL needs to be exceeded, and the stock needs to be overfished, and so, if all three of those occur, then the AM will reduce the length of the following recreational season and reduce the recreational ACL by the overage of the sector ACL.

Some things to think about while you discuss this, and it does have an in-season AM. However, it's not practical, due to data availability, and so we haven't been getting data in enough of a timely fashion to implement this in-season AM, which we see for not only snowy, but other snapper grouper species, and then does the AP recommend modifying the recreational accountability measures, and, if so, what does the AP recommend? A three-year average is an option, and, if you refer to that options paper, the IPT did suggest mirroring the options that snowy grouper currently has, and I'm going to flip back to that, so that you can see it.

Currently, and, now, this is the preferred alternative for red porgy, and so it's written very similarly, but the IPT thought it would be practical for snowy as well, and so, if the recreational landings exceed the recreational annual catch limit, you would reduce the length of the following year's season, the recreational season, by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational annual catch limit from being exceeded the following year.

However, the length of the recreational season will not be reduced if the Regional Administrator determines, using the best available science, that this is not necessary, and there's just a question-mark here on the end because this is getting fleshed out by the IPT, and so, with that, I will kind of turn it over to you guys to discuss what the AP recommends, if anything, for modifying these accountability measures.

MR. HULL: Allie, and so the question I have is you just showed us the preferred alternative for red grouper, or, excuse me, red porgy, and how is that different than the current accountability measure for snowy recreationally right now?

MS. IBERLE: Somebody correct me if I'm wrong, but the main difference is that it removes those triggers, and so you don't have -- It removes these triggers, and, Myra, I might need your help on this one, but the only trigger would be if the recreational ACL is exceeded. The total ACL doesn't need to be exceeded, and the stock doesn't need to be overfished, for the recreational accountability measure to be triggered, was my understanding of it, but correct me if I'm wrong, Myra, because I think these can get a little confusing.

MS. BROUWER: They are confusing, and I agree, but I think you got it right, Allie. The issue with red porgy was, because the ACLs, or the catch levels, are going down so much, there is a good likelihood that the AMs are going to be triggered, at least on the recreational side, and so the council didn't want the accountability measure to be tied to the total ACL being exceeded, because then that was going to create this kind of moving target situation on the commercial side, and that's why they have decided to just tie the AM only to the recreational ACL, and I think that's what we're talking about doing here as well.

MR. HULL: Okay. So it reduces some of the triggers, which one of them was overfishing, and it still -- If it's exceeded, there is a payback the next year, and is that correct? So, if you wanted to modify -- If the recreational wanted to modify the recreational AMs, that's one alternative that is already there that the council prefers, if some of the AP members on the recreational side wanted to do that.

MS. IBERLE: Correct, and so there would still be the payback attached to that AM, and it would just be changing how it's triggered, and, again, Alternative 3 is worded the same for red porgy, but, right now, in that amendment process, that is the preferred for that species.

MR. HULL: Okay. Good. I was just trying to get the conversation going, and now we have some participants. Tony, you're up.

MR. CONSTANT: To me, it's a little bit -- I understand where they're headed with it, but it's a little minute, being that the recreational snowy is only 17 percent of the fishery, and I don't really think we've been meeting the 17 percent of the fishery. I, personally, would in favor of keeping - - If it's not broke, don't fix it, and let's keep the three in place and not change up like we have to a species that's being detrimentally hit. The second question I have is, when the commercial sector reaches its limit of snowy grouper right now, the ACL -- Or goes over it before the season is stopped, is it retributed in the next year as well?

MR. HULL: Allie.

MS. IBERLE: The current commercial accountability measure is here, and so, if the landings are reached, or expected to reach, then the season closes. I'm not sure on the post-season on that one.

MR. HULL: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: If you don't mind, Harry, asking your question again, and sorry that I am multitasking a little bit here, but I think I know where you were headed, if you don't mind.

MR. CONSTANT: Myra, this is Tony, but I was asking if the -- I am not familiar, but let's just say it's a thousand pounds. If the commercial sector closes at a thousand, but it actually ran over to 1,200, would those 200 pounds be taken to the next year? Obviously, those numbers are irrelevant.

MS. BROUWER: You mean would the payback --

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, which is basically what they're asking the recreational sector to do here.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so, right now -- The trigger is if the total ACL is exceeded and then whatever amount -- Whichever sector caused the total ACL to be exceeded, that sector needs to pay the overage back, and does that get at what you're asking?

MR. CONSTANT: Yes, and that would be what I'm asking. If either sector exceeds, those sectors would pay back next year?

MS. BROUWER: Correct. That's the way it is right now.

MR. CONSTANT: Okay. So, if it's that way right now, why would it be mentioned in the alternative? Isn't that what the alternative is asking to do? If we reach the ACL, then do you have pay additional back? Is that already in place?

MS. BROUWER: That's what is currently in place. I think we're looking at maybe taking away the payback provision and maybe just reducing the length. I apologize, and can you scroll up just a tiny bit, Allie? This is structured very similarly to how it is for red porgy, and so if you note that Alternative 3 does not have a payback in poundage. What happens is, if the recreational ACL is exceeded, then, the following year, the season is shortened by the amount that would prevent another overage.

MR. CONSTANT: Does that same effect happen to the commercial sector? Does theirs get reduced based on their overage the following year?

MS. BROUWER: I don't know if -- Allie, are we looking for changes to commercial accountability measures as well? I'm not sure the council has had these discussions.

MR. CONSTANT: The reason I'm asking is, on this species, which we're talking about snowy, the recreational is only 17 percent, and the commercial is 83 percent, and so we're a minute -- I don't even think we reach the 17, and so, if we're going to talk about reducing, it would probably need to come from the 83 percent side, which I'm not suggesting that we need to do, but I just don't know where we were headed with this question.

MS. IBERLE: Jimmy, if you don't mind me jumping in, there was a discussion, during the September meeting, of examining the commercial accountability measures, but that's something that the AP can recommend, and I see that Kerry has her hand up, if you want to shed some more light on that, or, Jimmy, if you want to let her shed some more light.

MR. HULL: Well, of course. We need light. Go, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right, and so, Myra, I need you to pay attention, so that I don't misspeak. It is complicated, but my understanding of what we're asking here, and this happens with a lot of our fisheries, is we have an overall target for all of us, and so that's the ACL. Then we take that, and we split it into the rec portion and the commercial portion. The commercial portion is a hard TAC. When we hit it, we're done.

There are instances, whether it's in a split season or something, where the commercial sector goes over a little, but, for the most part, when we hit it, we're done, and I would have to look at each species individually to remember when we have a payback provision, but I know we have payback provisions.

What happens sometimes, especially with the recreational sector, because there is not a hard TAC, and we don't know what the recreational sector caught until much, much, much after the year has ended, because of how we collect that data, is we have this ability where, if the commercial fishery didn't catch all of their TAC, and there is still some of that ACL in between what the commercial guys caught and what the recreational guys caught and there is still a pile up to the ACL that has not been caught, and so, often, that has been allowed to go to, in most instances, and I think in almost all instances, the recreational sector, without them having to have accountability for going over their TAC, or sorry, and that's not the right word, but allocation the next season, because we're saying, hey, even though you caught more than your share, you didn't still catch up to -- The whole industry, commercial and recreational, did not catch up to the ACL together, and so we're not going to penalize anyone for it.

That is what this question is asking. What this is saying is do we not now allow that little bit that wasn't caught between the sector allocations and the ACL to be sort of this forgiveness pile, and do we -- Any sector that goes over their ACL, do they have to pay it back the next season, or whenever we realize that it has happened, and so, Myra, please tell me if I'm wrong, but that is my understanding of where we were going here.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Kerry, for verbalizing all of that, and I will say that accountability measures get very, very confusing, to council members as well, and Kerry pretty much explained the situation that we have, where recreational landings estimates are not available in as timely a way as managers would like to have them in order for the accountability measures to be most effective, and so we're often caught in this place where, theoretically, accountability measures, if they were triggered at the right time, would work really well, but sometimes they're not, and especially when you have very short seasons and you have in-season closures that don't ever get triggered, because you don't have the data until after the season has wrapped up.

That's one of the problems, and this sort of forgiveness pile, Kerry, that you mentioned, I'm not sure that that is something that we can refer to like that, and I think there's some rollover that can happen between the commercial seasons, like you said, and I guess what the council is trying to do is to make each sector more responsible for their own landings, and so untying the accountability measures from the total ACL makes it easier to track whether one sector was responsible for the overage and then that sector should be responsible for whatever payback. I don't know, and I'm kind of rambling here a little bit.

MR. CONSTANT: Myra, thank you, and, Kerry, you did a great job of explaining that, by the way, and I know it was a little difficult, and then I guess what I was -- Since that's been explained, and I don't know if this is practical or not, but, instead of taking that amount, as small as it may be, and taking it off the recreational side for the following year, is it feasible to add it to the commercial side for the existing year, even though we do have different seasons, so to speak? To me, it would make more sense to let that allocation for that year, if they haven't met theirs, to be added to the commercial side.

MS. BROUWER: I will say that -- Sorry, and I'm not sure if that was a question or not, but what you're describing is kind of this reallocation, to where, if one sector doesn't catch it, the other sector gets it.

MR. CONSTANT: Correct.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and that scenario has been discussed at the council table. They did talk about -- They talked about it for yellowtail, in fact, many years ago, and it is an option that the council has, and it's not -- As you can imagine, it's something that's a little controversial, and so it's not something that's been seriously considered or been close to being put in place for any of at least the snapper grouper species that the council manages.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, I think this is a very small number, because recreational is so small on this particular species anyway, but that just caught my eye about the 17 percent, and it was just small, but I will leave it at that, and I think your answers were great. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Myra. Thank you, Tony, and I think, Tony -- For me, initially, I think your question was that you were looking for equity between the sectors and payback. If you're going to do it here, you need to do it there, and I think that's where, initially, you were headed with that, but there's an awful lot here to try to understand. Harry, you're up.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir, and I would say to you that, at 17 percent, and an inability to have effective accountability measures until after the fact, and the fact that the five-year history shows that the recreational are remaining under their limit, that adding additional restrictions to recreational is not advised, at all. This is maybe the most minor area that we have discussed in the last year, and so I would not be in support of adding additional pressures when, right now, the recreational fishermen, by boat, can only have one of these fish, and so, no, I would not be in support of it, and nor do I believe that any of the fishermen that I talk to that go that far would be in support of it.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Harry. Jack Cox.

MR. COX: I just wanted to speak a little bit on the accountability in snowy and other species for the commercial sector. Keep in mind that part of our accountability program on commercial is we're required to do weekly reporting, by NMFS. If we don't comply, we are not able to renew our permits, which is a pretty strong accountability, and some of us have to do reporting discards as well, and also economic information, but I think, in a perfect world, both sectors would have in-season closures.

When I was on the council, I know we talked about it, and the commercial sector does have in-season closures, because the recreational sector doesn't want to have a shorter season the following year, and so I think that is something that they need to figure out, as they become more accountable, that they don't cut themselves short going into the following season. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Jack. James, you're up.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Jimmy. I wanted to comment on the idea of the shared ACL between the sectors and if one hits and the other one doesn't and having it shift back and forth. This kind of brings us full circle, when we're talking about accountability, pretty much like Jack was just saying, that the commercial sector is -- We have a lot on the line, week in and week out, day in and day out, and we have something to lose, and I think, just as a commercial fisherman, speaking that way, we wanted to have a clear distinction between the sectors and not try and share an ACL, because we believe that the AMs are going to come up for the recreational sector, and we're going to have better information at some point, and we're going to have better accountability at some point, and we want to know where we stand, and not necessarily sharing the same pool has been the best concept for us in yellowtail snapper. So, I mean, that's just kind of where we were on that at that time. Thanks.

MR. HULL: Thanks, James. I think we got that recorded, what you had recommended there of not sharing the same ACL. Okay. Do I see any other hands? I do not. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: I think that is it for me and for what the council requested input on for snowy, and so thank you guys for both your discussion on gag and snowy, and we'll make sure that your feedback gets back to the council, and so I will hand it off to Mike.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Allie. You did a fantastic job there. Mike.

MS. IBERLE: Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jimmy. Just coming back to the agenda, we have the updates, and then we'll move to public comment and other business. If you're ready, I can call on, or you can call on, Kathleen Howington to give the SEDAR update.

MR. HULL: If she's ready, I'm ready.

MS. HOWINGTON: I'm good to go. Hello, Snapper Grouper AP. My name is Kathleen Howington, and I am the SEDAR coordinator that coordinates the South Atlantic Council SEDAR assessments, and so I'm just going to give you a little update on what's been going on in the assessments, what's upcoming, and when you're going to be receiving emails from me, and please feel free to just interrupt me whenever you want and ask any questions.

Now, the first thing I'm going to do is just again -- I think I'm just going to do this every time that I present to you guys, is just give you a quick how to find SEDAR assessments. You just can go to the sedarweb.org and then click on this "Find a Project" and either look by species or by cooperators, or, if you happen to know the number of the SEDAR, you can just go to this quick link box over here, these blue buttons, and click on the number, and it will lead you to the website, and

so that then is how you find terms of reference, schedule, any documents that are there, any kind of workshop dates or updates.

Now, what I am going to do is I am actually going to click on this pretty little SEDAR assessment schedule grid, and this is hot off the presses from last week for the SEDAR Steering Committee, and so this is the most up-to-date version, and I'm going to zoom-in. Please just keep in mind, while we're looking at this, that green is approved and scheduled, and yellow, or orange, is approved pending scheduling, yellow is going to be finalized in the spring of next year, in May, and the blue is future requests, and so, while we're going through this, basically, the further down you go, if it's in blue, it's been requested that that's kind of what the council is thinking, but there is a high chance that it's going to change, and so keep that in mind.

Let's just start with 2022. This is all the stuff that's going to be happening next year, and so, if you all are not aware, the SEDAR 68 scamp research track was finished, and the assessment report was released on September 29 of this year, and it is going to be reviewed by the SSC next week. Then, following the research track, following every research track from now on, there is always going to be an operational.

Now, the goal of this operational is to integrate whatever the most recent data is, and so the goal of the research track is to come out with the here's the base model, and here's the model that we're going to be using for the future, maybe with one or two little tweaks, but this is the model that we're going to be using, and then the idea is that you have an operational instantly afterwards that is able to then bring in whatever the most up-to-date data is and get that terminal year of data from, and I believe this was 2017, to whatever the most recent year is that we can.

Next week, after the SSC sees the scamp 68 research track assessment report, they are then going to be developing terms of reference and the schedule for this 2022 operational assessment, and if, for some reason, we need a topical working group, I am going to be requesting the Snapper Grouper AP members in say the month of November, and so that one is going to be a pretty quick turnaround between, hey, we need a topical working group and, okay, guys, are you all willing to participate.

Now, hopefully, the SSC doesn't have a topical working group and we're able to just integrate data, and, if that's the case, then the schedule is starting in January of 2022 with data scoping, and it's ending in November of 2022, with the report being released then, and so that's the hope, and we're hoping to be able to crank that out and get that report out as soon as we can.

Also, starting next year is the gray triggerfish research track. The planning team has been meeting this whole time, and we have a draft terms of reference, schedule, and participant list that are going to be reviewed by the SSC next week and approved by the council in December. Right now, our current snapper grouper participants for this gray trigger research track are Harry Morales and Jack Cox, and so thank you, guys, for that.

That is scheduled to begin in May of 2022, with a data workshop in September of 2022 and assessment webinars in March through September of 2023, and a review workshop in October of 2023, with a report being released in November, and so that's the goal here, and then, of course, like I said, with every research track, there will be a follow-up operational, and so we will be

creating the base model during this and then, during this operational, be updating the base model with the most recent data.

We also have SEDAR 76, black sea bass, and this is the final panel-style operational assessment for the South Atlantic, and, right now, on the panel, we have Lawton Howard, Robert Lorenz, and Cameron Sebastian. This is just going to be via webinar, and it's scheduled May of 2022 to March of 2023, and so hopefully we'll be able to get that going, and then the final one for 2022 is mutton snapper, over here.

This is already ongoing and is scheduled to have an in-person data workshop in Florida from January 31 through February 4 of 2022. Right now, the appointed members are David Moss and Richard Gomez, and also Greg Mercurio, who is no longer a member of the AP, but he is still appointed. Following the in-person data workshop, there will be a series of assessment webinars from April of 2022 through September and a review workshop in January of 2023. Before I move on to the 2023 assessments, does anyone have a question about 2022?

Seeing and hearing none, in 2023, what we have scheduled right now, we have vermilion and red grouper, and both of these are going to be operational assessments, and neither have topical working groups, and so we don't have any Snapper Grouper AP members appointed. The schedules are currently drafts and are going to be approved at the December council meeting of this year.

For right now, vermilion snapper is scheduled to begin in October of 2022 and end in September of 2023, and then red grouper is scheduled to start in November of 2022 and end in December of 2023. Now, the big thing for 2023, and I recognize it's two years out, but just keep this in mind. During this year, I will be sending out requests to see who would be interested in the big upcoming red snapper research track, and so that's right here. It's scheduled to begin in 2024. In 2023, I will be reaching out, via email, and asking who is willing to participate. Just keep that in mind, to keep an eye out for my email.

Then, for 2024, the big change that happened last week was that the South Atlantic Council requested that a red snapper research track begin in 2024, and the goal of this is to integrate the South Atlantic Red Snapper Count, and so what we're going to do is we're going to start 2024 and we're going to integrate three years of data, for 2021 to 2023, and we're going to create that base model, and then we're going to finalize all of the red snapper count data in the following OA, and so that's the goal here.

We also have a tilefish OA and a blueline tilefish OA, and, when I say "OA", I mean operational. The tilefish statement of work is going to be developed at the SSC meeting next week. The blueline tilefish statement of work has already been developed, and there is going to be a topical working group for this assessment, and so I will be requesting Snapper Grouper AP members again in 2023, and so keep an eye out for that.

Then, after that, everything turns to blue, and so we don't have a schedule, and there's a chance that it could change, but, for right now, in 2025, you guys have gag, snowy, and red porgy assessments scheduled, and so hopefully we'll be able to get those done, and then, like I said, the further out you go, the more likely it's going to change, and so we have greater amberjack and white grunt in the 2026 and 2027 categories. Does anyone have any questions? I know I went

through that pretty quickly for the 2023 and 2024 assessments, but, of course, I'm open to any questions that you guys may have.

MS. IBERLE: Jimmy, I don't have any hands up right now.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Carry on.

MS. HOWINGTON: That's all I had, and it was just an update on the schedule and the requests, and so, if there are no questions, then I'm all good, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, you are. Thank you very much, Kathleen. I appreciate it. Great report. It looks like the next item on the agenda is the Citizen Science Report.

MS. BYRD: I am Julia Byrd, and I am the Citizen Science Program Manager, and we just wanted to give you guys a quick update on what's been going on with the Citizen Science Program and really just highlight things that have happened since you guys met in the spring, and then, also, we're hoping to get input on a few things from you guys about our SAFMC Release project.

First off, I just wanted to give you an update on a few program activities, and so, back in August of this year, we were able to bring on a new Citizen Science team member, and so we were really excited to hire Nick Smillie as our new Citizen Science Project Coordinator. Nick recently completed his master's thesis at the College of Charleston, and he worked really closely with the Citizen Science Program on his research, which really focused on trying to evaluate the effects of kind of dedicated recruitment and retention efforts on the usage of mobile apps, and so, as part of his project, he interviewed a number of our SAFMC Release participants and then also analyzed some of the MyFishCount survey data.

Since he was so familiar with the SAFMC Release project, he was really kind of able to jump into this position, and we're really excited to have him onboard, and we are going to kind of tag-team today's kind of update presentation to you guys, and he's going to give you an update on what's been happening with the SAFMC Release project.

Also, I wanted to let you guys know that our Citizen Science Operations and Project Advisory Committees will be meeting virtually the afternoon of November 1, and so these two groups are kind of our citizen science advisory panels, and the main thing they're going to be doing is updating our citizen science research priorities, and so those priorities really guide the types of projects that the program will kind of support or pursue developing over the next couple of years.

Our Projects Advisory Committee is made up of folks from each of the different council advisory panels, and so we are lucky to have Jimmy Hull and Bob Lorenz as kind of the representatives from the Snapper Grouper AP who will be involved in those discussions.

The last thing that I wanted to kind of update you guys on here is let you know that there's an opportunity to participate virtually in a symposium that's being put on by the American Fisheries Society, as part of their conference, and that's really on angler engagement. We've been working with a number of different folks in helping kind of coordinate this, and, really, as part of the symposium, there's going to be a ton of presentations on a variety of different kind of projects and campaigns, where fishermen and scientists have kind of worked together, and so the presentations

highlight freshwater projects, saltwater projects, things in the South Atlantic region, or, also, projects that are done in other parts of the country and in Canada, and so the symposium is scheduled, tentatively, for Sunday, November 7, and, actually, David Moss, one of you all's AP members, will be participating and presenting as part of this symposium, and so we'll be sending out details on how to kind of tune in via the council's South Atlantic Bite newsletter, or, if you're interested, just let me know, and I can share that information with Mike Schmidtke to send out to all of you guys.

Next, I wanted to give you a quick update on some work we've been doing with Rick Bonney, who has kind of been our citizen science kind of guru, or expert, that's been advising our program since it first started back in 2016 or 2017. One of the things we really make sure that we're doing is kind of evaluate the program kind of moving into the future, and so we want to make sure that it's doing what we want it to do.

As kind of the first phase in this evaluation, we're working with Rick to try to gather some baseline information on kind of trust levels and knowledge and attitudes between various groups of kind of stakeholders in our fisheries community, and so kind of gathering that information from fishermen and scientists and managers.

As kind of this first phase, Rick is going to be conducting interviews with eighteen folks in the fisheries community, six fishermen and six scientists and six managers, and so we have kind of identified potential interviewees. I know you guys, in the spring, provided some great feedback on that to us, and so Rick, right now, has been emailing folks to set up interviews and has started conducting interviews, and we're hoping that those will kind of wrap up between October and December of this year. I know there are a few of you guys that we're hoping to kind of talk with through these interviews, and so some of you may be seeing some emails from Rick Bonney, asking if you're willing to participate in this project.

Next, I just wanted to give you a quick update on the FISHstory project and where we are with that, and, just a quick reminder, this is the project that's looking at kind of historic fishing photos to look at kind of catch and length estimates from back in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and so, for this project, we've been working really closely with Rusty, who provided all of the photos from his family's fishing fleet for this kind of initial pilot project, and so I'm excited to report that data collection is complete, and so we had over 2,100 volunteers help us kind of count and identify all of the fish in these historic photos via an online kind of crowdsourcing website called Zooniverse, and those volunteers made over 35,400 classifications.

As the second part of the project, we developed a method to estimate the size of those released fish, by using the lumber in the leaderboards where the fish are hanging as a scale, and so all of the -- We're kind of pilot testing that method on king mackerel, and all of the king mackerel have been measured in the photos, and so where we are right now is we're analyzing the data, and so, for some of our tricky photos, we had validation team members kind of review the fish identifications and counts on those photos, and I know a couple of AP members served on that validation team, and so big thanks to you all.

Where we are right now is kind of comparing the validation team data to some of the live Zooniverse volunteer data, analyzing that Zooniverse data, and then also using all of those king mackerel that were measured to develop kind of length compositions, and so we should be

wrapping up analysis and have a final report for this project by the end of the year. Now I want to hand things over to our new Citizen Science Project Coordinator, Nick Smillie, to update you guys on things that have been happening with our SAFMC Release project.

MR. SMILLIE: Thanks so much, and it's been excellent hearing all of your great expertise over the past couple of days, and I know a lot of you have heard of the Release project, but we're just going to go over a general overview and some of the changes that we've been making, and then we're really hoping to get some useful feedback from you guys at the end of this section, and so keep an eye out for that, and I wish I could be meeting you in person. My name is Nick Smillie, and I'm the new Citizen Science Project Coordinator, and I'm focusing closely on the Release project and trying to focus on recruitment and retention of fishermen for the project.

Like I said, I will just give you a brief introduction to the project itself, and, as Jimmy was talking about in the beginning of the day, you know that discards are one of our biggest issues facing the snapper grouper fishery, and the number of released fish are increasing rapidly in the South Atlantic, and so the data on released fish are not totally covered with most of the traditional data collection programs, and so Release is kind of a niche project that empowers fishermen to show what they're seeing on the water and collect data on releases.

We have also talked a lot about accountability over the past couple of days, and I think this is an excellent opportunity to take some accountability in the fishery, especially for the recreational guys, and so one of the updates that we've been working on recently is that we've moved from a standalone application, like the one that you're seeing on the screen, and moved to SciFish, and so SciFish is almost a host application.

It's going to serve as a one-stop shop for a lot of fisheries citizen science projects along the Atlantic coast, and SAFMC Release is one of those projects that will kind of be nested within this application, and it is currently. Also, a recent update, which you guys would have heard at the last AP meeting, is that we expanded just from scamp, and that was the species that we started with, to now we're collecting release information on all shallow-water grouper species, I guess all ten of them, and so your reds, gags, blacks, scamp, and all the strawberry groupers. That was really exciting, and we've been able to get a lot more information that way, because we weren't getting a whole lot of scamp releases beforehand.

Since I've come in, we've been working on a lot of rebranding, and part of that was this slogan of "Reel, Record, Release", and, we've just been trying to make the project a little bit more recognizable and aesthetically pleasing, and we've been making a lot of new outreach materials. We just made some new print outreach materials, and we're working on some swag items to distribute as well, but, just to give you a little bit more specifics to the project itself, we work with all sectors, commercial, rec, and for-hire.

Our main goal, the main goal of the project, is to collect length data, to characterize the size of released fish, and, subsequently, also inform mortality estimates with information like depth, release condition, like shark interaction, or predation, and release treatment, like descending device usage and venting, and we've also updated the app to make location an optional field, because people weren't too hot on giving their exact location, and so you can give a general area, and that location is an optional field now as well.

I want to be clear in saying that the goal of this project isn't to -- It's not to estimate or collect data on discard numbers, and so we're really focusing on that size, that length, of these released shallow-water groupers, and so part of this new expansion is we are actually planning on opening and expanding further to collect release information on red snapper, which is really exciting for us, and we're hoping to recruit a lot more fishermen with this expansion, but this is where you all come in, because we understand that red snapper is a little bit different of a beast than the shallow-water grouper, and especially I think I heard Tony say that he had released forty-two red snapper in one trip.

The general nature of this project is to submit information on each individual fish that you release, a length on each individual fish, and so, obviously, it would be very difficult to do that for forty-two individual red snapper, and so we're trying -- First, I've got a two-part question for you, and it's to try and get an idea for how many Americans you all are releasing on a trip, and is it more than ten a trip, or is it fewer than ten a trip, and Tony gave us some insight, but I wanted to hear you all's points on that as well. Since the app is designed to log individual fish, is it practical to submit every released red snapper, and so that's kind of the first question there, if you guys have any comments on that.

MR. HULL: Tony, what say you?

MR. CONSTANT: I think that would be hard to do on a day like we had on that particular one that you're talking about. If we're dealing with reception on our phones, we don't have that where we're catching these red snappers, and so you're going to have to keep a log and bring it back home, and then do that, which I think, at that point, you have to -- I guess we go back to the recreational angler keeping logs and keeping better data. For instance, that day, I stopped counting at forty-two.

We had a lot of -- We caught grouper, and we caught everything else that day, but we do not have cell reception. As a matter of a fact, once we get to that fifty or sixty-mile range, you're on airplane mode, and so we would have to keep some data along the way, which would be another can of worms, but I am receptive to it.

MR. SMILLIE: I can respond to that as well, and, out offshore, this app actually allows you to log trips without service, and so you can submit your trips while you're out on the water, and then, once you get back into service, that will upload to the cloud. We understand that a lot of people are really busy, and like, if you're pulling up forty-two Americans, plus some groupers as well, you're not going to have time to work on that, to open and pull that app up, and so what we've kind of talked about is sometimes quickly measure it, take a photo of it next to a ruler, and then you can go back at the end of the day, after you've cleaned your fish, when you remember to go back and log those fish, and put it into the application. I guess the answer, coming from you, Tony, was that releasing and recording -- I mean, you said you stopped keeping track at forty-two, and you wouldn't be willing to log all of those fish?

MR. CONSTANT: No, and that was good thinking on this development. I mean, if I can take a picture of the fish, and I do have rulers, both in my box and on the side of my boat, and so taking a picture with the length and recording it is not a big deal. Obviously, we didn't take pictures of forty-two fish, but that's very doable, and then entering the information out there and being able to download it back when you get reception, that's very doable. I think that, with the knowledge

of the snapper grouper permits in the recreational sector, and it goes back to what Harry was saying.

Education here is the big thing, and I have spent the last fifteen or twenty years at fishing clubs and stuff educating locals on things like that, and I think the education is huge here, because the average people that will allow a floater aren't paying attention to what we are seeing every time we meet, and they're not aware of the fisheries, and, if we could get that over, I think we'll see more and more recording.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I do see that, Julia, your hand is up.

MS. BYRD: Jimmy, thanks. I think Nick covered a lot of what I was going to say, but one other kind of question that I had, that goes along with what Nick was asking, and what Tony was saying, is kind of how often -- When you all are catching red snapper, is it 75 percent of the trips, or 100 percent of the trips, where you all are releasing thirty or forty fish, or is that only on 25 percent of the trips? How often are you releasing kind of those large, large numbers? That's something that I think would be --

MR. CONSTANT: I think that's a great question, and I would say, if we don't move actively, then at least half of the trips we hit those kind of numbers, and I will say this too, that, every trip I go on, we catch at least one snapper that will cover the lid of a forty-eight-quarter cooler, which I believe are probably state-record fish. I think the state record here is about thirty-seven pounds, and I know these fish are over forty. We actually had a snapper one time that we were venting it on a forty-eight-quart cooler, and you could put your hand around the cooler and not see it, but, yes, we get numbers in the twenty-plus regularly, and forties maybe half the time, or maybe 40 percent of the time.

MR. HULL: Thanks a lot. Yes, that's how they came up from the assessment, saying that there was two-million pounds of discards. There it is.

MR. CONSTANT: You're exactly right, and, as long as we continue to have to release, and that's why my opinion is we catch one and you're done. One per angler, six per boat, or four per boat, or anything, but, if you allow somebody to catch one, two, three, or four per boat, you're done, and you don't throw anything back, and I've seen it work in other species.

MR. HULL: Right on. Thank you. Harry, I see your hand is up.

MR. MORALES: Yes, sir. I would say that -- First of all, I would strongly suggest that your fish measuring project get incorporated into this application, because snapping a picture of a red snapper and getting it back into the water real fast is probably the fastest way that you're going to get a lot of data. Now, I would say that, over the last five years, our catching of red snapper has only increased, where, most recently, we had fifteen red snapper, everything from twelve inches to about twenty-four.

Like Tony said, I mean, we're trying different techniques to avoid catching the red snapper, because the red snapper now you can catch like you used to catch the black sea bass ten years ago, and, I mean, it was like, one time on Christmas Eve, we had forty-some black sea bass caught in one day on the boat. All of the fishermen that I know, and we're fishing mostly for vermilion and

trigger, and whether it's a chicken rig or a small hook or a big hook, and it makes no damn difference. We're fighting the red snapper, and so I would say, on average, ten releases would be normal in this day and age. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Harry. Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: For Julia, just a quick thought, and we can discuss this more on November 1, but, for something like red snapper, I would just like, for anybody involved in designing these citizen science studies, to just keep in mind one of the biggest problems with this fishery is dead discards and releasing, and so we know the amount of time to handle a fish is very critical, and all of us will differ in our skills levels, anywhere from the fishermen from the charter fleet that is always out there to the guys that just go out once a month.

Something maybe to bake in the study might be a smaller group to also record -- Somebody to record the amount of time these fish are handled, in order to get this data, because I worry about it a little, and they don't seem to be all that rugged, these red snapper, and we're all getting practice, but don't keep passing them around for pictures and throw them back, and I do have some concern that these citizen scientists, knowing who they are, we may be -- These fish may be handled a little too long for good survival, by adding all these steps, and I think we need to be conscious of that, to make this really work. Thank you.

MR. SMILLIE: That's a great point there, Bob. We have been trying to collaborate our outreach efforts a little bit with the best fishing practices, just because there are so many common goals between the two projects, and so we've been trying our best, in our outreach, to associate the two together, and being a good citizen scientist is also taking care of these fish before you put them back in the water, and that's the whole point of working on this project, you know, is to understand if these fish are going to survive, and, if they're taking three or four minutes of the fish's life above the water, that's going to decrease their chance of survival, and so that's a really good point.

To kind of follow-up on those questions, it sounds like you all, on average, are catching ten-plus red snappers per trip. Since the app is designed to log individual fish, do you all think it's practical to expect a participant to log every released snapper, and, if not, then would there be a way that you all could think that we would get a representative sub-sample of the snapper that you're catching on a single trip?

MR. HULL: Nick, I will chime-in now. I think that this app is great, and I think it's what is going to be needed when we eventually get recreational licensing, or permitting, or some type of stamp involved, and this is how you're going to be able to report and send information in, and so it will all be set up, and this is a great thing.

I think that, for me, if I am releasing a red snapper, and being able to lay it on a scale, whether it's on top of a cooler or wherever, on a fish box, and getting a picture of the length of that animal on that scale, it's a lot of good information while we're taking the hook out, prior to either a descending device or venting that animal, and it isn't going to take that long. As far as the depth and the other location, that can be added later, as you're logging-in, going to different spots or on the way in, but you can get that picture, and, if it's above ten animals, you may not get a picture of all the animals.

If you had forty red snapper, I mean, that's going to take a lot of time, and there's no sense in getting that much, but you could record later that this is a sub-sample. Like you said, here's ten pictures of the smallest ones and the biggest ones and the middle-sized, in like a bin, you know, but there was forty of them, and so I think that it should be acceptable to not have to -- You can report forty of them, but you don't have to take the data from all forty, and you can get a representation. That's my two-cents. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Jimmy, I was about to say the same thing. You will at least get most of them. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: I want to warn people about something. With our sharks, especially the recreational-caught sharks, there's an awful lot of people that don't practice careful handling and release techniques, and that includes some of the other HMS stuff, and the government monitors a lot of these public postings, Facebook, et cetera, and some people have gotten in trouble.

Now, dehooking devices are another positive that goes with like the positive of using a circle hook, and you don't have a lot of deep-hooked animals that are going to be tore up inside, in the gills, et cetera, and, with some of the bigger red snapper, a dehooking device, a special kind of way to measure -- Some people actually put a measure on the side of the boat that they have their full-time to be able to analyze what they have and what they're releasing, and so there may come a day in the future where some people might get in trouble for not practicing careful handling and release techniques to better have the animals survive.

I love the fact that, whenever we have an observer onboard that tags and measures and all that stuff, and that's very sophisticated, and they've been trying to get the better measuring devices, and I was working, through Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and there was a problem in getting some of that equipment, but it's all needed. All of this information is extremely useful, and it's just a matter of the kind of citizen science approach that these people want to provide the data, and then they will. I am not worried about the person that doesn't want to, because, if we can get enough sample size amongst all the participants, that's a good day. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Back to you, Nick.

MR. SMILLIE: Awesome. Thank you, all, for your comments. This is just the last follow-up to a few of you all's comments before -- It sounded like a few of you were in agreement that the sub-sample technique could potentially be a good way to record red snapper. We're trying to get a feeling for, if we were to do this sub-sample submission, what would be the most representative of all of the red snapper that you're catching on the trip? What amount of fish, or what level of submitting, would give you the most accurate depiction of the size distribution of the fish that you all are catching on a given day?

Would it be that you just log all of the information about the very first snapper that you catch on that day and then release the rest of them, or would it be maybe an every-other-three fish, or just a random selection, I think as Bobby mentioned before, and what do you all think would be the best representation of the snapper you're catching in a day?

MR. HULL: Thanks for that important question, Nick. Being involved in quite a few stock assessments, and seeing how they throw out a lot of data for bias, I think that probably that question would have to go some of the analysts, which maybe you are, and that could say, okay, this would be acceptable, or this wouldn't be, and I think -- Because, for me, if I get to choose, I'm going to -- I think that it would be important to find out what they would recommend if they're going to use this information, this self-reported information, from them, because, for me, I'm going to pick the smallest, the in the middle, and maybe the biggest that I can see from the day, or something like that, but they're going to say, well, you just picked the biggest or something and maybe throw it out. With that, I will go to Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: In my opinion, a random check, or every third one, and the reason for that is we can't keep a red snapper, and so we're having to move a lot. If you start catching one, two, three of them, I typically move, and so I would say a randomness would probably be best.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Tony. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: Jimmy, thanks. Historically, whenever we, and I and others, have found snapper bonanzas, those animals are generally gutting out between twenty and twenty-five pounds, and there will be like a gazillion of them. In other words, they're all just the same size when they're that big, and then you will find some of the bigger ones mixed with the smaller and medium ones on reefs, but these bigger ones get right up into the upper water column, anybody that has fished them and seen them.

You will have a whole bunch of big ones swimming around, and it's the most awesome sight you've ever seen, but, if you're working on chickens, little ones and moderate-sized chicken snappers, and that's the one-pound to eight and ten-pound, you're going to find yourself in more areas that are uniquely different from what we call the bonanza. It could be the same depths. It could be five miles off the beach, or it could be twenty-five or fifty miles off the beach, but the reality is that's a big difference compared to just normal fishing, when you run up on one of them, and, of course, we're not allowed to exceed a certain amount of catch, and so, commercially, a lot of that has since been left alone, since 2010, January 4, when we closed down the red snapper. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Julia.

MS. BYRD: Thanks for letting me chime-in, and so, Jimmy, you made a really good point about we're talking to you guys, to see what you think is feasible to do on the water, and we're also talking to some of the assessment scientists, to say, if we did sub-sample, what would we need to do, so that the data could be used to put together kind of length information for something like a stock assessment, and so we're hoping to get feedback from you all, which has been great so far today, but we're also talking to scientists, and then we're hoping to get kind of a little planning team together, where the scientists -- That includes scientists and fishermen, where we can kind of hash this out before adding kind of red snapper into the project.

I did want to ask one other thing, based on something that Tony had mentioned too, and so, when you're catching a lot of red snapper at a spot, you will move to a new spot, and so just another idea, versus kind of sub-sampling that we've been batting around between staff, is maybe you would log your first released red snapper at each location, and I don't know if -- Would that kind

of help give a representative sample of what you're catching, or are you catching all sizes at all locations, and so maybe that isn't as big of a deal?

MR. CONSTANT: I don't -- You know, most of our fish are twenty pounds, or fifteen pounds plus, and then we do run into the ten-pound fish, but we find, when we -- I find, when I run into ten-pound fish, I also see a good many twenty pounds also. When I get to the truly big ones, meaning thirty-plus, or thirty-five pounds plus, we are -- Typically all of the fish -- Kind of like Rusty said, and they're all twenty-five-plus, and so, if you're catching really big fish, state record size, most of the fish you're bringing in are wild, and these things are huge, but, when you're -- I don't necessarily that the first fish would be the good representative, because sometimes you drop down, and you will catch a ten-pounder, and then you will catch nothing but twenty-pounders, or twenty-five-pounders. I still say that a randomness -- It's a random example would be about as random as the catch.

MR. HULL: Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: If you all remember that our twelve-inch minimum size is a one-pound animal, and this twenty-inch size is roughly a three-and-a-half-pound animal, or a four-and-a-half-pound animal at three years plus, and the other one was a one-year. Once you start getting into the lengths, Julia, eighteen to twenty-pounder, whole weight, and let's just say that. We have three categories of chickens, ponies, and sows, and the sows generally are eighteen-plus, and, at that point, your length measurements are going to run into a slow-growth difference between an animal that might be twelve years old and an animal that might be forty years old, because they had a forty-something-year-old animal that was twenty-one pounds, stuff like that.

Yet, you do the length really well dealing with that, one year to probably up to eight to twelve years, and it just depends on where you're located, and the biggest animal that I had, whole weight, was thirty-nine-and-three-quarter pounds. Generally speaking, we called them mules, once they were above thirty pounds gutted, and, of course, I have to relate to gutted in commercial, but, whenever we were headboat fishing and charter boat fishing, they were ungutted, and so you didn't know if you had a male or a female, but it is a 50/50 split, and so that's not a hard analysis, but the hardest part is using a length on any animal that is going to be probably over ten years old, and probably weighing twenty pounds plus, and so there's a lot to consider there with what you're trying to do.

I also believe that, when you first drop down, and if you're bottom fishing, the smaller snapper might be what jumps on your hook, and then, as you work your way through those fish, probably the next couple of fish that you get might start increasing, and, if you start seeing a little bigger ones, those bigger ones will come up in the water column, and I have seen times, in sixty to ninety-foot of water, you've got them boiling on the surface, and most of them, at that point, would be the biggest ones.

Jimmy Hull can talk to you about bringing black sea bass pots up and watching these sows, the last couple of years, since I rode out with him in 2017, and you can just look at them just swimming all around the boat, and it's the craziest thing that you ever saw, and it's so wonderful to see.

MR. HULL: Nick and Julia, does that answer your questions somewhat?

MR. SMILLIE: Yes, and I think that was excellent feedback, and I just wanted to thank you all so much for helping out with this. I think, Julia, we could probably move to the next slide. Again, I just wanted to thank you all for your feedback and everything you've been doing over this week. As a newcomer, I've been learning so much, and just hearing you all's testimony and your expertise has just given me a lot of hope for our fishery here in the Southeast, and so, just on a personal note, I wanted to thank you all for everything that you do.

This is the last slide, as far as Release goes, and I just want to, again, thank everybody who has already helped us with this project. I think what we're doing is awesome, and we have had so many of you give a lot of feedback and help out specifically with this project as well, and so thank you to those on the AP that have been willing to help us thus far, and, if any of you all haven't been involved yet, and would like to, we would love any and all contributions. You can download the application, and there's a link on this presentation that you all can click, or you can just email me or Julia, and we'll hook you up with the info to get started on it.

If you all have any advice into some people that are really getting onto groupers or snappers that would be great participants, or candidates, for this project, please pass that information on to Julia or me, and that would be really great to get started with those people, and, if you have any good contacts in the industry, we would love to hop on the phone with somebody, or potentially go to a fishing club or an industry association to do a presentation on the project. Again, thank you all so much for all your help, and it looks like Rusty is hopping on for a comment.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, I am. Julia is aware that I have some unscanned pictures that are non-family, but local to my area, and there is one picture in particular from 1979, what we called the Paul's Jet Wreck bonanza, that lasted quite a while and a lot of boats fished, right there are the Flagler/Volusia County line offshore, and not deep offshore, but, you know, moderate offshore, and, in this one picture that's not scanned, and, Julia, I will make a picture of the picture, but the entire wreck was nothing but twenty-five-pound-plus-or-minus animals. The entire thing is filled with one person there, and you can count every fish, and you can see what that rack holds, but that's just the more daunting picture that I have ever seen, and I just wanted to let you know about it. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: Just quickly, for Nick and Julia, you may very likely be in your budgeting process now, and this kind of thing can take a while, and so I would just like to make a suggestion that, as we're going with this, and particularly when it changes over to a less-rugged species, from the groupers to the red snapper, consider what it might take to put together something like a YouTube or your own video, and possibly be able to produce this maybe and get somebody, I don't know, from public TV or something, but you need a budget, and that always takes a while.

To produce a video on maybe the best stream of actions for people to do when they are collecting this data on a boat, and, you know, you might have a couple of our better for-hire folks here that will volunteer to go out and get the steps and illustrating a proper release, and get that on film and a YouTube video. I mean, there's some beautiful ones on the release with descending devices, and you may want your own to educate fishermen on the steps and the best steps to follow while minimally impacting fish.

MR. SMILLIE: That's a great addition, and thanks for mentioning that. We are currently budgeting our outreach for the red snapper expansion right now, and we've got some funds allocated to potentially make a few videos, and definitely number-one on the list is going to be a how-to submit a release on this project, while also keeping in mind the best fishing practices, and I think that would be really exciting.

The top-viewed video on the council's YouTube page is an instructional video on how to rig your descending device, and so, I mean, people eat this stuff up, and, if any of you all are willing to take a few minutes, while you're out there, and do a quick video, even on your phone or something like that, of best ways to release a grouper or a red snapper quickly and efficiently, we could use that for best fishing practices, and we could use it for the Release campaign as well, and so that's a great point there, and thank you for that.

MR. HULL: Thank you. There are no other hands that I see, Nick.

MS. BYRD: I think, from our end, guys, that's all we have for the Citizen Science Program, and we just wanted to kind of update you guys on what was happening with the program, and we really appreciate all your feedback on the Release project, and, again, just to echo Nick and thank all of you guys who have been kind of involved in the project, and, if you're interested in joining, let us know, and so thanks for the time for us to -- The time on the agenda for us to give you a quick update.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Julia. It was a great presentation, and so it looks like we have another item to update on the agenda, and, if everybody is still good to go without a break, we can go to it, but I suppose, if you need to take a break, just take it, and we'll keep going. I see Jack has his hand up. Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: Jimmy, I've got to jump to a meeting here, and I just wanted to say thank you, guys. I enjoyed working with you all through this meeting, and I will catch up with you later.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Jack. We surely appreciate you. It looks like off to climate change scenario planning.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Jimmy, if it's okay with you, we can go ahead and skip that one for now, and we can get an update on that at the next meeting, but, just in the interest of time, we can move from that and just go straight to asking for public comment and then on to other business.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Okay. At this time, I would like to provide the opportunity for public comment for members of the public that would like to make public comment, and I do see a hand. I thought I saw Ira Laks. Ira, go ahead.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Jimmy, for the opportunity. I just wanted to quickly comment, and I'm sorry that I didn't get to do it at the beginning of the meeting, about the two-for-one permit issue. I think it's kind of caught between a rock and a hard place. You have the Executive Order that wants to maximize production, but you also have a downward trend in all of these stocks.

I don't think going to a one-to-one situation is going to do anything to change the price of these permits. The simple economics is that people are going to -- What you can get for something is

what people are going to pay, and people are already paying a certain price, and so I don't think you're going to change your price line.

One thing there is to remember is that you do have about a hundred 225 permits, and those permits were issued originally to fishermen as unlimited permits, and there was a very short time in which you had to qualify for those, and, as Jimmy has been saying, fishermen have a portfolio, and some people were fishing for different species that were more abundant in their areas and didn't fish for snapper and grouper at those times, and so some things that need to be considered before any other entrants are allowed in is it might be time to make those people right and give them back their original permits, to make them unlimited permits.

That would put some movement back into the system, and you would add another hundred permits in that possibly could come up for sale. In the meantime, maintain the two-for-one thing, so that you can hold this fishery at a steady rate, without declining it too much, because you still have the two-for-one that will be dwindling them, and you can go forward and to see where all these stock assessment and management ideas are going to flesh out and how the fishery is going to look in five years and whether you want to get rid of the two-for-one then.

There is other things that you can do with the 225s, and you can offer those people an opportunity to use their 225 existing to purchase an unlimited and then get an unlimited permit, and, again, these people were all fishermen, and most of them are fishing to this day, and they have landings, and I doubt it's going to change the ACLs very much for these people, because their system of fishing and on their boats is pretty much set up for a 225 limit right now.

It would be a way to add a little bit of stability into the system and hold us at a status quo, and there is also things you can do to maybe look at maybe making the 225s transferable, so that new entrants could come into the fishery at a 225, but I just look forward to seeing you guys discuss this, and the council discuss it, going forward, but just to remind everyone that these permits were issued to fishermen as unlimited permits, and it was a very short window that they had to make their case. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your conversations going forward.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Ira. I appreciate your comments. I see, Rusty, your hand is up.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, and I just wanted to offer a clarification on that picture from 1979, and those were all headboats, and a couple of charter boats, and one retired headboat that was a charter that had become a bandit boat. They fished it for several weeks, and all I am trying to say is that those animals, during that time, when those headboats -- Where they had the voluntary reporting system, it apparently never made it on those pieces of paper, is what I saw, looking back in time, and we did have some similar situations that occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s. In other words, these large red snapper are important. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Rusty. Is there anybody else from the general public that would like to make public comment? Now is your chance. Okay. I see none. At this point, if it's okay with staff, I suppose that we will move into Other Business. For the AP members, is there other business that you would like to bring up at this time? Now is your chance. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Jimmy, I just had a question here, and I know we were talking about I think a white paper on barrelfish, and I was wondering what's going on with that.

MR. HULL: I would have to refer that back to staff and see if they know anything about it, and, if not, at this time, maybe we can get back to everyone later on, if they can't find out anything now.

MS. BROUWER: I don't have the document up, but I was just going to say that the council did talk about the potential for adding species to the management unit, and I want to say it was a couple of years ago, and, I think, at that time, barrelfish came up. They have not directed us to pursue anything further at this time. I think they've been really busy just trying to adjust catch levels for all these species for which we have assessments and stuff like that, and so that's my recollection, and I don't know if Mike Schmidtke maybe remembers more, but I think that's just sort of been put on hold for now.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I was going to say something similar, that the council has kind of had staff going in a lot of different directions right now, and so we haven't gotten -- There hasn't been any direction to pursue that just yet.

MR. BONURA: Okay. I just wanted to put it out there, that, here in my area, there's been a reduction in catch over the past couple of years.

MR. HULL: We lost you, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: Have you got me now?

MR. HULL: Yes.

MR. BONURA: I was just putting in the comment that, here in my area, Broward County and Palm Beach and Miami, there's been a reduction in catch over the past couple of years, and putting together an FMP, or looking into the barrelfish, would probably be a good idea, before it's too late.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. They're catching all that right now.

MR. BONURA: You got it. Sounds good. Thank you very much, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: So the council will see that. Other business? Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: In case we go to an offshore recreational deepwater kind of methodology, to keep up with that, I want to make sure that managers don't try to shove the sand tile in with the blueline and the goldens, because they have found that it's mostly inshore of the big ledge, and so I think that sometimes still winds up being considered a deepwater animal, and that needs to make sure that stays out. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Okay. There is language to reflect that. Bobby Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: I just wonder what is the quantity of barrelfish that are being experienced anywhere, and, in forty-nine years of fishing off of Morehead City, we caught one, and the mate said the meat was not good to eat, and so that's my experience with them, and so how much time do we want to waste on that?

MR. HULL: Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I could add to that, that the meat is a beautiful white meat, and it's very good, and it's like a grouper-type meat, with large, white flakes, and, here, we've got a huge -- I mean, all the restaurants and the markets and everybody wants it, but, also, the recreational fishermen are now targeting them as well, and it's becoming a species that people are going out for on a regular basis.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Vincent. Bobby Freeman. Excuse me. Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: I just want to know, and maybe for a future agenda item, at maybe the next meeting, that we could discuss if it's anything even worth discussing, but I got calls from a fellow down in south Florida, in the Keys, and speaking of the concern of spearfishing, and I think he was from the for-hire industry, and so I am not sure whether he was concerned about it, and I know that it was commercial take with snapper grouper species with a spear or if it was a growing recreational diver participation, but I was wondering if this group thinks that it is worth us looking at spearfishing and diving, commercial and recreational, as a gear and its impact on some of these more important snapper grouper species. The species he specifically mentioned was black grouper. Again, I am not there, and I know it's done up here, and I know spearfishing gets to be a very touchy issue, and I just wonder if it's worth discussing over the new couple of meetings, what to do about it, if anything. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jimmy, and thanks for that, Bob. If the AP would recall, we did put together sort of a white paper, information paper, on spearfishing a number of years ago, and I want to say maybe it was 2017 or 2018, due to concerns that were brought in front of the council, and I believe it was mainly off of North Carolina, and so we dug into the information.

There is not a whole lot of data that we could use, but it ended up being that the spearfishing component was pretty small, and the council listened, and we had some public comment. We presented the information, and they decided not to pursue anything related to spearfishing restrictions, or regulations, or what have you, at that time. Certainly, if the AP has additional information that they would like the council to consider on that matter, feel free to bring it up, but I just wanted to make sure you all knew that we have done some gathering of information, and this was discussed at the council table fairly recently.

MR. HULL: Do you have additional information, Bob, since you brought that up, as to the impacts of spearfishing and diving on snapper grouper species that the council needs to consider?

MR. LORENZ: Jimmy, I am going to have to follow-up, and I was simply bringing it -- Somebody brought it up to me, and it's now been about five months, but on the precise problem, and I think it was a concern with picking off the largest of fish, and I was simply bringing it up just for others to think about, and did anybody else here, particularly from Florida, think that is a topic worth speaking about, and, based on what Myra told me, I will look into it and call that gentleman back and see what's going on with that.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Rusty, you're up.

MR. HUDSON: Thanks, Jimmy. Just Googling barrelfish, it's 300 to 1,200 foot and 500 to 900 foot, twenty-pound animals, and it looks to me like another golden tile, blueline tile, snowy grouper kind of scenario and that it could wind up being in that special stamp deepwater stuff. They're using deep drops, and they're using the trolling motors, and it's all here on the internet. Thank you

MR. HULL: Thank you. Harry. Harry, are you there? Okay. Maybe Harry will come back, and I see that David has a written comment.

MS. IBERLE: I can read that, Jimmy, if you want.

MR. HULL: Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: He agreed with Vincent. He said that barrelfish is more and more popular in restaurants. We've seen more and more available from multiple wholesalers in the last two to three years.

MR. HULL: Thank you for that. Harry, are you there? I am not getting Harry. I see Vincent. Go ahead, Vincent.

MR. BONURA: I would just add also that the wreckfish is a bycatch of the barrelfish fishery, or vice versa, and that's why it would be nice to have a bycatch allowance of wreckfish as well, or be allowed to lease the ITQ, if that was available to us.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Vincent. Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: We've been down this road with the wreckfish thing, and, of course, that's the ITQ thing, and I find that the wreckfish was only like a half-a-percent, but we gave you all 5 percent, and we don't know if you're catching it or not, but that's another animal that could fall under that deepwater stamp. That way, you can see the universe that wants to go out and fish in those kind of extreme depths, with their deep drops and trolling motors. Thank you.

MR. HULL: Right on. Back to you, Harry. Are you there? If you can hear me, Harry, you can provide a written comment, and we'll capture it and put it in the report. I don't see any other hands, and so we're going on. It's 1:00, and that's the last agenda item. I'm going to go back to staff, to make sure there's nothing else that they want to add in here, and we're just about to sign-off here. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That's all I had for us to cover, and I would just thank everybody for their input and their participation.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Mike and the entire staff. Just one last comment from me, and nobody has all the answers to all of these questions, but I really feel that this Snapper Grouper AP is a great asset to management, and I hope that we continue to be an asset to management, and I thank you all very much for your time. This has been a long meeting, and they are, and you guys have given up a lot to participate, and it's because you care, and so, with that, I thank you very, very

much. I see Harry has a written comment, and, before we just leave, go ahead and give Harry's comment.

MS. IBERLE: Harry wrote in that he would like to invite Waddell for an AP presentation at the next meeting, and he provided a name, and I think it's Al Stokes, but I'm sure Harry can provide more details, to hopefully get them at the next AP meeting.

MR. HULL: If you just capture that, that will be great, and so thanks to everybody. Thank you so much, and let's sign-off. The meeting is concluded. Thank you all.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 21, 2021.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
December 21, 2021

Snapper Grouper Advisory

Attendee Report: Panel Meeting

Report Generated:

10/20/2021 07:58 AM EDT

Webinar ID

470-940-643

Actual Start Date/Time

10/19/2021 12:59 PM EDT

Duration

3 hours 38 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bubley	Walter
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Constant	Tony
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Freeman	Robert
Yes	Gercken	Christopher
Yes	Gomez	Richard
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	HOWARD	LAWTON
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Hull	James
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Johnson	Robert
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lorenz	Robert
Yes	Mahoney	Andrew
Yes	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	McCawley	00 - Jessica
Yes	McKinley	Randy
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Militello	Chris
Yes	Morales	Harry

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
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Yes
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Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

Murphey
Paskiewicz
Patten
Piland
Pugliese
Reeder
Sanchez
Smillie
Stemle
Travis
Wiegand
adeimy
cox
fish
moss
thomas
vara

Trish
James
Willow
Andy
01Roger
Kelly
Joseph
01 Nicholas
Adam
Michael
01Christina
daniel
Jack
andrew
david
01suz
mary

Snapper Advisory Meeting

Grouper Panel

Attendee Report:

Report Generated:

10/21/2021 06:36 AM EDT

Webinar ID

470-940-643

Actual Start Date/Time

10/20/2021 08:38 AM EDT

Duration

7 hours 16 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bubley	Walter
Yes	Carmichael	John
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Cinklin	Chris
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Constant	Tony
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Freeman	Robert
Yes	Gomez	Richard
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	HOWARD	LAWTON
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Hull	James
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lorenz	Robert
Yes	Mahoney	Andrew
Yes	Marhefka	00Kerry
Yes	Marhefka	Kerry

Yes	McKinley	Randy
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Militello	Chris
Yes	Morales	Harry
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Paskiewicz	James
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Pellicer	Joseph
Yes	Piland	Andy
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Reeder	Kelly
Yes	Sanchez	Joseph
Yes	Sebastian	Cameron
Yes	Smillie	01 Nicholas
Yes	Snyder	Dave
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	adeimy	daniel
Yes	cox	Jack
Yes	fish	andrew
Yes	moss	david
Yes	thomas	01suz
Yes	vara	mary

Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Meeting

Attendee Report:

Report Generated:

10/21/2021 01:57 PM EDT

Webinar ID

470-940-643

Actual Start Date/Time

10/21/2021 08:28 AM EDT

Duration

4 hours 44 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bublely	Walter
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Constant	Tony
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Floyd	Mike
Yes	Freeman	Robert
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	HOWARD	LAWTON
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Hull	James
Yes	Iberle	01Allie
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Johnson	Robert
Yes	KELLY	BILL
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lorenz	Robert
Yes	Mahoney	Andrew
Yes	Marhefka	Kerry
Yes	McKinley	Randy
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil

Yes	Militello	Chris
Yes	Morales	Harry
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Paskiewicz	James
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Piland	Andy
Yes	Reeder	Kelly
Yes	Sanchez	Joseph
Yes	Sebastian	Cameron
Yes	Smillie	01 Nicholas
Yes	Snyder	Dave
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	cox	Jack
Yes	fish	andrew
Yes	moss	david
Yes	thomas	01suz
Yes	vara	mary

