

**SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**SNAPPER GROUPER ADVISORY PANEL**

**Town and Country Inn  
Charleston, South Carolina**

**March 26-28, 2024**

**Transcript**

**Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel**

Robert Lorenz, Chair  
James Paskiewicz, Vice Chair  
Vincent Bonura  
Chris Conklin  
Tony Constant  
John Polston  
Andrew Fish  
Gettys Brannon

Joe Mathews  
Chris Kimrey  
Cameron Sebastian  
Chris Militello  
Robert Freeman  
Paul Nelson  
Andy Piland

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Jessica McCawley  
Tom Roller  
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**Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: I would like to call to order this meeting, on March 26, of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I'm Bob Lorenz, from Wilmington, North Carolina, and I'll be your chair for today, and this is my last meeting to chair, and so I will mention that.

One of the things that I would like to do, just first, is recognize that we do have two council members here, over to my right, and we have Jessica McCawley from Florida, a fisheries manager from Florida, and Kerry Marhefka, who is here from South Carolina -- I'm so sorry, and you're going to think, after all these years we've known each other, and we've got Tom Roller from North Carolina. We also have Amy Dukes from South Carolina. Welcome. All right. Welcome to our council members to our meeting.

One of the things we'll have to do -- This agenda will be -- There's going to be quite a bit in it, and mostly tomorrow, when we get to the groupers, and this is -- It will like one of the last times you all are going to get to really comment, and have the clout of being an AP member to say it in public, on the record, and then we have to consolidate down to the things we want for recommendations to the council, and so, when you get to 36 and 55, we have a bit of work to do, and we'll probably have some nice discussions on sea bass later, and so, if you review anything for tomorrow -- If you have a stake in those fisheries, please take a look at it.

One of the other things we will do at this meeting -- What I've seen, over the past nine years, when I've been here on the AP, was I thought we kind of rushed into picking the chair and the vice chair at the end of the meeting, the last thing we do, and so I've moved that up to tomorrow afternoon, and it's very customary that we have -- Usually, the vice chairman moves into the chair spot, and so we have James Paskiewicz here, which would need a nomination. Though I would endorse him, I can't make that nomination.

Also, with practice, and it's not clad in stone, but it's been a gentleman, and ladies, agreement, for years and years and years, that we always split the leadership, which is off from time to time, and so we classically would want a recreational, someone from the -- To be the vice chair, to be from the recreational side, and represent that side, and so what I'm saying is, if you know anybody, watch them, and think who you would want to potentially be leading this in three to five years, and, if you yourself want to go, speak, and get it know, and get somebody to nominate you, and we'll run that election tomorrow afternoon. Okay?

Then, also, I guess we have Julia here, for if you have your FISHstory items to deal with, or any recommendations on where she can get some more great information, and she, and other staff members, will be here to do that for us. Okay?

The next item I would like to move to is approval of our agenda, and the agenda has become really, pretty much, our transcript, and so, if everybody read it, and doesn't have any questions on page 68, or anything like that, and I would just like -- Let's say who here has what they think is a change or an inaccuracy that they noted in the agenda that they want to note? Then speak. Otherwise, I'll assume that you all approve the agenda, unless -- I would say raise your hand, if you don't like the

way it is, and this is the approval of the October agenda. I have nobody protesting that, and so thank you. The meeting minutes -- The minutes are approved. I'm sorry, and I got ahead of myself.

Then, also, with the agenda, and I spoke of it, and does anybody have anything on the agenda that they want to comment now, something you think needs change or is inaccurate or that sort of a thing? Otherwise, the agenda stands. All right, and the agenda is approved to move forward. I would like you all to introduce yourself. I've already done mine, and so your name and sector that you're a stakeholder of and where you come from. Thank you. We'll start with Bobby.

MR. FREEMAN: Robert Freeman, charter and recreational, and sometimes commercial, out of Atlantic Beach, North Carolina.

MR. KIMREY: Chris Kimrey, recreational, North Carolina.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, commercial, Florida.

MR. CONSTANT: Tony Constant, recreational, South Carolina.

MR. MATTHEWS: Matt Matthews, recreational, Georgia.

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

MR. BONURA: Good afternoon. Vincent Bonura from Florida, commercial and wholesale dealer.

MR. MILITELLO: Chris Militello, Palm Beach area, recreational.

MR. PILAND: Andy Piland, Hatteras, North Carolina, charter captain.

MR. CONKLIN: Chris Conklin, South Carolina, commercial dealer, charter, recreational, everything.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, AP, for introducing yourselves. I believe, Mike, we have public comment on, before we start, and is there anybody online to make public comment?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, before we move into public comment, I do want to note -- I'm just going to navigate, on the screen, to where you all can locate the public comment that has been submitted for this meeting. We do have some comments that are online, that you can navigate to from the meeting webpage, and so, if you're on the general South Atlantic Council page right here, what you would do is you would click on "Meetings", and that drop-down shows "Advisory Panel", and it shows our meeting right here, the March 2024 Snapper Grouper AP meeting.

Under that page, right here, this button on the right says "read public comments", and, here, you can click on that, and you will see the public comments that have been submitted thus far. We do -- I do want to note that we have been getting some public comments through our general comment page, and we have kind of different forms that are set up. One is where we're constantly taking

comments from the public, and some of them have pertained to the AP meeting, or some of the topics that you will be discussing this week. As far as I know, Nick Smillie, our web guru, has moved all of those over into the AP meeting page, but I'm just letting you know that some of those have popped in there, and so we'll make sure that those get compiled and presented to the council in the appropriate manner, but I think we have everything on this comment page for your review right now, and so please make sure that -- As you are having your discussions, take some time to look at these and to consider them in those discussions.

I also do want to note, especially for the webinar users, that, right now, GoToMeeting is going through a little bit of a transition in their platform, and so there were some things that changed as we created the webinar. Basically, if you registered for the webinar ahead of time, you won't necessarily get the reminder emails throughout the week, and so you would still use the exact same link to sign-on, but, depending on how you registered, you may only get a reminder email, and you may have gotten it today, but you might not get it tomorrow, and so just make sure that you're checking in as you get to the meeting webpage.

You click this webinar registration, and you may have to re-register, if you don't get that reminder email, but it's the same link, the exact same button to push, to get into the meeting, but, if people have questions, feel free to email me and to let me know, you know, any questions that you have along those lines, but it should be the same button, and so I did want to note that.

Then we can move into public comments for folks online. For folks online, if you would like to make a comment at this time, please raise your hand, using the raise-hand function on the webinar. It looks like we have at least a couple going up, and so, first, we have Haley Stephens. I will go ahead and unmute you on our end, and so you're unmuted on our end, Haley. You should be able to speak now, if you click the "unmute" button, the microphone button.

MS. STEPHENS: Good afternoon. How is everyone doing? My name is Haley Stephens, and I am the owner of F/V Sea Spirit in Ponce Inlet, Florida. I represent the new generation of fishermen and women who are earning their livelihood on the water, as well as represent the South Atlantic Headboats United, which is an alliance founded on resilience and respect.

I have several items that I would be grateful to address, and so I'm going to get started. Number one, the big one, vessel limits for headboats. We believe that private rec and for-hire six-pack limits shouldn't be the same as they are for the headboats. Why? Well, we're completely different. We have different licensing, different permitting, mandatory fish catch reporting, and we carry more passengers.

As for Amendment 36 of snapper grouper, two fish per vessel is simply inequitable. We host folks from all over the state, the country, and sometimes the world. We carry many different folks from all sectors, and the headboats are the most inclusive option that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy offshore fishing.

I want to paint a picture for you. Imagine that you are on a public fishing pier, and you're told, sorry, you cannot keep that fish that you just caught, because someone else already kept two earlier that day, they already kept two earlier today, and it's the same analogy with the headboat that carries thirty, forty, fifty passengers. Yes, the immediate concern, for vessel limits, at the moment, is for the grouper aggregate, but, really, what we want to ensure is separate conversations, separate

considerations, and separate regulations for the headboats moving forward, and so what do we do? I'm so glad you asked. Let's explore some reasonable proposals.

MR. LORENZ: Haley, please, excuse me, and this is Bob Lorenz, the chairman, and I sincerely apologize for interrupting you, but one of the things that we omitted to do here, to try to keep our meeting on a timely manner, is to have a time limit.

MS. STEPHENS: Sure.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so I'm just going to give you five minutes, and, again, my sincere apologies. You're the first one, and we forgot to get that out there. Thank you.

MS. STEPHENS: All good. Five minutes is totally reasonable. Some options could be a percentage of passengers that would determine a daily limit. For example, and let's use the grouper for an example. A two-fish vessel limit on a six-pack boat comes up to about 33.3 percent, and so, for an example, let's plug that into the same percentage with a headboat of fifty passengers, and we're looking at 16.5 percent. If we round it down to sixteen, and that would be a rolling basis, a percentage based on passenger count for that day. If you only have twenty passengers, well, then your limit is going to change to, you know, six fish, but that is, in our opinion, the most fair, and inclusive, way to approach it. As headboats, we're required to have a full manifest each day, as well as the number of passengers reported on the VESL dashboard, to ensure compliance.

Well, let's talk about benefits. Again, equal and fair opportunity for headboat anglers, and a positive economic impact amongst the multi-passenger fleet, and continued collection of 100 percent accurate fisheries data aboard the headboat dashboard reporting.

The MRIP data, you know, it can get a little funky, but the headboat data is proven to be real. Of course, there's going to be risks, and what are those risks? People being too happy? Creating too many lifelong memories on the water with their children and families? That might be something that we're willing to risk.

Really quick, I just want to reiterate that we are in full support of FWC's EFP red snapper initiative. The headboats serve as a cost-effective and time-efficient resource. We here at the Sea Spirit pride ourselves on being an organized and motivated company to support the success of this exciting program. Just to summarize, there is less than ten headboats currently operating in federal waters here in Florida, from Jacksonville to Fort Pierce. From Fort Pierce south, they have a tendency to fish in state waters, based on what we've heard from their owners.

Kind of changing gears, we -- Just a side note, and lane snapper should be at least twelve inches to harvest. Eight inches, for an offshore fish, is kind of crazy. We do encourage our guests to only keep a lane snapper if it's over twelve inches, and, number three, the Sea Spirit has been 100 percent in compliance with our dashboard reporting since 2014. Those are cold, hard, real numbers that cannot be argued. The data is there for the headboats, and we've been doing it for over a decade. We sincerely appreciate your time. Sea Spirit rules.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Haley, and thank you for keeping that very timely, and, again, my apologies for having to interrupt, having not introduced the time limit initially. Mike, the next

public comment? All right. That completes the public comment for today, and there will be another spell of it at the end of our meeting, which will be -- We'll allow for it on Thursday.

I note that we have some more folks that have come in since we initially started, and so I would like, just for the matter of public record, and, you know, for part of the roll, that those who just joined us in the past five or ten minutes, and I think there's three of you, introduce yourself, your sector, and where you're from.

MR. NELSON: Paul Nelson, Ponce Inlet, Florida.

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, Port Orange, Florida, Kings Seafood.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Cameron Sebastian, North Carolina/South Carolina border, Little River Fishing Fleet, Coastal Scuba, Hurricane Fleet, charter, headboat, and commercial.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. All right. We're ready to move into Item 1 on our agenda, which is the Committee Chair Remarks, and this is the chair of the Snapper Grouper Committee for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and Jessica McCawley to speak to us. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Since you guys haven't met since October, I'm going to try to give you some highlights from both the council's December and the recent March meeting. So, first, here, this is about Regulatory Amendment 35, which was the red snapper and snapper grouper discards amendment, and so, at the December meeting, the council rescinded their approval of this amendment for submission to the Secretary of Commerce. It had previously been approved by the council, and, after added information about MRIP, and other discussions, the council decided, and actually voted, to not submit this to the Secretary for approval.

Then, at the March meeting, there was a lot of additional discussions about actions that we had talked about in the past. We looked at recent literature, and we talked about the snapper grouper MSE that you guys have talked about. We talked about some of the research projects that are underway, including the Florida exempted fishing permit, and I'm going to give you a presentation about that here today as well, and then, also, at our March meeting, NOAA Fisheries sent the council a letter stating that they are considering interim measures to reduce overfishing of red snapper during the 2024 fishing year.

The council also had discussions on for-hire limited access. You guys talked about that at your last meeting as well, and so some highlights from the last two council meetings. In December, an amendment was initiated to establish limited access for the for-hire components of the snapper grouper, coastal migratory pelagics, and dolphin wahoo fisheries, and there was also an approval of a newer control date of December 8, 2023. This would indicate that anyone who obtains a for-hire permit after that date, and who has not reported on SEFHIER, on or prior to December 5 of 2023, is not assured future access, if limited access is implemented, and so lots of discussions about this, both at the December meeting, but more so at the more recent March meeting.

A little bit about reporting, and so SEFHIER -- At both meetings, there was lots of discussions about how to improve SEFHIER reporting, and so this was kind of tied into limited entry and thinking about, hey, if we can improve the reporting aspect, maybe one way to do that, to get compliance, is to do that by having limited access permits, and so that was some of the discussion

that happened in March, and the council, at the March meeting, established a structure for a new AP to explore, and advise, specifically on approaches to improve reporting.

The council also had discussions about establishing an AP that would look at limited entry, but the council made decisions to keep these two APs separate, and so, right now, there is one for the reporting, and then there could be one, after this, that would meet on the limited entry.

Commercial permits, there was lots of discussion about commercial permits. This really started as a discussion of the two-for-one permit, and I think you guys have talked about that at your last meeting, or maybe the previous AP meeting, and so staff gave the council a report that was previously presented in 2021, with some updated information, and then the council really got into discussing the visioning efforts that the council had worked on a number of years ago, and how the current commercial portion of the fishery can move towards those original visioning goals.

The council is also considering ways to gather additional information from commercial folks that are involved in this fishery, through some type of upcoming in-person meetings, or outreach initiatives, kind of like the townhall meetings, or the port meetings, that are going to happen for mackerel cobia, and so this wasn't completely figured out, and it was just a discussion of wanting to have these in-person meetings to figure out a path forward for the commercial fishery.

Also, the council is considering using a subcommittee-type approach, and so this is what the council did to move the wreckfish Amendment 48 actions, and so what it was was a subcommittee of the Snapper Grouper Committee was formed, and that would meeting separately, outside of the council meeting week, to work on this topic and then bring that back to the Snapper Grouper Committee for discussion, additional motions, comments, et cetera.

The council talked about webinars specifically for this topic, that would be a subgroup of the council members that then would report-out to the Snapper Grouper Committee. None of this was finalized, and no structure was formed, or any of that, and the council staff will bring back a package to the June council meeting about this.

There is some other ongoing amendments, and one that you guys are really interested in, which is Amendment 46, that recreational permitting amendment, and so the next steps for this document - - So the council did discuss this a lot, at both the December and the March meetings, and they worked on different aspects of the document at the two different council meetings. Next steps would be gathering input from a technical advisory panel, a private angler advisory panel, and then going back to the council's Outreach and Communication AP, all of this before the council's June meeting, to try to gather additional information on various aspects of this recreational permitting amendment.

Right now, the way that the council has it set up, it does not include mandatory reporting, and so that was something that you guys said, in the past, was very important to you, and so I just want you to keep that in mind, and I just wanted to point that out, that it's not in the document right now. The reason it's not in the document, I would say, is because we've been told that it can move faster without the reporting component in there. I think it is the intent of the council that, after the permit is established, to then follow behind with reporting, but we haven't had a specific vote on the reporting piece.

Then, for Amendment 48, which is wreckfish, the subcommittee met before the council's March meeting, and so there were a lot of motions made at that subcommittee meeting, and a lot of actions added, and so these were reviewed at the meeting in March, and some of these focused on prelanding notification requirements and actions on ITQ shareholder eligibility, permits, et cetera, and so several preferred alternatives were selected at the subcommittee meeting, and then selected by the committee, and so the council is ready to consider this for public comment, and cross your fingers, but hopefully final approval at the June meeting, finally.

With that, I will take any questions, and, as you can see, there's a number of council members here, that will be here for the duration of your meeting, and we can help answer questions, where we can, about the specific topics, as you guys dive into them.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Anybody have any questions for Jessica, or any comments or opinions that you would like to state at this time? We've got four council members here that are all on the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, and so that's good representation before the June meeting. Anybody? Andy.

MR. PILAND: On the charter headboat reporting, what's the percent that are in compliance on reporting?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't remember it. Mike, do you remember? Myra is coming up here. Okay, and we'll get a specific number. Good question.

MR. LORENZ: Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: On the recreational reporting, and the mandatory reporting is out of it, and so it's just a permit, so to speak, and is it just a fishing permit? Is an offshore permit? Is it dictated to bottom fishing, or can we at least categorize it? I guess what I'm saying is a head count of how many boats are offshore is really not going to get us where we need to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so, right now, the preferred that's selected would be for all fifty-five snapper grouper species, and so, if you're intending to go offshore and fish for those species, then you would need this particular federal permit.

MR. CONSTANT: So, if the anglers are just trollers, and they're not bottom fishing, they're not going to buy this permit?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Unless they think they're going to happen to catch a snapper grouper species, but, yes, the intent is that it would cover all species in that snapper grouper complex.

MR. LORENZ: All right. It's open. John.

MR. POLSTON: It's mainly a question, and I'm not really sure who I'm supposed to address with this, but this new fish ticket program, or at least in Florida, and I don't know if that's federal or if that's just state, but I think it's both, right, and so everybody is having to use it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's a state-issued -- So it's issued by FWC. The snook permit is issued by FWC, and that's what you're talking about, right, is snook, or the State Reef Fish Survey?

MR. POLSTON: The one going away from Claude Peterson's format and to the new format, whatever you all are calling that, and it's horrible, whatever you call it, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A commercial permit?

MR. POLSTON: Yes, the one that the fish dealers have to -- Instead of the old Claude Peterson trip ticket that everybody has been filling out for thirty years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You're talking about like the paper one, where you scan the card, and like the card through there?

MR. POLSTON: No, it's a computerized program, but they have a new one now, and I guess everything has to be manually input, and there's no predispositions, I guess you would say, and there's none of that, and every species you have to put in, and you basically have to keep entering them, and, I mean, it's -- It literally is taking -- I'm not a computer guy, but, people that are, it's taking them three-times as long to do one ticket, and so there's something that needs to be done about that. Somebody needs to put some software in there, or something, to where they're workable, or go back to Claude's program, one of the two.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. I feel like I'm not an expert on this, and I will certainly take this information back to FWRI, and Chris Bradshaw is over this particular program, but I might actually get with you, during a break, and try to get some more information about this, so I can give some more specifics to him.

MR. POLSTON: I appreciate it. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: To speak on that, I've been resisting making the transition, because I've heard it's so bad, but, you know, my computer has been yelling at me, telling me that I have to make this switch, because the old program is going to be obsolete, and it's just -- You know, it's terrible that it's going to be, you know, we're moving forward in technological advances, and we're going to go backwards and waste time with technology, and it's just awful.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Questions and comments that have come from commercial. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just coming back to Andy's question about SEFHIER compliance, and, in 2023, the estimated compliance was 37.4 percent.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. Any comment or questions from for-hire? Anybody related to assisting the diving industry, or divers that want to comment on anything that Jessica stated, or has presented? All right. Am I to assume that we're all up-to-speed with what we need from the chairman of the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Thank you, Jessica.

All right. Then we'll go into Number 2 of the agenda items, which is the Council Discussion Updates on the amendments, and I guess, Mike, are you going to handle that? Are you going to start us off with the talking about Amendment 51?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so I'm just going to run down -- This is Attachment 2a in your briefing book, and it gives kind of rundown on what has happened since you last met in October of 2023 regarding the amendments that the council has worked on for the Snapper Grouper FMP. For a good number of these, these kind of go back a couple of years, to processes that you all have looked at, and the council approved, but now we're kind of closing the loop, because they have become implemented regulations, and so I'll note those as I go through. Other ones, I may skip over, just because you'll address those later on this week, and so I'll note those as we get to them.

Amendment 49, addressing greater amberjack, the step that happened since the last meeting was that the regulations became effective, and so, all the items that you all had previously discussed, the council approved back in -- It would have been late 2022, and the regulations were effective beginning in October of 2023.

Snowy grouper, Amendment 51, is another one where the big step was that the regulations became effective. Those started in January of 2024. Amendment 52, those regulations became effective for golden tilefish and blueline tilefish. That started in December of 2023.

Amendment 53, addressing gag and black grouper, those regulations became effective in October of 2023, and I do want to note that some of those regulations, because they affect Regulatory Amendment 36, and kind of one of those actions there is in response, adjusting one of the actions that was completed in Amendment 53, and just take note of the recreational vessel limits that are kind of in place right now. There is a recreational vessel limit in place, for gag, of two gag per vessel, and there is also a recreational vessel limit in place for black grouper of two fish per vessel, and that was completed in Amendment 53, and what's being talked about in Regulatory Amendment 36 is an adjustment to those recreational vessel limits that are already active in the regulations right now, and so I just wanted to make sure that that's pointed out before you get to that discussion later on this week.

Regulatory Amendment 35, Jessica noted that the council rescinded approval of the amendment, and now they're having further discussions talking about what other course of action the council may be taking in regard to response to that assessment. Amendment 48, Jessica kind of hit that item, and so I'm not going to delve too much into that, as well as Amendment 46, and there were those discussions at the recent meetings.

Yellowtail snapper, and that would be Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, in December of 2023, the council passed a motion to deprioritize work on that amendment, and so that's going to be kind of put on hold, awaiting a new assessment to be completed that incorporates the Florida State Reef Fish Survey data, and that was talked about as one of alternative routes, since that is a pretty Florida-centric species in this region, and so that amendment is kind of put on hold until that new assessment is completed.

You will hear about Amendment 55 later on this week, for scamp and yellowmouth, as well as Regulatory Amendment 36, and that will be covered later this week. The Comprehensive ABC Control Rule Amendment, that went into effect in February of this year, and that was the one that adjusted the ABC Control Rule, and one of the ways that it changes, in terms of this AP and how you all operate, is, when we get to the fishery performance report, there's a new piece of that that we'll fill out for hogfish at this meeting, and, right now, we're in the middle of this transition of

putting in a new control rule and figuring out the best way to get information to use in this stock risk rating that goes into how the council goes from an overfishing limit to an acceptable biological catch to the annual catch limits, kind of on down the line of their regulations. We'll use that additional piece of the fishery performance report that you all put together to contribute to that, and so I just wanted to kind of point that out. That's effective as of February of this year.

The joint commercial logbook amendment was submitted in February of 2024, and so that's going through the National Marine Fisheries Service rulemaking process right now, and that would be expected to go into place later on this year, and then we have a couple of amendments that were recently implemented, or kind of picked back up, or not implemented, but initiated rather, and kind of picked back up, and so this actually should not be a regulatory amendment, and that is an amendment. That is a full plan amendment for black sea bass, and you'll talk about it later this week. That one is in response to the most recent stock assessment, SEDAR 76, and so we'll review that on Thursday.

The council also initiated an amendment to explore limited entry, limited access, for the for-hire component of the recreational fishery. Jessica gave you some of the steps that have gone into that discussion to this point. There was a control date that was passed, that she pointed out, and -- It was passed by the council, and I believe it's still going through the NMFS process at this point, before it has its final approval, and so I believe that is -- Yes, that is all of the amendments that are going on, or have recently been put in, for snapper grouper, and I will pause here, to see if there are any questions on specifically those amendments that are not being covered later on in the agenda.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Are there any questions for Mike? Let's go first with the Part A, which is the amendments, the discussion that he just gave you on the amendments. Any questions, or comments, to Mike? I see no hands raised, Mike, and here you get a second chance on the recent council discussions, which Mike went through, like the commercial permits, limited access, a lot of which Jessica provided. Any questions, or comments, that you've thought of, while you've been sitting here, on that? Here's a second chance. All right. All is quiet, Mike. I think we're good. All right. I will recognize Andy Fish with a question.

MR. FISH: On the control date, does this new date negate the one that was I think 2009 or something, or does that one -- Was it 2008? Does anybody know that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm going to let Myra speak to that.

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so the council had approved a control date of June 15, 2016, and so, once this new one is approved, then it would take the place of the old one, but, as Mike said, it's still undergoing rulemaking, and there is a comment period that I think closed just last week.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy, for that question. I'm sure there's a lot of fishermen that will be very interested in that, and will be watching that as we go along. Anyone else, before I close Item Number 2 on the agenda? Jessica, are you going to provide to use the Florida discard information? All right. Thank you. Jessica McCawley, coming back to present to us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Just to give you a little bit more information about Florida's proposals, these EFPs, and so this is the same presentation that the council saw in March, and I'm

happy to answer questions about these proposals, and I believe they're out for public comment right now.

FWC submitted three separately proposals, and this was for that funding opportunity that was focused primarily on getting information about recreational discards, and FWC submitted three of these, and so an exempted fishing permit, or multiple exempted fishing permits, would be created from these proposals. The goals of the proposals are there on the screen, to collaborate with fishermen to obtain catch and discard information, to test innovative strategies to reduce discards, allow additional harvest opportunities, develop a reporting app and an education course, and evaluate angler satisfaction with the current regs, as well as the regulations that we're proposing in these proposals.

NOAA Fisheries awarded FWC money for these proposals, but the EFP that goes with them is not all the way through the process, and the potential start date of all three of these projects would be July of this year.

All right, and so there are three proposals and two study areas, and so two of the proposals would occur in northeast Florida, which is kind of the hotspot area for red snapper, and then one of the proposals would occur in southeast Florida, which would be Cape Canaveral south through the Keys, and so what we also call the non-hotspot area, and so the hotspot area there in northeast Florida would go down to the NASA Vehicle Assembly Building in Canaveral.

Here's a little chart, to kind of crosswalk the differences between the three proposals. Two of the proposals are very similar, and they just happen in two different areas of the state, and so the study fleet is a little bit different, and so you can see that the study fleet and the hotspot fleet both occur in northeast Florida, and then there is a proposal called Southeast Florida Snapper Grouper Fleet, that occurs in that area that's south of Canaveral.

The study fleet is vessel-based, and so focused on the captains of both private and for-hire vessels, and then the other two, the hotspot and the southeast Florida snapper grouper fleet, are angler-based. On the study fleet, we will be selecting ten participants per quarter of the year in this study, and so that would be -- The goal is five private vessels and five for-hire vessels each quarter, and I believe that's correct, but it will be a total of forty, and then, on the private angler group, those would be a total of 800 between those two proposals.

On the study fleet, and, actually, on the other two as well, what we're doing is testing out a fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate bag limit. I can -- I have a table that lists out what all is in the snapper grouper aggregate, but, basically, once you get to this fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate, then you have to stop bottom fishing, and so that's part of what we're testing here. In the study fleet, you would have full retention of red snapper that are coming onboard while you're trying to get that fifteen-fish aggregate bag limit, up to sixty fish per vessel, and then, in the other two fleets, that are angler-based, you would have additional red snapper harvest opportunities, a bag limit of three per person, on each one of these trips, and there would be a control group, and then an experimental group, and these folks would be -- People would apply, through our Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and then they would be selected through a lottery to participate.

The two fleets on the right there, they -- Once again, it's per quarter of the year, and, like I said, they're being drawn in a lottery. The study fleet also is -- They apply, but not through the licensing

system. They are selected as well. Let me look at the angler requirements, and so there's lot of pieces to all three of these proposals. Everybody would be taking an educational course, and there would be hail-in and hail-out requirements. There would be data validation at the dock, and there would be a customized app that would be for reporting when you get back to the dock, and this is being developed by FWC, and so this would be specialized just for this particular three proposals, or three projects.

We have a number of social scientists, at FWC, that are working on angler satisfaction surveys that would happen before and after these trips, and there would be angler incentives, and then some folks will also be doing one-on-one satisfaction interviews. I feel like I'm forgetting something, but go ahead to the next slide.

All right, and so these -- A little bit more about the proposal components that I talked about on the previous slide. This snapper grouper aggregate bag limit is something that we had brought up to the council in the past, and it would basically be a way to hit this bag limit quicker, and so, right now, depending on the time of the year, you could take, in certain months of the year, up to forty-five snapper grouper species per month, depending on which month it is, what's open and what's closed, and so we're suggesting using this snapper grouper bag limit of fifteen fish, and, once you reach that, you have to stop bottom fishing, and, thereby, that would reduce discards, and so it's kind of a test on how does this work, how does it work on reducing discards, how does it work on people reporting about the discards.

People would be fishing in all twelve months of the year, and so we're getting discard information in all months, and we're looking at discards primarily of red snapper, but we're also trying to gather information about other species, other snapper grouper species, that are discarded as well, and so our bag limits, this fifteen-fish bag limit, considers current federal regulations, current federal bag limits, and species stock status.

This education course, as I mentioned, this is something that our FWC IT department is developing. FWC has experience developing these mobile apps and education courses for other things. We have a shore-based shark fishing educational component, and we also recently implemented an educational course for people fishing on the Skyway Fishing Pier that are interacting with birds and need to dehook birds like pelicans.

Let me see, and so, in the app, you would also have hail-in and hail-out information, and you would enter trip information, and you would enter information about the species that you're catching and discarding, and then, as I mentioned, these pre and post-satisfaction surveys, these semi-structured interviews, that will be done by our social scientist team.

This is a very complicated flow chart, but it's just to show folks that there are kind of two or three different components, main components, of this, and so you have a number of things, over there on the left side, that that angler is going to do, or this is the study fleet, and so either the charter captain or the private vessel captain is going to do prior to actually going out on the water, and so it's everything from the pieces on the educational course, filling out these surveys, making sure people have the licensing requirements and those types of things, and then, on the day of harvest - - So the study fleet would be making a certain number of trips each quarter, and so, on the day of harvest, there's some things mentioned there about what they would do on the date of harvest, which is basically recording information about what is happening on the vessel. Then, post-

harvest, at the end of the trip, is over there on the far right, about the requirements that would need to be filled out following the trip.

This one is similar, and it's for the other two fleets, you know, one that's in northeast Florida and one that is in southeast Florida. It's the same structure, where, prior to harvest, showing what to do before the trip, and then what's happening during the trip, and then what is being reported and what all is happening following that trip, and so people in these two fleets would be taking up to three trips per quarter that would follow this structure and be using this snapper grouper aggregate and be able to take some red snapper out of the season.

With that, I will answer any questions that you guys may have, and we can back up and look at other slides, or other things, but I'm happy to answer any questions, and I will give you a little bit, and so the council saw the presentation, and there were some comments during the meeting. A couple, that I remember, were some people thought that the sixty-fish vessel requirement for the study fleet was too many, and so there were -- Meaning that you could take up to sixty red snapper per trip for that entire vessel, and so some people thought that that number was too many, and thought that it should be reduced. I'm trying to think if there were other things that came up during the meeting. That's all I can think of, and maybe Mike remembers more. There were a couple other comments, but I can't remember what they were.

MR. LORENZ: Mike, did you want to state anything, for color, on the backside of Jessica, before I address the AP for any questions? Okay. Mike is fine with it. Okay. Questions, or even commentary, for Jessica and Mike here? Andy.

MR. PILAND: Can we try that in North Carolina first?

MS. MCCAWLEY: There was an opportunity for all states to submit these types of proposals, and to apply for an exempted fishing permit, and this is just how Florida is doing it.

MR. LORENZ: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Will it count against the recreational ACL?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. We asked Andy this exact same thing, during the council meeting, and he said, no, that it's separate.

MR. LORENZ: Yes.

MR. NELSON: Are headboats included in the hotspot?

MS. MCCAWLEY: They would be part of the study fleet, and so a for-hire fisherman, or a captain, could apply to be part of the study fleet, but, also, if you're selected as an angler, that angler could choose to go on a headboat, or on a charter boat, once they're selected to be part of the study.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. Cameron, any questions?

MR. SEBASTIAN: So the fifteen aggregate bag limit, is that the meat of the test, is to see how fast you hit that limit?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. I would say, yes, that's the main kind of management change that we're testing, but we're also testing things like anglers reporting following a trip on an app, and we're also testing anglers going through an education course prior to the start of the trip, trying to get information about angler satisfaction, and so I would say that we're looking at some other components that the council is considering as well, but the main management type change that would reduce discards is that fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate bag limit.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Okay, and so, following down that line, so, if you're running a headboat, how do you stop? You know, if you've got fifty or sixty guys out there, how would we handle something like that, if it's a bag limit? I mean, obviously, the vessel can't stop it, if some guys only have a couple.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You mean how would this work in practice, following the EFP, or how would it work in the EFP?

MR. SEBASTIAN: How would it work in practice, if something like that was found valid, and then the council moved forward with something along those lines?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can't even imagine how you would write that in rule, but you would basically be asking people to stop bottom fishing once they reach that particular limit, and then, once every individual had completed their limit of bottom fishing, then the vessel could go do something else, could go fish for something else, et cetera. There might -- You could imagine that each individual -- That some people might get to that limit pretty quickly, and other people might take some time to get to that limit.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Right, and so, basically, in a nutshell, when the vessel hits that fifteen limit, then the vessel has to do something else, I mean, in reality, because that's what would happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I think that we would also hope that the individuals that were expert bottom fishers -- Once they got to their snapper grouper -- To their fifteen-fish snapper grouper bag limit, that they would stop fishing and wait for the others, instead of continuing to discard bottom fish.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I guess my point was I guarantee what will happen, and they will definitely continue to fish, and then they will share their fish with those who have not caught up yet, is what will happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to pretend that I didn't hear that. I'm not law enforcement.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. John Polston, you're recognized.

MR. POLSTON: My question would be, whatever number you guys come up with for this, who is going to prevent the high-grading, like what's going on with all the recreational right now, and it's out of control, and who is going to do that, when they're allowed to catch fifteen per person, and throw it back, and catch a bigger one and throw it back, and catch a bigger one?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. In the EFP specifically, this would be part of the education course, getting into trying to get people not to do that, trying to educate people about that. It would be our law enforcement who would be enforcing this on the water, and at the dock, and so what we're saying is we would try to get to that, through an education component, prior to people leaving the dock.

MR. POLSTON: Understood, but is there going to be anybody on these experiment boats that are going to be an observer to enforce it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Also a great question. In the study fleet, on the for-hire component, there will be observers onboard some of those trips, and then, the private vessels that are in the study fleet, we'll use a GoPro camera, or a couple, to look at the bag of the boat, to observe how this is happening.

MR. POLSTON: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Along those lines, in practice, that's a fifteen aggregate snapper limit, and so, if the angler continues to return, he can keep fishing today, and so it's actually -- In his eyes, if he catches fifteen, he has to quit fishing, period, and he has to go home, and so, if he only catches ten, then he needs to keep catching ten, because he can go catch grouper, and he can catch triggers, and he can catch so-and-so, and is that correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know if I fully understand the question.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, I guess I'm asking, if this -- Not so much in the Florida study, but, if it actually works, and it goes through with something, to apply this, an angler would hurt himself, if he were to catch the fifteen fish, because, I mean, when we get into a snapper hole, you can do that in twenty minutes, and so then I have to go home, and I have to quit fishing, and so, if we stop at ten, then I can go catch some grouper, and go catch some triggerfish, and go catch some so forth.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the way you're thinking about adjusting your trips there.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, when you're fifty miles offshore, somebody is buying the fuel.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. I have a question, but anybody else before me? Anybody else with a question, or a comment, to Jessica? All right. Jessica, I just have one question. With the exempted fishing permit, and I know it isn't finalized or anything, and so there may be things you can't say, but we have some folks here that fish out of Florida ports, and so how does one go about getting that, and maybe the selection process, the skill process, and how will you vet people that will get this?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So a couple of things. First, we have to get this whole thing fully approved, and so, on two of the fleets, the non-study fleet, those two experimental fleets, they would apply through a lottery, and there is a number of criteria that would have to be met, and so you would have to agree to do this data collection, and you have to agree to use the app, and you have to agree to this education course, and so there would be a lot of aspects like that.

On the study fleet, I believe that you also have to go through a background check, and so there's some added aspects for the captains in the study fleet, and so lots of specifics on that, and I would say it's not fully worked out, and so, the lottery component, once -- If you guys are familiar with Florida's goliath grouper lottery, and it would happen in a similar way, where you apply through Go Outdoors Florida, and then, if selected, you're contacted, and that's when we start going through a process of asking you questions, making sure that you have a Florida fishing license, or you're exempt, and are you signed up for the State Reef Fish Survey, all these other components, and then, if some of those people don't meet the criteria, or don't want to participate, now that they see they have to take an education course or what have you, then we would go back to the next people down in the lottery.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you. Anyone else? All right, Jessica. Thank you very much. It sounds good. Let's do a time check here. Okay, and so we've got another hour before we can go to -- We'll probably take a break about 3:00, and we'll probably end up splitting hogfish up, and we do have a fishery performance report, an application to discuss, and I think there's possibly -- There is out there, in the world, sort of an EFP potential floating around for the hogfish fishery in Florida, and so I'm going to hand it over to Mike for Agenda Item 3 on the Florida Hogfish Fishery Performance Report.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, within your briefing book, Attachment Number 3 includes the discussion questions related to the Florida Keys and east coast of Florida hogfish fishery performance report, and so, for hogfish, within the South Atlantic region, the populations are divided up and assessed separately, and so, right now, we're talking about the population on the east coast of Florida down through the Keys. We're not addressing the Georgia through North Carolina population of hogfish in this assessment, and this is just addressing that southern portion within our region.

I'm going to pull up the application, and you have a link to this fishery performance report application that's in your document, but I'm going to go ahead and pull it up here on the screen, and kind of walk through some of the points that are included there, and so a lot of this information is going to come out of the last stock assessment that was completed, which was, I believe, SEDAR 37 for this stock of hogfish. Once you're on that application, you go over to the Snapper Grouper AP tab, and that should pull up the data that we're looking for.

Within the information here, we have some life history, and we'll have some index data as well, and landings information. We have life history information, and that's shown here. You kind of see the growth curve for hogfish, the length-at-age, and these points along the way are the different -- Are the ages, and those are maintained in some of the further figures. Here we have the whole weight to length relationship for this stock, and we noticed that, with age, it didn't quite get to a full kind of flattening out of the max age with the growth chart, but the estimated -- Or the maximum observed age for this species is twenty-three years old.

Looking at the maturity information, if you will recall, hogfish are protogynous hermaphrodites, which mean they start out as female, and they transition to male, and this transition can kind of vary in time, and it's based on social dynamics, and so there's a pretty wide range of ages at which that transition can occur, and it doesn't always occur necessarily at a certain size or age, and so -- But females, as they grow, and sorry for all the visual difficulties here, but females, as they grow,

they can reach maturity by age-one, somewhere between late -- As they approach age-one, but before age-two, and that's kind of the age at 50 percent maturity, and then it goes up from there, and so, by age-two, most of them are mature.

Actually, Bob, if I can get one moment, I can see if I can try to grab kind of a different way to present this, and, that way, I can do it offline, so I'm not going through the web and having the timing get bogged down.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so why don't we just take a break, quickly, folks, and so five minutes, and we have a holiday coming on us, and so travel is going to be fun on Thursday evening, or afternoon. Okay. Five minutes, folks.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right, everyone. The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel is back to order, and we will -- As we have resolved the technical issues, we will now proceed with Mike Schmidtke with the Florida hogfish fishery performance report, and I see that Chip is with us too, Chip Collier. Gentlemen.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so we're back here looking at hogfish. We're back here looking at the life history information, and so, at the bottom figure there, you see the female proportion mature, and you will notice that, by year-one, and we can maybe zoom-in a little bit more here on our end, but, by year-one, this is 95 percent, at age-one, of the females are mature, and so that's kind -- They are maturing before they hit that first year, and then they're maxing out by age-three, and their total length you can see along the bottom axis there, and so, by the time they are roughly in the twelve-inch range, that's about when the females would be mature, and the transition, like I said, can happen at a wide variety of ranges, because it's pretty socially dependent.

Next, we can move to the index information, and so, in the last assessment, we can kind of see the indices that were used at that point. The terminal year for that assessment was 2012, and that's why the data go through where we saw them, and that one came -- That one resulted in the stock being overfished, and so the stock has been going through a rebuilding plan since that assessment, and we can kind of see the levels that they were noticing, some late declines in the commercial spear index, and well as the MRIP spear index, and I'm not sure, and I would have to look at that assessment again, to see which ones were kind of weighted most heavily, but those were some of the noticeable declines there, and much of the effort related to hogfish is kind of in that spear component.

Next, we can look at the landings, and so I believe the red line that's shown here is the annual catch limit for that year, and so, first, we're looking at the commercial landings, and you can see those over time. Note the scale here, and this is -- The top of this figure is going to be 10,000 pounds whole weight, and so we're not talking about a huge fishery here, from the commercial standpoint, in terms of poundage. Looking into the most recent times, the commercial landings have been generally well below the annual catch limit. This annual catch limit is rising each year, as part of the rebuilding plan that is in place for Florida hogfish, and so, each year, the population is projected to increase, and that annual catch limit is on a rising trend.

The State of Florida had no commercial discards, no commercial discard data, that we have there, and, looking at recreational, the recreational landings, you can see kind of -- There's a unit difference, and the landings are in FES, and the annual catch limit is in the telephone survey, the CHTS, and so there is going to be some discrepancy in the units here, and so just kind of take into account the trend, and not necessarily where it relates to the annual catch limit line, but there's been significant declines in hogfish, and part of that has to do with the rebuilding plan. There were some cuts to the allowable catch. Those went into effect in 2017, and they've been -- They've had low levels of landings, kind of in line with the rebuilding plan, since that point.

Scrolling down, we're only looking at the Florida component, as far as the state goes, and the releases -- There have been some uptick in the releases estimated through MRIP for this species, and I know that -- I would have to look back at the assessment, to see what it looks like as far as the hook-and-line release mortality, but I believe the spear release mortality would be high, and it would be 100 for the spear release mortality, but the hook-and-line -- I would have to look back to see what that mortality rate was.

Next, we have the landings by wave, looking at kind of the seasonal aspect, and so the recreational landings are going -- We see them going back in time, going all the way back to 2000, and they occur January through July, but I believe there's a season in place. I'm pulling this over, so I can reference that correctly, because I believe there is a season in place. Right now, the recreational season is May 1 through October 31, at this point, and so that's where the most recent landings would be.

Chip used the filter, and now you can see where those landings are, that May through October timeframe, and that's the timing in which they occur, and I would guess -- Chip, I guess you can verify, but this would include Monroe County, and so the landings outside of the South Atlantic season are probably Gulf side landings, potentially.

DR. COLLIER: They could be coming from the Gulf.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: It could be minor misreporting here and there, and just not reported to the correct region, and I think that's right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next, we can move to commercial, and so the timing for the commercial fishery, and most of the commercial landings are occurring in Wave 3, the May-June wave, and then declining throughout the rest of the year. Next, we're getting into some of the economic information, and so we have ex-vessel value shown over the last five years. I am guessing that 2019 was a no-data year, rather than a true zero.

DR. COLLIER: It's 15,000.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry. I didn't look at the scale, and it's 15,000, and so, yes, paying attention to the scale, there was some drop in the ex-vessel value, from above 30,000 to down to 15,000, and then some increase in the last three years. The ex-vessel, the adjusted ex-vessel, price, and we had a low value in 2019, and then it's increasing up to about \$7.00, \$7.00 per pound, by 2022. As far as economic impacts, the sales associated with hogfish, there are similar trends to what we saw

with the revenue. We had a drop in 2019, and then it's increasing into 2022. It's the same pattern for the income, and then associated jobs is kind of fluctuating, from four, down to two, and then three, for the rest of the time series for the commercial.

Associated recreational sales, there was a decline from 2018 down to 2019, and a further decline in 2020, but then a big increase in 2021, and a little bit further increase in 2022, and a similar pattern for the associated income, and a similar pattern for the associated jobs for the recreational sector, and, just kind of scaling that a bit, the big drop went from a little bit over thirty, down to about twelve or so, just over ten, and then back up in those late years, to about thirty or thirty-five.

That's the information for Florida hogfish. If you want to check out information, Chip did pull Georgia and North Carolina hogfish as well, and I'm not going to go over that today, but the information is there, for those of you that are interested. We're going to complete the fishery performance report for the Florida population, and that's what we'll be going through today, because we have an upcoming assessment for that, and so I'm going to go ahead and take -- I guess, before I take presenter back, I will pause and see if there are questions about the data that's been presented related to Florida hogfish.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Any questions for Mike on Florida hogfish, because ours are much bigger in North Carolina. I don't see anything, Mike. It's pretty quiet, and I guess you can move on to what you need on the performance reports.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Then I'm going to go ahead and take the screen back, and I will move over our discussion document, with the questions included, and so I did include, this time around, just a small table of the regulations that are currently in place for Florida hogfish, and so the overfishing limit, ABCs, ACLs for each sector, along with fishing year, seasons, and any measures that are in place. There is a sixteen-inch minimum size limit for both sectors, and the commercial trip limit is twenty-five pounds, and the recreational bag limit is one per person per day, inside of that recreational season of May through October, and those were most recently changed through Amendment 37.

Getting into the questions for you all, as a reminder, some of these questions may or may not be relevant specifically to Florida hogfish, and this is kind of a standard template that we use, just to kind of provoke some thoughts and ideas that you all have, some of the changes that you've seen in the fishery, and the intent of this is to kind of capture some of that extra information that may not come through in just straight-up landings or discards data, and so, if there's some type of extra factor that may not have been captured in the data, the assessment analysts would want to know that, to be able to take that into account when they're trying to model what has happened in this population, and then also projecting it forward, and so we have our first kind of overall question about changes in the fishery.

Then we'll look at some questions about changes in the fishing behavior, or in the catch levels, and, as you look through these questions, there are a few places where there is italicized language, and these are places where the lead assessment analysts looked at the question, and they wanted just a little bit more detail, and so this was -- These parts of the language were specifically put in by the assessment analysts, after their review of the questions, and we also have questions here about the social and economic influences, the potential management measures that you all think how have they been working, what changes should be considered for this fishery moving forward,

any environmental or ecological impacts that have happened related to this species, and then kind of our catch-all question related here.

After we go through these different sets of questions, we'll record your discussion related to these, and then we'll get into the stock risk rating, and I'll give an explanation about that, and we'll go through that process as well, and so, bringing us to the first question of looking at, you know, just overall substantial changes that you all have noticed in the Florida hogfish fishery since 2012, and that's the terminal year of the last assessment.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. We'll start off with Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: Andy Fish, Cape Canaveral area, and I no longer dive in Florida, but I have -- I know of one more commercial buddy that dives in Florida, and, since the twenty-five-pound catch limit, there has not been a significant change in any of the hogfish from the Sebastian/Fort Pierce and north, for Florida, in his eyes. North Carolina and South Carolina is still licking their chops, waiting for these to make it up the rest of the way.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy. Anyone else on the first item, the changes in the fishery since 2012? Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Florida is not my area, obviously, but I do notice this fishery, and it seems like there's a lot more people fishing that are going after the hogfish, recreational and commercial.

MR. LORENZ: I think they're learning how to fish for them a little more, and not right up against the structure.

MR. CONSTANT: Correct, and I have some friends that are doing very well, especially on the Gulf side.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Anyone? Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: Chris Militello, Palm Beach area, and I'm going to back up what Tony said. They're definitely savvy to football jigs and live shrimp, and people are getting the hang of it now, the rec guys.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and I remember that, and I had to learn. Anyone? Let's see we had South Carolina and Florida, and anyone from Georgia? Joe? You fish Florida, don't you?

MR. MATTHEWS: I have fished Georgia and Florida, but it's been a long time since I've been fishing for hogfish, and so I don't know if I have anything to contribute since 2012, but I did a lot before that, and it was mostly spearfishing though, and not much hook-and-line.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you. Mike, I don't see any hands raised, and so we can go on to Item 2, for the fishing behavior and the catch levels.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so, scrolling down to the fishing behavior and catch levels, and I'm just kind of skimming through some of these questions here, to see if they can jog some thoughts, but, speaking about effort shifts, there was the comment before about more

recreational hook-and-line effort, and so if there are any additional details about specific regions, or timing with which that occurred, then that would be helpful. Changes to the fishing techniques, I think I heard some discussion alluding to that, of more hook-and-line relative to spearfishing, but that could be a place for some additional information there.

If there's any change in the timing of day that people are targeting these fish, any efforts to avoid fishing for hogfish, to avoid undersized fish, or other species that are highly regulated, if there's any changes in the discards by gear in the commercial or recreational sectors, if there's any information about discards that folks are seeing, and is there, you know, an increase, as far as what people are seeing on the water, and how's the -- How have the discards been affected by the size limit, potentially, things of that nature.

I'm just pointing out what the previous assessment noted, the prior benchmark assessment, and hook-and-line discard mortality was assumed at 10 percent, and spear mortality, discard mortality, was 100 percent. Are these reasonable values? Do these sound like something similar to what you would estimate from your experiences on the water, and so I will pause there and start taking notes.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Comments for Mike, or any knowledge on that discard mortality? You know, that's coming up with every species, more hot and heavy, and so now is the time to speak, if it's less. Andy.

MR. FISH: If you're asking for like discard mortality, is that spearing and missing, or wounding and not getting, or getting him to the boat and go, okay, he's fifteen inches, and we've got to throw him back, that kind of thing, when he's speared?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think it would be you would have hit the fish, because it would be in your possession, to have the fish, and that technically would -- That would be the catch. The catch would be you caught the fish, and it's in your possession, and now you see that it's not of the right size, and you can't keep it or whatever, and then it's released after that.

MR. FISH: I think you can assume 100 percent on the spear.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Joe Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: I always also assume that, if I speared and discarded one, that that would be counted towards my catch, or that I would get a ticket for undersized fish, if I got caught doing it.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Joe. Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: Chris Militello, Palm Beach area. Like the hook-and-line is more popular, but I don't think that we're going out to target them. If there's one or two guys in the boat that go, well, I'm going to try to get some hog, while everyone else is doing everything, and we're getting those in shallow water, and so I think that estimate on the mortality rate is a big number.

MR. LORENZ: Chris, what depth is that, just out of interest? Then I will comment on North Carolina.

MR. MILITELLO: I'm going to go a hundred feet.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, because we're -- In North Carolina --

MR. MILITELLO: I mean, a hundred feet isn't really deep for us.

MR. LORENZ: All right, and so that's very similar to what we see on the little ledges in North Carolina, but they're about ninety to a hundred feet, and they're large, and they're away from that structure, and so it would be similar. Thank you. Vincent Bonura.

MR. BONURA: I just wanted to add that I'm not a spear fisherman, but a handful of the guys I know that do commercial scuba diving lobster have been getting their trip limits here pretty regularly, and they're telling me that the class of fish is growing, and there's been more and more bigger fish regularly speared.

MR. LORENZ: Very good. Thank you, Vincent. John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: Just something I was thinking, and I was asking Paul, and Paul said they catch a lot, which I knew that, down around the Keys and stuff, but, up around our area, Ponce and through that area, the best I can remember, I only remember seeing one caught on a hook-and-line, and maybe it's more than that now, but the point is I don't know, and would it be more effective to make the range of where you're -- Still including all that, but break it up a little bit more, versus, you know -- Didn't you say that now you're doing from the Keys all the way up to where -- In this?

MR. LORENZ: I guess the fish are available from the Keys well into North Carolina, and are they up as far as your area, Andy, hogfish, or you don't have -- Because we have that smaller structure, with the sand nearby, the little reefs, and that's where they are, is off that structure, and so I don't think there's been any discussion to have a regional fishery on this, Mike, like you talked about in groupers, right, and this is just the whole South Atlantic?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the assessments are done for regions of the -- I guess areas of the region, rather, and so we have one population that is from Georgia through North Carolina, and so that's kind of grouped together, and then we have the east coast of Florida through I believe a portion of the Gulf coast of Florida, and that's a connected population there. They may not be distributed evenly throughout that area, but that's kind of where the genetic connectivity is between those fish, and so that's how they've divided it up.

MR. POLSTON: I guess where I'm actually going with this is -- I wasn't explaining myself very well, and the amount of fish that I've seen over the years, of hook-and-line fish caught, and I don't know how they could come up with a 10 percent mortality rate, if you're not catching them in that area, and how could -- Hook-and-line now, and not diving.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that 10 percent -- The 10 percent and 100 percent mortality rates, those would have been derived either from -- I think the spear is kind of just, you know, talked about, and they noticed that this is what happens with the fish, but the 10 percent is likely derived from a biological study that was conducted specifically looking at the survival of these fish after they were caught and released, and then they were probably tagged in some fashion, to see how well

they survived after that. Chip, if you remember that assessment, and that's not correct information, let me know, but that's normally how those estimates are derived.

MR. LORENZ: All right. While we're waiting for Chip, go ahead, Andy, and make your comment.

MR. FISH: I heard you say you think there's two different populations, or you're just calling just two different sectors of harvest, and like I know there's two different quotas, and two different catch limits, and are you thinking there is two different biomasses, so to speak, or are you saying that --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, I think they're two different, I guess, populations of animals. You know, it's the same species, but there are two different groups that are going to be connected to each other genetically, reproducing together, and they're not necessarily migrating back and forth between the Georgia/North Carolina group and the Florida group.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Chip Collier has joined us.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on the genetic thing a little bit, hogfish are extremely interesting creatures. I mean, the wrasse family, in general, is a very interesting group of fish. They're very distinct, and, you know, very plastic in a lot of their shapes, and you guys have seen hogfish, and they kind of take different shapes as they go along, and they have different colorations, males and females, and so it's interesting, but, within hogfish, there are three genetic stocks, one in west Florida, one down by the Keys, and then one up off the Carolinas, and so that's how they're split up, and it's based on a genetic study that was done, I think, in 2010, 2008 or 2010, somewhere around there.

Then, for the discard mortality of 10 percent, there really wasn't much information. It was assumed to be 10 percent, and they didn't really have any other values associated with it. One reason that they went with such a low value is, down off of Florida, where a lot of the fishing was occurring, and they had a size limit, there was -- All the fishing was done in pretty much shallow water.

Up off the Carolinas, and I believe up off of western Florida, they go into deeper water, and barotrauma is going to be a little bit more of an issue, and so we need to look at potentially discards in those other areas, to better inform that discard mortality rate, but, for where the majority of the recreational hook-and-line fishery was, I believe at that time, it was down in the Keys, and it was assumed to be around 10 percent, just really based on expert knowledge. Some of the fishermen had indicated that's about what it was.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chip. Any questions for Chip, or a comment back? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: With those three different biomasses, or genetic different hogfish, were there any notations of overall growth range? Like were the ones in North Carolina -- Were they actually larger fish genetically, and like were they capable of being larger, just by their genetic code?

DR. COLLIER: They didn't look into if the genetics were causing larger fish or not, but there are a couple of things that were found out about the species. Usually, when stocks are overfished, and

they have some of these different life history characteristics, they respond by becoming mature at a younger age. However, if you look at the maturity of hogfish down in the Keys, they were maturing at the older ages, or at least switching over to males at an older age, and so that was pretty interesting for a stock that seemed to be overfished. It was doing it at an older age.

One of the things that was pointed out is hogfish tended to be larger in deeper water, and so they were thinking some of the sampling, some of the effort, down in the Keys might have been occurring in some of the shallower water, and therefore targeting some of the smaller fish, as opposed to up off of the Carolinas, where they're pretty much getting into the deeper water and pretty much catching only the larger fish. I didn't read up on the western Florida stock that much, just because I wasn't going to have to work with management for that species, or that group.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Chip, and that would kind of lead me to wonder why, in the Bahamas, in some of the shallower waters there, there's a lot of larger hogfish animals, where I've never seen those animals in the Keys, and so it's just really interesting.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, James and Chip. Anyone else at this point have anything to add? Okay, Mike. Next item and questions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so you kind of see the notes that I'm taking along the way. If folks see things that look different than what you've discussed, please let me know, and I will correct that, but I'm going to keep moving down into the social and economic influences, and so I will scan over these, and, if you have comments, then please make them.

For the commercial sector, we're asking about how price and demand for hogfish have changed, and, as a timeframe, just kind of think since the last stock assessment, that 2012 year, and so about the last ten or eleven years, and how has price and demand for hogfish changed for the commercial sector, the charter component? Among species that are targeted, how important are hogfish to business enterprises? Are there specific communities that are dependent on Florida hogfish? Are there additional challenges that these communities may face, potentially poverty, access to internet, unemployment, things like that. and so even aspects that are not related to fishing.

Have changes in infrastructure affected fishing opportunities, specifically for hogfish? One question that was noted, by the analysts, is they asked how has damaged caused by recent hurricanes affected fishing opportunities for this species, and then how have fishermen, and communities, adapted to some of the changes that you all have observed in the Florida hogfish fishery? I will pause there and take notes on the discussion.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. James, kick it off.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Mike, you know, along the lines of some of those things, one of the things that popped up into my head is kind of the perception of table fare, like in the Keys, and, you know, hogfish is super sought after. You know, a lot of tourists, when they come down, they see hogfish on the menu, and they think it's something that was harvested, you know, in the Keys, and the fact of the matter is that maybe 10 percent, at most, of, you know, of what people are eating in the Keys comes from the Keys. Most of that is an imported product, harvested somewhere else, and I think that the public might have a perception of one thing, and then go look

at fishing rules, and regulations, and wonder why there are such heavy restrictions on species like hogfish.

I mean, maybe some of the things that we need to do, you know, is these places can't advertise fresh and local, when it's not, you know, and maybe change the perception, to the public, of what's actually hitting their plates. You know, I know it's a little bit off-topic, when it comes to what you're asking for, but it is a little bit of, you know, of a concern, is the perception of, you know, why we have these limitations, when it seems like these fish are abundant.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Anyone else here on that social or the economic aspects of these fish? I know, myself, and I may address Chris, and these things are not very available in the fish market, and most, that I have ever had, which isn't that frequent, was, you know, caught hook-and-line, or they seem to come in from someone who commercially dives, and so I know they were available, and I bought some around January or February, and I don't know, and it may have come from you, Andrew, but they're available in Wilmington, from time to time, but not very available, and they were \$30.00 a pound retail, and so I know -- Chris, do you carry that very often, or fish for them, and I don't know of anybody that actually commercially fishes for it. Every time I heard it, it was somebody that was diving.

MR. CONKLIN: I have probably sold more hogfish than anybody in the country, over the years, believe it or not, but, you know, there is plenty of them out there still, but, unfortunately, the preferred method of harvesting them is by spear, and all of my commercial divers have aged out, and they don't dive anymore, and so I don't see much of it, and, like I said, or like James was saying, I've got to buy it off a damn call sheet, and it's Mexican, and, where it used to be \$6.00 or \$7.00 ex-vessel, it's in excess of \$10.00 to buy an inferior, imported product, and so, if it wasn't for the imports, there wouldn't even be a seafood business on the east coast, I promise, because we can't make it on the crumbs that we're allowed to keep.

MR. LORENZ: All right. That's depressing. Thank you, Chris. Andy, please.

MR. FISH: I would think that, with the gag grouper going to a 300-pound trip limit, and a five or six-week season, there's going to be a lot more pressure put on the hogfish in all regions, and I don't know if that's appropriate here, but I would say it.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Commercial, or socioeconomic, you know, Mike, I don't think there's really too much of a social aspect here, with communities, and we've heard from -- Well, other than what Chris said, but I guess I haven't really heard of anybody -- I could probably name one name of a guy that I know that spears them, and probably sells them, and maybe get him on the AP eventually, and Andy probably knows him, and that's it. Anybody else on the commercial aspect? I don't think any charters are running for this, that I've heard of, and I don't see anybody advertising that. I mean, occasionally, somebody puts a fish up on Facebook or something. Okay. It looks like we're ready to move on, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. I'm just trying to think of kind of a summarizing point here, and so I want to run it by you all. Would it be fair to say this is something that it's not highly in demand, in terms of being sought after, but it's just in demand when it's available, when it's made available, that type of idea?

MR. LORENZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, Bob. I think that it's pretty highly sought after in the restaurant industry in the Keys. Every time I'm in Islamorada, we have hogfish, but I don't think it's sought after as far as hook-and-line. It's the commercial industry that is sold to the restaurants. For starters, if it's sold direct, they will pay a higher price than the market will.

MR. LORENZ: Andy.

MR. FISH: When I get them, and I'm in a little fish house in North Carolina, and they don't -- They usually distribute a lot of fish out, and they keep all the hogfish. Hogfish is a super high buzzword in the seafood industry, and I would say it's very sought after, but a very limited supply, specialized by mostly divers.

MR. LORENZ: I will bank off of what Andy said, Mike, and I know of quite a few non-fishermen, and they're just seafood lovers, and, when they hear there's hogfish, they will -- Word goes around, and I will even get a text of, hey, Bob, they're over at, and then they will name the fish house, and so, yes, there are people out there, that don't know a lot about fishing, that for some reason love that fish. It's good.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, all, and so I'm going to move down into the management measures portion. Looking here, are there new management measures that the council should consider, or existing management measures that should be changed? Are there current ACLs and allocations appropriate for each sector, just kind of noting, again, the table, scrolling up here.

The annual catch limits for -- I guess I will look at 2024, since that's the year that we're in, and commercial is at a little over 12,000, and recreational is at about 42,000, and that's in fish, versus pounds whole weight. Then you also have your minimum size limit, your trip limit, bag limit, all of these measures that are in place. The allocations, right now, are 90 percent to the recreational, and about 10 percent to the commercial, and so noting those are the current regulations, and are there any recommended changes to management measures for this species?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any comments on I guess the quantities and the current allocations between the commercial and the recreational sector? I guess, Mike, that's a tougher one, without, you know, all the tremendous targeted effort by very few people, and, like I said, I don't know of any commercial that target it, and I do know some recreational folks, but there aren't that many that are really good at it. It looks like not much comment. We recognize Chip Collier.

DR. COLLIER: I did want to point out that, even though the ACL that was presented to you guys for the recreational sector was presented in CHTS units, and they now are changing over to FES units, and this was an iconic species down in the Keys. If you look at the t-shirts down there, you will see all kinds of hogfish t-shirts, and, right now, neither the commercial nor the recreational are meeting their catch limits, and I'm just wondering, and is that because of like -- What might be happening, is it a lack of interest, or is it the population, or is it too restrictive regulations, and I'm just trying to get some insight on what might be occurring there, because this is an extremely important species down in the Keys, or it was an extremely important species.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. To answer that, Chip, you know, for a period of time, I can remember where it was extremely popular with a group of highschoolers that, you know, grew up on the water, and they were spearfishing constantly, into young adulthood, and, when the size limit really changed, it lost a lot of popularity. These kids, or young adults, however they were, when it changed, they couldn't go spear legal-sized fish, and so then posts on social media -- They became less and less, and there was less hype generated, you know, from seeing those images, and those landings, and I think, really, it's lost popularity, alongside of the size increase, at least in the Keys, because we do see a smaller fish.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: Definitely with the sharks, the way they are, diving is very, very low on a lot of -- It used to be divers want to do this, and it is extremely dangerous to dive with the sharks, and a lot of people don't handle it well.

MR. LORENZ: Joe. Thank you, Andy.

MR. MATTHEWS: I would echo what James said. I lived in south Florida back in the early 2000s, and it was a big-ticket item, and we spearfished for them every time I went to the Keys, and we would stop and free dive for them on the way back in, but it was all spearfishing, and, since we started this discussion, I've been thinking about the sixteen-inch size limit, and I don't know that I would have stopped and looked, if I had to get a sixteen-inch fish, because I don't know that we -- You know, you might see one a day, back in that timeframe.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: I don't really know a lot about the hogfish, as far as the industry is concerned, but one thing I do know is about commercial, and, if I understand correctly, it's twenty-five pounds, right, for unloading, and is that what you guys said? I do know commercial fishermen, and none of my guys would consider leaving the dock to target something like that, and I don't think nobody in the country would be, as far as trying to go make money, and so that would weigh in very, very -- Nobody mentioned that, and I don't believe it, and, I mean, twenty-five pounds, and that's ridiculous. That could be two fish, and then you've got to come home, and, I mean, if you were targeting that, but I'm just saying I think that needs to be mentioned. Twenty-five pounds, that's pretty pathetic for a commercial unload.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, John. You know, something is coming to me, and, Chip, maybe you will remember, but we discussed hogfish, back seven or nine years ago, and we had some quite spirited discussions, and we did have a Florida fisherman, and I won't give his full name, but Richard S., and he lived in Okeechobee, Florida, and he fished out of Key Largo, and he was really into the argument, like James made back -- I think it was the first time that we wanted to increase the size limit, and maybe to --

Was it a fourteen-inch minimum or something down there, and I know that we, in North Carolina, were bragging that, well, we don't even see them, and, boy, he was really into this, about the need for it in that northern part of the Keys, and with that initial tourist pulse that comes, when kids get

out of school in May and June, and he was very into it, and he really advocated for it, because I know he did commercial stuff, fishing, too, and I think he even was with lobsters or stone crabs or something, and he spoke a lot about this, the hogfish, and so there's some records back there on this, from like -- If you're looking at what it was like a few years ago, you had somebody that would always talk hogfish, at every one of these AP meetings, when Richard was on our AP. He termed-out maybe five or six years ago. All right. Anyone else? We're ready for the next topic, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Next, getting into some of the environmental and habitat aspects, and then looking at the population from a biological and ecological standpoint, and so do you perceive that abundance of this fish has changed in the past twelve years, since the last assessment, and that's really the timeframe that we're looking at, and so have folks noticed an increase in abundance? Where, and when, are fish available, noting that we do have a season in place, at least recreationally, but has there been any change in the availability of fish, from a time or location standpoint?

Has the size, or the sex, of fish that you typically encounter changed? Have you noticed any effects of environmental conditions on this species? Any observations on spawning seasonality for hogfish in Florida? Any notes on recruitment? Are you seeing a lot of small fish in specific areas? Are they found in the same place as the bigger fish? Have you seen any changes in the catch depth, or the bottom type, where hogfish are being caught? Have sea conditions changed the fishable days, and then, finally, have you noticed any changes as far as the years, or the seasonal aspect, of the species that are caught with hogfish, and so I will pause there, to see if there are any notes about abundance, availability, or biological and environmental aspects.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I guess I will take over and ask if there is anybody who would like to comment on that. Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks. I am from South Carolina, and I'm also a commercial developer, and I can't help but think, if this species is a shallow-water species in the Keys, the economical, or environmental, situation has changed, with the amount of runoff from commercial development in the Keys. That has to push the fish into deeper water.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Tony, to that point, you know, that's been such a major topic of my whole thought process, when it comes to fisheries management lately, is, you know, you take a look around, and you see all of this development, and the constant pressure on our shorelines, and not only in the Keys, but up and down every coast, and, you know, I just -- I just have to wonder, you know, like when -- When is development going to be held accountable, you know, I mean, and we're managing a pool that just seems to be smaller and smaller and smaller, with more piss in it, year in and year out, you know, and it's like what are we really doing, in fisheries management, you know, and we're just trying to conserve, you know, from every sector, and cut down, you know, but we're not really -- We're not really looking at what the reasons are and why there is less fish to manage, and it's really frustrating.

Then, down in the Keys, you know, having to deal with this mutant algae situation that's killing, you know, countless fish, and multiple different species of fish, and now endangered sawfish, you

know, and, I mean, it's really quite frustrating, and scary, to kind of look forward and see that it's going to get harder and harder, if we don't do something about it, and I know that's not our charge in this room, and, you know, we can only do what we're asked to do, but, at some point, it's got to be a bigger deal, the water quality.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: James, I would like to follow-up with that a little bit, too. In South Carolina, we are regulated extremely high on our water quality, and to the point where, in the low country, you're taxed on your impervious soils. Your homeowners is based that way, and I've been fishing in the Keys for most of my life, and I go there, in the last ten to twenty years, and I'm in awe at what is being done, that I see every day, and we have runoff here, and don't get me wrong, but it's not anywhere to that, and we're still categorized as pristine. The microorganisms are still here to feed the shrimp. Something has to be done in south Florida, a lot more than is being done.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. I know that James -- He actually brought this up before, and I told him about my experience as, you know, a student down in Florida in the 1970s, and going down to the Keys to dive and fish, and into the 1990s, and how it was, and what I see right now, and it's just appalling, and I kind of agree with him for like all of us. We spend a lot of time here trying to help, with the micromanagement of stocks and what is the reason for the decline and decline, and here's this monster out there along the coast with us, with our waters and the turbidity, that we just can't get a handle on, I mean, and it's just hurting everybody, and it doesn't matter what sector, and it's almost like we need to unite against that somehow, is my personal opinion. Thank you. Chip, you're recognized.

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to follow-up on James' comment. You know, I've heard a lot about the sawfish being impacted by the disease down there, and are you seeing -- Is it shallow-water species, and is it inshore species, more offshore species, that's being impacted? Just a little bit more information on that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So far, only nearshore waters, you know, canals, and really close to shore, but, I mean, as far as other people, what they've seen, and like my business partner, while harvesting from spiny lobster traps, has witnessed ballyhoo, as far as six or seven miles from shore. Now, granted, that's on the bay side, and that's in very shallow waters, and that's in some of the same waters that could be tidal flow in and out of the canals, and it's mostly isolated down in the Lower Keys, and so west of Seven-Mile Bridge, but there have been cases all the way up into Key Largo, and really all over the state, that really were kind of not being discussed, but, now that it's being -- You know, it's more prominent, and, you know, there are cases being reported in other places, and it's all kind of linked.

It's really scary, and, for a lot of the scientists that I've spoken to, they say that the number of species that it has affected is much larger than what it should be with an outbreak like this, if you will, and so, again, it's just alarm bells are going off, going off, going off, and, I guess, from what I understand, it's almost a mutation of something that was, you know, known about already, and so it's kind of, you know, an algae on steroids, I guess.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chip and James Paskiewicz. Anyone else want to comment on this, on the environmental aspects here? Okay, Mike. We can go into the other part, and is there more for the performance report?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so just kind of a catchall question, and then it may be a good place, after this Number 6 part, to kind of take a break, before we get into the stock risk rating portion of it, because that's something a little bit new, and so we'll need a little bit more explanation on that, but, if there's any additional notes that you all have, that haven't been covered thus far, that the assessment analysts need to know related to hogfish, and remember that they get this report, that gets generated from these questions, and so they will have this as a resource, to go along with all the data that are coming in, all the numeric data that they have for this assessment, and this type of information helps possibly to explain some of the data points, some of the trends that they're seeing, as well as if there's something that looks a little bit weird from a numeric standpoint, and information like this can kind of inform that and tell them how to approach those types of issues.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Mike. Anything else in closing for us, comments here? Then we'll take a break, I guess. I believe it's 3:09, and so we'll take a break for ten minutes or so, to 3:20. Let's do ten minutes, and we can get the rest of the hogfish and get into the vessel limits for headboats. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right. Let's reconvene the meeting on Florida hogfish, the rest of the fishery performance report, and I guess we're into the discussion of the stock, right, Mike, and that's where we're going? All right, Mike. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and I just wanted to note that, during that break, I talked with Vincent Bonura, and he's been communicating with some folks down off of Sebastian, Palm Beach County, and Broward County, and these are lobster dive fishermen that have snapper grouper permits, and they gave him some notes of kind of their experiences, and so I just wanted to make sure those are read into the record.

They noted that -- Each of them noted that they were catching their limit of hogfish, their commercial limit of hogfish, as a bycatch while they were targeting lobster, and they noted that the larger fish tend to stay in deeper water until it warms up, and smaller fish are closer to shore, and they've been seeing more juvenile fish. The fourteen to twenty-one-inch range of fish has been noticeably abundant. The average size has increased noticeably over the last three years or so, and then, off of Broward, it was noted that the depth that they were in was twenty-five feet and less, and so just kind of giving some additional information that Vincent grabbed for us, and so I appreciate that, and I wanted to put that in.

Now, moving down into the stock risk rating, this is a new part of the fishery performance reports, and it is -- It came out of the acceptable Biological Catch Control Rule, and so we're going to be using -- We're going to be using this worksheet to kind of go through one aspect of that control rule, and I'll give a little bit of a summary on how this information is going to be used, and then we'll go through the different risk scores, and factors, that come up with the risk rating.

What we are going to do, with stock assessments moving forward, is, when we do the fishery performance reports, we're going to come to the AP, and we're going to come to the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and we're going to go through these scores of different attributes of the fishery related to how much risk the council should be willing to take, and, by risk, we mean any level of catch, whenever you catch fish, and there is some probability, some risk, that you are going to overfish that stock, and, the more fish you catch, the higher and higher the probability goes, and so what's an acceptability probability?

That's kind of the question that we're trying to get at, is finding that balance between enough fish that it's sustainable for fishermen, but also not so much that you're taking too much risk, and so we're trying to capture some of that. In doing that, we have different attributes that I will go through at the bottom, and some of them cover the biological characteristics of the fish, the population itself, and some of those attributes cover social or economic dependency, if there's a really, you know, high-priced, economically-in-demand fish, that people are going to go after, and that presents kind of a higher risk than a fishery where it's not as much in demand.

We're going to go through a few of these different attributes, and we'll show you kind of the scoring systems there, and then we'll ask you if what the data are showing, related to these scoring systems, if you all think that this makes sense for this fishery, in your experience, or if there are additional notes that need to be taken into consideration.

The council gets the ultimately decision on what the risk rating for a stock will be, and, the way that the risk rating is used with assessment information is shown here in Table 2, and so a stock with a higher risk, and that means it's more susceptible to being overfished, or experiencing kind of those characteristics that come with an overfished stock of juvenescing, having a lower -- Having a lower size at mortality, and they tend to grow a little faster, but they don't get quite as big, those types of impacts that can happen to a stock.

Within this table, you can see kind of the interplay here, and so, for a stock that has a low risk rating -- If it has a high biomass coming out of the stock assessment, then an acceptable probability of overfishing -- You might hear the term -- When the SSC talks, you might hear the term "P\*", and that's what they're talking about. They're talking about the accepted probability of overfishing that would be 45 percent, and that's kind of the default level.

The council has a little bit of wiggle room, when it comes to these levels, but this is going to be the default level that they would go to with each of these combinations, and so a stock that has a very high risk of overfishing, and has a low biomass -- You wouldn't want to have a very high probability that you're going to overfish that stock, and so the default level, for something like this, would be like 20 percent. If you have a higher biomass, it increases the amount of risk that the council would be willing to take. If you have a stock that has characteristics that make it less susceptible to overfishing, then they're willing to take more risk, and that's kind of how this table gets set up.

We're going to go through these risk scores, and, after we get through this scoring system, there will be an overall rating of high, medium, or low. That will go into this table, and we'll have these numeric scores though, and the way that this works is that there are three thirds of our stocks that we're looking at, and we apportioned them into high, medium, and low, and so a third of the stocks that are included in this system, which will be your snapper grouper stocks, along with dolphin

and wahoo, and a third of these stocks are going to be high risk, and a third of them the council will take medium risk, and a third the council would take low risk.

The way that works out, numerically right now, is that, if a stock is less than 2.03 for its final score, then it would be a high-risk stock. If it's between 2.03 and 2.35, medium. Greater than 2.35, then it would be a low-risk stock, and so your job, in this process, is to take a look at the scores in the table that we are going to go through, and comment if any of these scores seem unreasonable, why they seem unreasonable, how they should be adjusted, things of that nature, or if there are any special circumstances that need to be thought about when evaluating these kinds of attributes for the Florida hogfish fishery.

I'm going to scroll on down, and this is our table. This is what it looks like, and so we have three categories. We have first biological, and we'll talk about a couple of the biological aspects of this stock, and then we have the human dimension, and that is how are people interacting with this stock, and then, finally, we have a category for environmental attributes. Are there any special risks, for this species, coming from environmental aspects? Are there ecosystems that are heavily dependent on this stock? How is climate change affecting it? Things of that nature. That one is a little bit different, and I'll talk about it when we get there, but, first, we're going to look at these biological attributes.

The first one that we look at is the natural mortality, and that gets estimated within a stock assessment process, and, generally, a higher nature mortality means that the stock is more productive, and so that can allow for more risk tolerance, and that can allow for higher  $P^*$ , when you're fishing this stock, and so, from the last stock assessment, natural mortality was estimated at 0.179, and so it falls into the high-risk category, and so this stock would be susceptible. From a natural mortality standpoint, it would be susceptible to overfishing, and so that's the level there.

Then, for age-at-maturity, generally, if a stock is maturing -- If a species is maturing later in life, then that means it's going to be a bit less productive, and so your higher-risk stocks are going to have an age-at-maturity, and we look at the age at 50 percent maturity as the metric here, and, if it's greater than four years, that's high risk. Two to four years is medium, and less than two years is low. For Florida hogfish, the estimated age-at-maturity was somewhere in the range of 0.9 to 1.6 years, and we do note that it does have protogynous hermaphroditism, and so that's a little bit of a different situation. You're not getting females throughout the rest of the life span, once you hit maturity, and we have age at transition -- It was noted, in the last stock assessment, that it can be anywhere from one year to eleven years, and, like I noted before, it's socially mediated, and so it can vary quite widely.

From that age-at-maturity, we have a score of three, that it's a low risk, because it has a low age-at-maturity, although it kind of has an asterisk with it there, because you don't get the full female production throughout the female life span with the sex change, and so that leaves us with a biological score of two, just averaging these two different attributes, and so, I guess, from this standpoint, I will pause here, to see if there are any questions, any disagreements, with how the biological risks have been evaluated for this species.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any comment from the AP on the risk in these tables and how it was evaluated? James. Thank you. You can start off.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. I think that all of it looks pretty complicated. As long as we can trust, you know, the science that we plug into the chart, I think it looks good, and I think it looks really, really simple to come up with something that's easily spit out. You know, again, we're just stuck with, you know, how much we trust the scientific data for each species, but, I mean, for this one, and, you know, not looking at it, but everything looks in line so far, and so I kind of like it.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: I just -- If you don't know the age when it turns into a male, and that's a nine-year period, and, I mean, does a one-year-old make the same amount of eggs as a five-year-old, when it's still a female? I mean, there are so many variables in there, and how do we narrow that down? Like do 90 percent of them turn male at 1.9, or do 10 percent of them?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I'm looking towards Chip, but, I mean, my impression is that it is hard to predict. You know, the simple answer is that it's hard to predict, and it's a really unique type of fish, and so, yes, your production, from your females, over the course of a lifetime, can vary quite a bit, because the females -- The time that they spend as females will vary widely, but I will pass to Chip, to see if he has more.

DR. COLLIER: It varies by area, but, looking at the last assessment, it was generally between four and six years old where about 50 percent of the fish had transitioned over to males, and so, I mean, that's about where 50 percent -- I think it was 90 percent at, I think, around age-eight or nine, and so, much like you have that strong ascending limb for female maturity, you have a similar pretty strong drop for male maturity, or fish transitioning to males.

MR. LORENZ: Chip, just a question, because I sometimes mix this one up with sea bass, and I think the females turn to males at some point also. Okay, and there's also something out there, with hogfish isn't it, that they also do it when they have to, like the younger ones, like if there's a male missing, and a female does change, or am I wrong on that?

DR. COLLIER: Like Mike was saying, it's socially mediated, and so, if there's not a male present, they might -- Even a large, older female might not transition over until that male is removed from the population.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: But wrasses are also known to have this thing called sneaker males, which basically are small males that will sneak into a harem and fertilize the eggs, and so, once again, wrasses are crazy little fish.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just thinking, and I've heard, over the years, about, you know, the selectivity, and the method of harvest for these things, is you generally go down and you harvest the biggest fish out of the harem, which would most likely be a male, and the females don't turn into males overnight, and so I've heard that they disperse, and they are lost, like Nemo, trying to find, you know, another partner to party down with, but so it just screams, to me, when you

implement a higher size limit, that you're -- I mean, obviously, natural -- For selectivity of spear fishing, you would go kill the largest animal in the harem, obviously, if you could, but, you know, it just screams, to me, that you're also forcing that, and that there could be another way to -- You know, I think maybe we've talked about it off-topic before, that, you know, you only harvest a -- You know, to feel good about yourself, and to make your resource, at least from a commercial fishing standpoint, that you wouldn't go do that, and you would harvest some of the other animals, and, that way, they could continue to reproduce.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chris, for that, and that's kind of interesting, because I know that they will circle up along the -- I know, among the recreational fishermen, with time, because of the diving, and the way they can go inside -- I mentioned, to Andy, that they can go inside a wreck and get that large one, and the rest of us recreational fishermen are kind of -- We're on the outside, trying to chase them a little bit away from some structure, but maybe a little talk, or a comment, on that from a diver point of view, or the commercial fishing, the commercial diving point of view, and would something like a slot limit have any practicality, and then, again, considering the refractive index in the water, and how do you even tell what their length is, and I would like you to say something, Andy.

MR. FISH: I think a slot limit, for a spear fisherman, is really tough, and, obviously, everybody likes catching the bigger fish, and shooting the bigger fish, and it's one thing to even just gauge like your smaller size, but now you've got to try and visualize the bigger size too, and I think that would be really hard to do.

MR. LORENZ: That's what I thought, but I wanted to hear. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: For me, it just would come down to what the limit would be, you know, and how much benefit do you gain for that, and, I mean, I agree that it's tough, man. When you're moving underwater, it's all over the place, and you're trying to bang some fish out, and, you know, it's challenging to narrow down, you know, a twenty-four-inch scamp, or a twenty-inch scamp, versus a twenty-four-inch gray, and that's somebody who does it a lot. God forbid the guys who don't do it a lot, and, I mean, they're just down there shooting shit all over the place.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you. That's interesting. Anybody else? Okay. Mike, back to you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Now, kind of taking a look at the human dimension attributes, and these -- There are a few more categories of this, and so we might go a little bit more slowly through this one, and so, first of all, the ability to regulate the fishery, and this has to do with are the annual catch limits being exceeded, and that's kind of the target that is used to evaluate this characteristic here, and so a high-risk fishery would be one that consistently exceeds its total ACL for example, more than three years out of the last five. A medium risk would be one that is kept mostly below the ACL, but maybe comes up every now and then, and a low-risk fishery would be one that's consistently kept below the ACL.

When looking at kind of the apples-to-apples comparison, the telephone survey -- You know, relative to the telephone-survey-derived annual catch limits for the recreational, and then the commercial, compared to the commercial annual catch limits, neither sector exceeded its ACL from 2018 through 2022 for this fishery, and so that gives it a low risk of three, and, I guess, you

know, kind of the additional aspect of that is do you all see any difficulty, in terms of people adhering to regulations for this fishery, or is there -- I mean, the data speaks to the annual catch limits, but I guess your experience would speak to within, you know, the fishery itself, and are people having trouble with the regulations, and staying within the limits, the size limits, anything of that nature.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any comments, and then maybe even a suggestion, if there is a comment, on issues related to the various ways to control the take of these fish, and staying within the regulations, and does anybody have any thoughts on that? That's a tough one, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If there's nothing additional, that's fine, but I just wanted to make sure that the question is asked. Part of this is, you know, we have a data metric that we're going through, but the data metric doesn't always tell the entire story, and so that's where we put it out there that does this tell enough of the story for, you know, you all's perspective, and so, not hearing any additional comment, we can move down to the discard losses.

Kind of the data metric here is that -- How much of the total catch ends up in dead discards, as a result, of you know, catch and release mortality rates applied, and this one -- The score is kind of a preliminary score that was conducted by the SSC, when they first derived these, and we are going to look at the actual discard estimates, and we didn't get a chance to have those numbers available here, because, when you go through a stock assessment process, they take those estimates, and those may get tweaked a bit, depending on what the data look like, and it's not always just download from commercial logbook and the MRIP site, and that's the end result, and there are adjustments that are made to the data within the assessment process, and so this is a preliminary score, but, just qualitatively, how would you all characterize dead discards for this fishery? Are they a significant proportion of the total catch? That would be, you know, say over 40 percent, or are they a moderate proportion of what you catch, or are they a very small portion of what you catch?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any comment on the dead discards and the frequency, and, Mike, this is focused on Florida?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. LORENZ: Florida hogfish for sure, and I guess I would ask the AP, and I know we've had comments on the fact that the small ones are fairly abundant, or they're showing up inshore, and you basically go further off for the bigger ones, and so I guess there could be some thoughts on that, and so anybody with enough hogfish fishing experience here to take a shot at this one, on what you think of those discard levels of over 40, 20 to 40, less than 15 to 20? Anyone? I will go to James first. Go ahead, James, the vice chair.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. I would like to back up to the last item, just for a minute here, and, you know, it's kind of tough, when we're talking about the ways to really assess the ability to regulate the fishery, and, you know, you take a look at not meeting an ACL, for either sector, for a period of time, and it hasn't been met from 2018 to 2022, and, you know, with the implementation of a twenty-five-pound commercial limit, we're probably never going to hit that ACL, and, with the recreational sector, you know, we're still having major accountability issues.

We don't know what the rec sector is catching, and so we could be sitting here with a number of three, and we could always be sitting here with a number of three, because one sector is really limited in what they can bring across the dock, based on a trip limit, and the other sector is still unknown, and so I would be hesitant to really count that number in the overall -- You know, in the overall formula, and it just seems like it's going to skew everything, and maybe I'm kind of -- Maybe this isn't what you're asking, but I think that it might be.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I guess a couple of points related to that, just kind of -- Just kind of framing the discussion related to regulating the fishery, and the goal, in especially this aspect, would be a three, in terms of an annual catch limit is meant to be that's the point that you don't go over, that you don't go past that limit.

Now, something like an optimum yield, which, in our region, we often set very close to our annual catch limit, and that is what you want to catch. That's what you want to achieve, but you don't -- If you're going over your limit consistently, then that is taking on a substantial amount of risk that you would potentially overfish that stock, and so the ability to regulate the fishery, and keep it within the limits that you intend that fishery to exist in, is kind of the goal within fisheries management.

Related to just this evaluation, as it sits in these others, and so the ability to regulate a fishery is one of several human dimension characteristics that we're going to go through, and it will get, you know, averaged out in this manner, and so one score doesn't terribly change the entire thing, and, if this fishery is not being regulated, like if people are not fishing within the regulations set for this fishery, then that's something that should be noted, and that's a risk towards that fishery, and that's something that we want to capture here.

The big limit, that is in place for every fishery, every federal fishery, is the annual catch limit, which is why we use that metric, but there are also additional regulations that are in place, that, if people aren't abiding by these, then that makes it tougher for the fishery to exist in the way that we would project it forward, that we would estimate it to exist, because we're estimating that people are going to follow the rules that are set forward, and we have to make that assumption, as the population gets modeled forward, and we look at what's going on there, and so I think that kind of addresses some of the points there, or hopefully it hit a few things.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It really does, and just my whole problem with this, and we kind of come back to it, in one way, shape, or form, is, you know, how do you run these models, and how do you run these charts, when you still have a huge variable in accountability, when it comes to a sector as a whole. You know, I mean, I really don't want to get derailed on this, and I just -- You know, it's a big question-mark in my head.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, James. Chris Militello, you have a comment?

MR. MILITELLO: Just to back up, what James just said too is we don't know when the fish is mature, first of all, but, as far as the discards go, in Florida, like I said before, it's shallow. I mean, it's a hundred feet, and so I don't think they're dying, any of them.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chris. Mike, I guess we're ready to go to your next -- I'm sorry, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I don't fish down in Florida at all, but, if I move the numbers upward -- I mean, we run eight boats, and I would say, on any given year, out of eight boats going out to the Gulf Stream and doing stuff, we might catch forty or fifty hogs, total, amongst all those vessels, and so, you know, if you try to move that to the recreational, it's the same thing, and I just don't think it's a fish that's caught, you know, really that much, and, when we do catch it, and release it, it's the same thing that Chris said. We're in relatively shallow water, and so the mortality is actually usually really good, and most of them make it back to the bottom, and we're fishing in eighty to a hundred foot.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. Paul.

MR. NELSON: I've been fishing off of Ponce Inlet for fifty years, and I've never caught one on a rod-and-reel. We just don't get them.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. Anyone else? Just a quick question, Mike, and is this a stock we're worried about is in decline? I mean, it's kind of interesting, listening here to James and John and some of the others on the commercial side, and we've got an ACL that probably won't be met, because there are not enough fish allowed to be kept to make it economically feasible, and that's over here, with that ACL not met, and the larger ACL, maybe 250 percent larger, is for the recreational folks, and maybe that's the problem, but then James says, well, gee, we don't have great accountability on that, and so, wow, and where does that lead you down the line? Do you open it up, so the commercial can take more, and cut back over here, or say commercial will never go for it and flip it over, and that will be an interesting dilemma.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, I mean, that's what they'll be looking at in the stock assessment, is what has the population done since 2012, and that's kind of where we're at right now. This stock has been in a rebuilding plan since it was declared overfished in the last stock assessment, and so now they're checking back in to see how has the population reacted since then, and what we're doing, you know, kind of within this process, and this is meant to become a standard process, as part of the, you know, assessment, and transitioning that assessment information to management, is how much risk should we be taking with a certain stock, and so this is kind of the question to ask.

We do this early in the process, so that the assessment analysts can have the right information to run projections in the assessment model, so they know this is what the council is thinking, as far as its risk evaluation for this species. They plug that into the model, and then they project the model forward.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Are some of the questions that are looking to be answered, alongside of an assessment, and using this type of formula, and are we going to be able to answer whether the ACL is appropriate, and the MSY is appropriate? You know, once we figure out a risk tolerance, and we take a look at, you know, if an ACL is being met, or even coming close to being met, and it's going to raise the question of if the ACL is appropriate, and if the MSY is appropriate, given the fact that we're not even coming close on the ACL, and so then the MSY has to be wrong, and will we be able to answer those questions within this?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that won't be at this step of this process, because any MSY estimate is going to come out of the stock assessment itself. We're ahead of the stock assessment right now, and so, I mean, I can't -- That won't be addressed right here, at this part of the process, but I do want to kind of poke this point, and that's one of the essential parts of our stakeholder observers within the SEDAR process, is that, if there are ACL -- If there are catch estimates, coming out of a SEDAR process, and there's something that doesn't seem to line up with observations of the fishery, how the catches have corresponded to ACLs, that's where, you know -- I mean, the scientists will have the numbers, the data, that are available to them, but you all have a different perspective, and you all are part of that process as well, and so those stakeholder observer seats, that we take volunteers for, and people sign-up, get in that process. That's where we really depend on people to speak up for that.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: With what you just said, I've got to mention one thing, and the State of Florida did exactly what you're talking about, and they spent their own money to go out and rent the charter boats to go red snapper fishing, and I know we're talking about hog snapper, or hogfish, and they did that, and the entire program that was set up came back with a thousand percent of them saying that, everywhere we dropped -- Every one there was, there were red snapper, and they took that back to the people for the report, and nothing was done about it. I mean, it's just -- It's still -- I know that's not a subject we need to be on right this second, but my point is, if you're going to use this formula, it should be used on everything, and it has been, but it's like the data is not being taken up the line and used, or in my opinion anyhow.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, John, and I think that closes that, where James took us back one step, and are we finished up with the potential for discard losses, whether those figures that are shown there of low, medium, high, are reasonably valid to let go at this point? I don't see any further comments, and so I guess we'll move to the commercial value.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, just noting the discard value, from the comments that I heard related to discards, it seems to be a low-risk item, because they're released in shallow water, and so that lines up with the three score of a low risk. Looking at commercial value, we have a couple different metrics to consider related to this, and this is how much of total revenue, and so this goes across species, but how dependent either trips are on revenue or how much annual revenue is dependent on this species.

From looking at the logbook data, the average percent of annual revenue that was dependent on hogfish, during this time period of 2018 through 2022, that was about 3 percent, and so that's kind of in this medium category, and the revenue per trip, on a per-trip basis, was about 13 percent, and so that's, again, in this medium category, and so that's kind of where we got that estimate of two, and it would be a medium-risk type of species, in terms of its commercial value, and so any additional comments, or questions, on that?

MR. LORENZ: Andy.

MR. PILAND: Isn't that regulated by the quota? I mean, isn't the value of the fish now being regulated by the twenty-five-pound trip limit?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, it would be affected by it, and that would certainly contribute to it. That also shows the -- I guess we're looking at the relative scale of this species, compared to others, and are you catching -- You know, if you're not catching very many other species, then the percentage that you would be dependent on hogfish goes up, and then there's a higher risk associated with that species, but, yes, the annual catch limits, and the trip limits, definitely affect this.

MR. LORENZ: Andy Fish now.

MR. FISH: On that far-right box, on the top, the average trip, the average percent trip revenue, 13 percent, and is that box saying that 13 percent of all trips is hogfish, on a commercial -- On an annual commercial value?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No. For the trip revenue, and I think Chip -- In case I'm wrong, and please let me know, but, from what I understand, on trips that catch hogfish, hogfish constitute 13 percent of the revenue generated from those trips, and so that would only include trips that catch hogfish, and that shows how much money is being made off of hogfish on that trip.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think, to clarify what he's saying, that's why the average annual revenue isn't 13 percent as well, because, if it was of all trips, then it would be -- So it's 3 percent of the annual number, or at least that's how I'm reading it, and I could be wrong.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Kimrey, did you raise your hand? Okay. Thank you. Any further comment on the annual commercial value? All right, Mike. Recreational desirability.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we'll look at recreational desirability, and, Chip, I was not able to grab these values, and so, if you could, I guess -- You emailed the values to me, and I just didn't get them over into the document. We have more recent MRIP values for the total amount here, and I grabbed the ones from the last stock assessment, just kind of noting those, and the scale that those are on, but we look at targeting data, when it comes to recreational desirability, and so, if there are more than 5 percent of the MRIP trips for this area that are reporting that that's their target, then that's considered a highly-desirable species. If there is less than 1 percent of trips targeting this species, then it would not be highly desirable, and this should be reversed, and so it should have been a three score there.

What we have, from the last stock assessment, is that the total was 0.76 percent of trips, and so it was less than 1 percent. It did note that there was kind of a pretty significant disparity of the spear trips. A lot of them were targeting hogfish, but spear trips are a very small component, compared to the number of hook-and-line trips, and so that's why you see that big difference.

Normally, we don't -- Normally, we kind of have this overall total number, but, because spear is a significant component within hogfish, that's the reason that was noted in the last assessment, and I guess -- If I remember correctly, this is in line, in the range, of what you saw, Chip, for 2018 to 2022, and it was actually a little bit less than the 0.76, and it was probably around 0.5, right?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's correct, for the overall Florida component, and it definitely looked like it was less than 1 percent, and, obviously, North Carolina is even a lower percentage than that, the North Carolina/Georgia stock.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It looks like John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: This is just throwing a thought out there, but, listening to what everybody has got to say about the hogfish, and there is basically very low dead discards, apparently, with hook-and-lining, and 100 percent spearfishing, and then the council possibly might want to consider two different commercial landings, in order to get more data, to raise it up on the hook-and-line fishery, and either keep it or raise it some on the spearfish fishery, because of the difference in the dead discards, to be able to get more data, and I don't know, and it's just a thought.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I will move -- That note is more management measures for the FPR, and so I'll move that up into the FPR section, but I do have that note down, and so it seems like, just from the discussion that I've heard here, that less than 1 percent of trips seems appropriate to what people have observed for this fishery, and so I'm going to keep on moving down.

Then we have social concerns, and so we use a metric called a social quotient that looks at community information, seeing are there communities that are highly dependent on a certain species, and we have different categories for how many of those communities exist. We kind of had a question along these lines in the FPR, and it seemed like there weren't a whole lot of communities that were highly reliant on hogfish, but I will pause here, just to, you know, kind of check back in and see if there were any additional comments related to that. We don't have a preliminary score here, and so like the final overall scores -- Take those with a grain of salt, because, as we fill in the information, and as we update the information, as you all provided it today, those will be updated before they go to the council for the final decision.

MR. LORENZ: A comment, Joe? Joe Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: I think this is another area that kind of highlights the need to, specifically with this species, consider different gear types differently, because I would say, from the recreational sector, there's probably a significant number of folks who spearfish who would say that 90 percent of their trips, spearfishing, they're targeting hogfish, whereas, with hook-and-line, you might not find hardly anybody that says that they're going out to hook-and-line target hogfish.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Joe. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: My experience is, if you're going spearfishing, you're targeting anything that you're allowed to harvest, and the same with if you're, I mean, just going fishing in general. I mean, I don't -- Like my commercial guys, when they used to catch a lot of hogfish with their spears, they weren't going out for just hogfish, and, you know, they would target whatever they could harvest, and my friends that recreationally do it as well, and, you know, they're going for whatever they can put on the top of the water.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. Captain Bobby.

MR. FREEMAN: What is the depth range on these fish? All the time I've fished out there, and probably forty miles northeast of Frying Pan would be as far to the south that I've fished, and I never saw a hogfish, but, most of the time, we would have been fishing deeper for grouper and tilefish, but I just wondered what's the capability, or the potential, that those fish would be in areas that I have fished and never saw one.

MR. LORENZ: Andy, do you want to answer?

MR. FISH: I frequent that area, and they're all the way out to the break, as far as I know, and, in the Wilmington area, they kind of start at thirty miles, which is going to be the warmer-type stuff, and all the way to the break, and, in the Keys -- They're everywhere in the Keys. I would say like about that area, and Morehead -- I know they get them in Morehead, once you out far enough to the tropical water on the bottom, but they're out to the break, at least up there.

MR. LORENZ: Robert, I just don't think you came quite far south enough down there, near the shoals, because the southern end -- Thirty-some miles off of New Hanover and Brunswick, they're there, on those coquina reefs, and right near them, and, you know, for fishing, for hook-and-line, and that's -- I don't know, and that's like anywhere from eighty to 120 feet, but they're big fish. All right. Mike, just one thing to consider, on that last one, would be -- I don't know if there's anybody to talk to, in the Keys or something, and, again, I'll bring that other AP member that was here years ago, and we talked about first going to the fourteen-inch limit, upping the size limit in Florida, and there was a pretty convincing argument, and I guess he may have known people that rent small boats, or something like that, and there was a phenomenon, maybe in the Keys, and so maybe get a pulse of fishing.

Florida kind of lets schools out sometime in late April, or very early May, and there are like -- Like it was stated, there are just loads of families that come into the Keys for a short time, and during that say May to June period, that fish, and it was kind of a big thing for the fish to -- For the kids to go for the hogfish. I mean, at times, their abundance, and I guess the ease of catching it down there, and then sort of the exotic nature. For the children, there was an argument made that it really means something for tourism, for some folks, and, like I said, this statement came from one of the Upper Keys, near Key Largo. James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I think I would speak to that, and I think it was more of a local kind of diamond in the rough, initially. Just the water starts to calm down, you know, in May and June, and kids -- A lot of kids that aren't playing in sports, you know, they're more geared to the fishing-type activities, and they have small boats that they run themselves, and they have a lot of experience on the water, and so, you know, when those seas calm down, and the waters clear up, after school, it was one of the activities that just was absolutely on the list, every single day that these guys could get out on the water. At that point, it was super important, for locals even.

You know, with the change in the size limit, it definitely -- It really curtailed, you know, that pressure, but, again, that's isolated, you know, to the Keys waters, where I think that we do see, normally, a smaller fish. With that being said, I think I can speak for just about everybody in my zone, that we do want to see more of these fish, and we do want to see larger hogfish, and, really, there's no urgency to really change anything that's going on, because, you know, like Vincent was saying, with some of the people that he's spoke to, that they're seeing larger fish, and they're seeing more abundance, and I think that we're in the right direction on this species.

You know, no matter how important it is, you know, to any particular user group, we have an obligation to manage this species as best we can, in the parameters that we're given, and it looks like, with this one, that we're on the right track at least.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: Just a question, and so, I mean, if the trip limit in Florida were higher, could you harvest the fish, because I'm looking at your landings, and, in 2021, you hit almost 41 percent. In 2022, it was 37, and, last year, it was only 24. Is that because the fish aren't there, or is that because the trip limit is too low?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I mean, personally, I have never caught one on hook-and-line, and I don't get in the water to spear fish. I mean, I would -- Just knowing the industry, the way that I do, I would dare to say that the trip limit absolutely is creating a very low ceiling for what -- You know, what we can put up, as far as our ACL goes, absolutely, and then I guess time will tell if -- You know, if we started harvesting close to our ACL, we would know if the MSY is wrong or not, you know, and it's a delicate balance, everything we do out there, and so it's an interesting concept all the way around. You know, I mean, we're definitely in the safer zone right now, at twenty-five pounds per limit.

On a side note, as far as hook-and-line fishing goes in the Keys, I have never caught a hogfish hook-and-line fishing, never ever, and I've caught a lot of fish. I have a friend of mine, from Miami, who comes to the Keys specifically to hook-and-line hogfish, and he's got a super-secret regiment that he follows, and the dude catches fish.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, James. Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: How are we comparing to the Gulf side, and the reason I ask that is because I have some friends that are crushing it, on the Gulf side, with hook-and-line, and they seem to manage it well, or at least the fish that I'm seeing have decent size to them, and there seems to be plenty of them.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't quite know. I can maybe look, and follow-up with you after the meeting, but, yes, I don't quite know what the Gulf is doing to kind of have that perspective one way or the other.

MR. CONSTANT: A lot of times, they've run through their troubles, and they might be on the other side of it.

MR. LORENZ: All right, Tony. Thank you, and, Mike, we will be back to you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, noting that I updated this rec desirability number, this 2.25 number is probably a little bit low, and it's probably going to end up a little bit higher, once we incorporate all the rest of the metrics in here, and have everything updated, and it just doesn't automatically update in Word, but now, moving down into the environmental attributes, and so this aspect is set up a little bit differently.

This is basically seeing is there anything that is especially affecting this species, from an environmental standpoint, or about this species that puts it at a particular risk from the standpoint of how it is valued in its environment, and is it a keystone species from which a lot of other species are dependent on their biology, something of that nature, and so we look first at ecosystem importance.

Kind of thinking about is it a keystone predator, or a strong prey species that something else is highly dependent upon, and does it have a significant role, in terms of maintaining a reef, or building a reef, or creating structure that other fish rely upon, and then, thinking about a climate change standpoint, is it a species that is especially susceptible to climate change, and is it suffering from any type of expansion, or collapse, in terms of its range, or is it interacting with new predators, because of climate change, things of that nature, and then, finally, are there other environmental variables that are especially affecting this species, and this is where the concept of regime shifts, have we see collapses in its recruitment, things of that nature, are brought into play.

All of these three factors are considered -- You know, if it plays a big role, or is heavily affected in this, then that's considered a high-risk type of thing, and this environmental attribute is really - - Either it's high risk, or it's not considered in the average, and it's either present or not. It's really hard to characterize the risks of some of these factors, in terms of a high, medium, or low, because we just don't have the data, or the information, to be able to separate out -- To separate out those different categories, and so, if it's present, then it would get a one score, of a high risk for environmental, and, if there's nothing present, nothing affecting it, then the environmental score is not included in the final average, and so this zero wouldn't be a real zero, and it would be a blank, and we would just be averaging biological and human dimension to get this final score and the ultimate risk rating. I will pause here, to see if you all have noticed, and are there any significant environmental factors that need to be taken into account when considering hogfish and how much risk should be taken with this species and how much harvest is coming out.

MR. LORENZ: Anybody have any comment here? It almost seems like, if you're a diver, you might notice, and it's almost like behavior, and what you observe, but okay. Chris, take a shot, Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: I think what James said earlier, because all the building, and I think Tony mentioned it too, is that the shallow fish, that you could get in fifteen feet of water -- Because those reefs are not doing great, they're not there anymore.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. Anyone want to add? That's a tough one, Mike. That's almost something for the old Jacques Cousteau or something. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob, and so, with that concern being brought up, there would automatically be a one there, you know, with the hogfish in this section of this chart.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I guess the follow-up -- We note that there is, you know, infrastructure impacts, and there's going to be a certain level of impact on any of the snapper grouper species that are in that area, and do you all think that it is especially affecting hogfish, I guess, above average, more than it would be affecting others? Are our hogfish any more susceptible to that type of difficulty than any other snapper grouper species?

MR. MILITELLO: Well, if there's no coral there, then they're not going to be there.

MR. LORENZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: What Chris said. If you take away the food, you're affecting everybody.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else with a thought? Okay, Mike. That's it for the AP here on that one.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and, just from that that comment, then that would kind of be a one. That would be a high-risk attribute, and so that would be factored in here, and, like I said, this number is not final, and it's just kind of what was in the numbers that came in, but we've adjusted that now, and so, yes, it will go to -- I will update the numbers, and it will go to the SSC, and they will go through a similar process of what you all have gone through, in terms of, you know, any information that they have that would contribute to this final score, and then comments from you and the SSC will go to the council, and the council will decide what the ultimate risk rating is for this stock.

That's kind of where this stands at this point, and I guess any -- Before we leave this, and that's all I have for the FPR and the risk rating, and this is something that we're going to be going through for species in the future, and does anybody have any questions about this process, any recommendations on how we can make this more efficient, or, if it's fine as it is, and we continue to cycle species through -- This is the first time we're doing this, and so any feedback that I can get, and we have a little bit of time, and so any feedback that you can give me, either now in email follow-up, would be great.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Andy Fish, you had your hand up?

MR. FISH: I think it's very cool and all, but maybe do it on a species with a whole lot more data that we're sure of. I mean, I'm not knocking anything here, but there's so many things that we don't know about these fish, and I would guess it's a 99 percent commercially-harvested fish, and I'm just guessing, and that's where all the data comes from, and so I would be -- I think it's a neat thing, but there are so many unknowns, and it's hard to -- At least in this fish.

MR. LORENZ: John.

MR. POLSTON: Nobody has mentioned it yet, and maybe I shouldn't, but, somewhere or another, we've got to face the fact of fish eating fish, like the shark situation, versus all the species of fish, and not just hogfish, but everything in general, and that has gotten out of control, and I think any recreational or commercial, and I heard James say he wouldn't dare to get in the water now, but that's -- Somewhere or another, that's going to have to be managed, and I know maybe that's a highly migratory thing, but it's certainly out of control, and that's for sure.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, John. Anyone else? I know that comes up a lot. Vincent.

MR. BONURA: To Chris's question there earlier, Chris Conklin's question, about if we could catch the ACL, and I had messaged a couple of my guys here, and they said that absolutely we could catch it, and they were looking for possibly like a hundred-pound trip limit, and then one of

the guys had mentioned that he thinks the numbers for last year could have been off, possibly, because he had over 500 pounds of fish put in just off of one boat, he says.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Vincent. That's interesting. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I would guess that this is a fish that is very easily sellable not on the regulated market.

MR. LORENZ: Good point. Yes. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Andy, to speak to that point, you mean like backdoor sales? So that's -- I mean, that's been a problem in the Keys, and, I mean, it's actually been a way of life in the Keys, for many years, you know, and, with Mexican hogfish being so readily available, and widely used in the restaurants, up and down the Keys, almost every restaurant has documentation of hogfish being allowed to be in the building, and so, you know, another one that comes through the door -- I mean, if there's paperwork there for it to be there, and I agree.

MR. LORENZ: So would there be something to look at, and, I mean, I know this species is in decline, but I'm getting the pulse that there needs to be a look at these ACLs, and possibly a fairer distribution, to allow a little more of a commercial take of this, and it's probably not going to harm the species, would it? It looks like there's a fairness thing behind this, somehow, on the look of how these fish are distributed, who can take them and for what, particularly since we have the strong documentation on the one side, with the twenty-five-pound limit. Okay. Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: What do we know about the presence of lionfish where these hogfish are residing?

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Being in the spiny lobster fishery, we see a lot of juvenile lionfish, in the same habitat that we see a lot of juvenile hogfish, and, really, they're kind of the same size, like the same exact size, and, I mean, we're talking, you know, two-inch range size, and so I would think that -- Assuming you're going in this direction, that you're not seeing a lot of the larger, mature lionfish where you're going to see the smallest hogfish. You know, the fry is pretty much all together in that habitat, and so I don't think you're seeing a lot of the baby hogfish where you're going to see the lionfish that would predate upon them.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, Mike. I think we're there, or we're completed with the FPR. I guess you want to roll into the other issue on this, the permitting? I am looking at the time here, and it's about 4:27, and so we'll just keep rolling. If anybody has to get up and out for a few minutes, go ahead, and we'll just keep going through.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. I will get us rolling on this. Just a little bit of brief information, and so this topic -- The concept of recreational vessel limits, and how they should be applied to headboats, this started -- Well, this came up at the March council meeting, via public comment, and it was commented on in relation to gag and black grouper, but the council really is looking for a larger conceptual discussion from the AP about costs and benefits, any recommendations on how they should handle recreational vessel limits as a -- You know, kind of as a measure for limiting harvest and how they should be applied in the context of headboats.

Just scrolling down, Table 1 here includes the species for which we have recreational vessel limits on the books right now for the South Atlantic snapper grouper fishery, and so black grouper -- That went in place through Amendment 53. Right now, the limit is two per vessel per day for the private recreational component. For the for-hire component, which includes both charter and headboat, it's two per vessel per trip, and there was some, you know, discussion by the AP that made that distinction, on the per-day versus per-trip basis.

Black grouper are, of course, under consideration right now, with gag, for an aggregate trip limit, and that's in Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36, and, right now, what's considered there would be two fish per vessel per trip, and those two fish would be either gag or black grouper, and so just two fish total. Right now, we have two separate trip limits. One is for black grouper, and then you see gag right there, and it has its own recreational vessel limit.

Right now, scamp does not have a vessel limit, and neither does yellowmouth grouper, but that is one of the options that's being considered in Amendment 55, and so you'll see Amendment 55 later on this week. We wanted to have this overall conceptual discussion today, ahead of you all talking about these specific species, and what you want to do with these species, but there is no vessel limit in place right now for scamp or yellowmouth grouper. I included it in the table, because that is being considered in Amendment 55, which is under development right now, and you will talk about it tomorrow.

We've got those two species here, and then snowy grouper have a vessel limit of one per vessel per day. Wreckfish have a vessel limit of one per vessel per day, and, obviously, bag limits are noted here within this table as well. Within each of the amendments that we develop, that have a recreational vessel limit, there includes analyses of what percentage of trips are harvesting how many of these fish, and so, for example, this was straight out of Amendment 53 for gag. This looked at the percentage of trips and what percent of trips were harvesting how many fish per vessel, and we have the MRIP data for your private and charter boat component, and then you have your headboat component, that's shown in the white, and so you can see the harvest per vessel for trips in this timeframe of 2017 through 2019.

Then, scrolling down, the next figure is a similar figure for black grouper, except it has the private and the charter separated out. We had enough data to have the private and charter separated out there, and we also have the analysis, similar analysis, that was completed for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, the percent of angler trips, and how many fish were caught per person, and this wasn't on a per vessel basis, and this was on a per person, or no. This was -- Allie, this was per vessel, right? This was the one that had the axis off. Is this per person?

MS. IBERLE: Yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It was per person. Okay. Sorry about that. I just wanted to make sure. These are some of the analyses that are included in amendments that consider this type of measure, and this is kind of what we've seen, and so the council has asked you all to comment on what you think they should do, in terms of, if they're thinking about a recreational vessel limit, how should they be applying it to headboats, any comments on risks and benefits.

You know, as far as changing of measures, or what's considered here, I mean, this -- A couple of these things are regulations that are already in place, but there are a couple of amendments right now where the council has some decisions to make on if they're going to put in or if they're going to change a recreational vessel limit, and so this will hopefully frame some of their discussions, and contribute to those for the future, as they consider some of these.

I do need to note that, within this group, outside of wreckfish, and its vessel limit has been in place for quite some time, but, looking at yellowmouth and scamp, they're kind of grouped together, and that stock didn't have a very positive outlook, coming out of its assessment, and snowy grouper is currently in an overfished state. Gag is in an overfished state, and black grouper is included there, but it's kind of in aggregate management with gag at certain points, and it's not overfished, but it is managed kind of in concert with gag, for a lot of its recreational measures, and so I will pause here, and I guess I'll see if there's any questions, before you all get into your discussion.

MR. LORENZ: All right, and so questions for Mike, with respect to what he has presented to us, before we get into the discussion and points for consideration? Cameron, go ahead. You get the floor first on this.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So the question is are you saying that the council is going to reevaluate the vessel limit for gag and black?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's what they're doing in Regulatory Amendment 36. Right now, we have two different vessel limits, one for gag and one for black, and the council is, right now, considering making those an aggregate, one aggregate limit that includes gag and black, and it would be -- Instead of two separate two-fish limits, it would be one two-fish limit that's either gag or black.

MR. SEBASTIAN: That's the only thing on the table or anything is on the table, as far as the numbers could go up for charter and headboat?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm not saying anything is off the table, because that's not my decision, but I will say that, right now, gag is an overfished state, and so, if anything is on the increasing end, then that is going to -- It will definitely require some more analysis of how that works within the context of the larger fishery and keeping, you know, catches below the ACL, things of that nature, and it will definitely require some analytical work. That doesn't necessarily align with the initial timeline that was set for that amendment, but that doesn't necessarily put it off the table, and so I can't say what is on and what is off, but the council would need to deal with the fact that gag is in an overfished status, and that would be a difficulty to any type of increases from what was set in Amendment 53.

MR. LORENZ: Are you satisfied, Cameron? Anything else? Okay. Then next question from James, or comment from James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. We are -- The question is how it applies to the headboats, and so I'm kind of like just expounding on some different points that I've heard throughout the years, and Cameron has been one advocate of the perception of being able to go out and catch -- And keep a fish that you catch, and so, in order for the charter headboat to be successful, they have to

maintain the perception that, if I go out, and I catch one of these groupers, I'm going to be able to retain it.

Then I'm kind of thinking about the charter six-pack, you know, your normal, everyday charter boat, that can have up to six people on it, and, you know, they can retain three groupers, and, depending on the species, you know, maybe only one black or gag, you know, one black or gag, and then two other species, to make up the three, and so, thinking about it along those lines, I'm thinking, if three of the six people potentially can keep fish, we should kind of take a look at, well, how many typically are on your regular charter, and, again, trying to keep this fair between your regular charter boat and your headboat.

Maybe we could do a divisible number of participants on the headboat, and so let's say the headboat has thirty people on it, and, you know, we could either divide that by six, you know, which is the potential of any regular, you know, six-pack captain, and then extrapolate the limit, the daily bag limit, and they can get five limits for those thirty people. You know, that's assuming that six, on a regular charter boat, is the average number, which it probably isn't, but, you know, would somebody in the headboat industry be amendable to something like that? You know, for every three people, or for every six people, you get a limit, and I would like to hear what people have to say.

MR. LORENZ: Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I think you would have to look at the mathematics on that too, because now, if they're proposing a six-week season, and if you factor in what the headboats would catch doing something like that, would they be okay with a three-week season? Which would be more harmful, a three-week chance at a grouper or a -- I mean, I think you all get what I'm saying. I think the mathematics has to show what's the worst of the evils.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy. Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: I wonder -- How confident are we that we've identified the spawning season for these fish? I am real disappointed that, the last fifteen years, all the drastic measures that have been made in changing creel limits, and we still seem to be backing up, rather than moving forward.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Robert. Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, Bob. I am in line with James on this, and as well as the woman that called in publicly earlier. We have charter captains, that are generally six pack licenses, and then you have anywhere from two to six people on his boat, and then you have recreational that are in the same category, that may have two, six, eight people on the boat, and then you have a boat reg, whether it's two or three per day, and I don't see how a headboat can function in that recreational realm.

To me, the solution isn't trying to adapt a headboat into the recreational sector, and it's to figure out a sector for the headboat, and it may be as simple as the mathematics, and, if he has twenty people there that day, then he gets X amount for every six, and that may be it, but to function -- For him to function financially, in a world that's based on recreational, or a boat with six people in it, it's just not realistic. I think that he -- It seems, to me, like we, as a group, need to put the

headboat into either a commercial class or its own class, and figure out a way for him to survive, because, right now, it's financial suicide to do something like this to that industry, because you can't give him two boats when you've got thirty people -- Two fish, with thirty people on it, but, at the same time, we can't give him fifteen, and so you've got to figure out somewhere.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James, did you have your hand up, and then Paul.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely. Thanks, Bob. Tony, I absolutely agree, you know, and one of the things that we really need to look at here as well is that the resource is supposed to be publicly shared national resource, and, you know, it's become more of a white glove, you know, like who can afford to own a boat and get out there, and who can afford to pay a private charter to get out there, and the headboat is the last foothold of your regular working-class person that can go out there and share in this resource, and I think that it is absolutely critical to preserve that portion for the working class. I mean, it can't always be just the wealthy, you know, people who get to participate, and I totally agree.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Paul.

MR. NELSON: There is very few headboats that are still left fishing, and so you're not really considering a whole bunch of gag grouper being caught from the headboats. If you look at the data that's been factual here the last few years, if you look at the area of time that they're going to be open, with this new schedule that they're going to have, and the groupers on the headboats are like five to nine a day, on average, even during the peak of the May spawn, right after they open up.

You're talking nine headboats in Florida, the tackle they use, and you go through the whole factor, and they're not going to be getting very many gag grouper on the boat anyway, but the people that do catch them, and the perception that they're able to catch them, and say let's go and catch these grouper, and they think they can, and 90 percent of them are going to bust off anyway, and get away, and I just don't think that the headboats should be under the same regulation as a charter boat. I think, like everybody is saying, that this is the last chance for families to go fishing, that can afford to go, and I think they should have just as much of a chance. I fish on all sectors, and I fish for charter, and I fish for commercial, and I fish on headboats, and I think that they should have a fair shake, just like everybody else.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. Good points. Joe.

MR. MATTHEWS: I'm just going to agree with what James is proposing, and everybody else who is chiming-in, and I think -- I think, from a fairness standpoint, that the headboats -- To expect them to just catch two gag, and be done, it's not fair, and you're cutting out a pretty significant sector of folks who might otherwise want to go fishing, but can't afford to pay for a private boat or buy their own. Then, also, I think it's -- Again, we're looking at a relatively low impact, when we're talking about nine boats that are fishing, and so I completely agree.

MR. LORENZ: I just would like to make a comment here, and I kind of hold back on some of this, but, you know, I'm with all this about the common people, and what's left to do, and having some -- What I would call commercial viability for this type of recreational fishing, but it seems like a really great thing to consider would be that aspect of the vessel limit in proportion to the

number of anglers that we can get on that, you know, the six-pack times some multiple, which would take, you know, the headboats, and maybe there could be some comment, but there might be an in-between coming up in the future, and we had, for years, a member on this AP, out of St. Augustine, and she was a friend of yours, Paul, that I believe had a boat that takes ten to fifteen people, and a bread-and-butter would be a corporate, like a Wells Fargo trip or something out there.

There you have even another niche that may come into play, or at least another opportunity, and we always talk for the future, and some of you can't go into a large boat, or an operation taking, you know, fifty or sixty people out, but someone who caters to that middle level, and not the regular guy, but a little further up, that might have, you know, ten to fifteen on a boat, and would need a slightly larger vessel limit, and so some multiplying factor, I think, of the number of anglers, that we originally based on the six-pack, or the private recreational boat, would be something to consider, that not only can consider the businesses of today that serve that public, but some of the others, like out there out in St. Augustine, that I think could actually come up, where, you know, you could really do something with a fifty-five or sixty-foot boat, and, you know, sort of middle-of-the-economics clients. Thank you. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So we operate those kind of boats, and so we operate three vessels that run between six and twenty passengers, and then we have the big, classic headboats, and so you know -- Of course, for me, as a businessman, you know, I just want to keep my guys fishing, and allow them to continue to do what they've done for several generations, which is where I am, and I'm like, hey, you know, my daughter is in the business, and she's eager to continue on, and I've got to look at her sometimes, and it's like I told you that you should have been a PA, you know, and that would have been really smart.

You know, I want to -- As a company, we want to be able to continue the tradition that guys have been doing in our area since the 1940s, and, you know, it's only through what the consumer sees as the value of going out, and so I don't know if it's a mix of a certain number, or just a, hey, there's a number of possibilities per vessel, and so I'm looking the graph. You know, four to five to six is pretty common, and so, if that number is somewhere in that mix, then it's something we can work with.

I know that one is not going to sit well with our consumers. I mean, the guys who work blue-collar jobs, lawncare and stuff like that, and they come down and spend 150 bucks to go out, and only one of them gets to catch a grouper, and that's going to turn a lot of them off, and they're usually in, you know, lower-economic-status communities who go on the headboats. I mean, like you said, the guys who want to do private charters are going to do private charters, and the guys who want to pay to go on the twenty-person boats are going to pay, but there's a very big population, especially on Saturdays, and, you know, that's their big deal, is to come out and go headboat fishing.

I've got to be honest with you, and the first time that I ever went fishing was on a headboat in the Florida Keys, when I was twelve years old, and I started working the back decks of the boat when I was seventeen, in the Carolinas, and, you know, that's just sort of the way that things go, and so, you know, if the council will consider, you know, how do we mince out something more for the headboats than the one or two, because that's going to be pretty tough to deal with.

From a business standpoint, I'm very, very attuned to where things are going, and I've got to be honest with you, and, you know, I've got to reconsider whether I'm investing more money in the headboat-type businesses now or I start to shift my game to tiki bars and stuff like that. I mean, that's just the reality of it, and it's just the business end of it, and so just keep that in mind when you're making your decisions.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. One thing that you have the benefit of is we do have four council members behind you that have heard that. All right. Anyone else? Anyone want to support, back behind Cameron, and I guess the spirit of this discussion, Mike, right, was just kind of points for consideration, more conversation today?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I don't know that the -- I don't know that the council had a specific final answer ask, but it sounds like there -- It sounds like there's been a lot of general agreement, among the AP, of this concept of a vessel limit in proportion to number of anglers type of concept, that that's something that the council should consider a bit more heavily, and so there is the question that we noted, the question that was asked of how this measure would affect season lengths, and making sure that those comparisons are in any type of analysis that is there, but I think that's kind of where the notes, the comments, are, and so I don't know that we need like any type of final recommendation from the AP, and the comments speak pretty heavily themselves.

MR. LORENZ: I think we've stated, a number of times, and it's almost -- Like, if I was actually to state that let's have a new initiative, it would almost be a lot of -- You know, let's start with a white paper thinking and design of like a -- With what's limited, with what's left, it would be a headboat rescue, an economic rescue, initiative that would include, you know, the headboats, or what I would call larger-party recreational fishing opportunities, businesses that will serve people beyond six, and I think there needs to be a way to loosen up a little and take into account what's left there, because, when we lose that, you know, we are losing a huge connection for the regular person to be -- To the ocean, and even caring about it, as Cameron as eloquently said.

MR. CONKLIN: Just for the record, it's been done in the Gulf of Mexico already, and so there's already somewhat of a template in place, and so, if anybody is interested in exploring, you know, our friends in another region, and how they moved forward with it, to get away from -- You know, to sort of write their own regulations, and improve their accountability, and there's already a precedent set, and the Fisheries Service 100 percent condones it. We've been asking for it here for a long time, and everybody says no, no, no, and now there's dire times, and I'm hearing the same thing, and so at least I like what I'm hearing. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Absolutely, Chris, and I was kind of leaning in that same direction. You know, once we do establish a limited entry, you know, a certain portion of that could be set aside for charter and headboat, and, really, just kind of know -- You know, know the field that we're playing in, even more and more as we move forward, and really get a handle on things, and it would be a really good place to look at, you know, and it's already happening in the Gulf. It's been happening, and it's been working, and they're doing it.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, just so that the council knows the business aspect of it, there's another operator in my area, who is basically getting ready to age out, and I've really got to consider, you know, whether I want to invest in his business, and have so much risk, you know, in the millions of dollars of risk, based on something that's really out of my control. You know, usually, if you go to invest in something, you've got some control over it, but so much of this stuff is literally out of my hands, you know, and, if I don't do something with his company, then does his company just vanish, and there goes three more headboats, right there off the bat, you know, and that's -- That's just sort of the business aspect of where these decisions and rules come in and how it meets the pavement.

MR. LORENZ: James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Cameron, I don't really think you have to worry about that, because that will get bought up, and it will be gone, just like that. You know, I mean, it's absolutely -- It's going to happen, you know, and it's really your charge, if you want to preserve that. You know, if your investment is to preserve what's already part of history, you know, and is it going to be worth that risk, but I wouldn't worry. It will be gone.

MR. LORENZ: It almost looks like that fifth bullet, should a headboat be in its category, separate from private and charter, and that almost is, you know, worth of its own discussion, and strong consideration, and, I mean, that would be what could finally rescue, or underpin, that part of the recreational sector, and it just looks like it needs to come about. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess -- I know I said that we don't necessarily need a final recommendation, but, if people are in agreement, it may be -- You know, it may send a strong message to the council, if you all are in agreement, and is there anybody that would disagree with this statement right here, and I'll make it a little bit bigger, but of the council considering a proportional vessel limit, and would that be a recommendation from the collective AP for the council?

MR. LORENZ: I guess is anybody in opposition and wants to make a point why you wouldn't think that this is a great idea, for this recommendation, and it seems like the meat of what we all want, or think is needed. Only nodding, Mike, and so, yes, we would like to go with that. Do we have some comment? Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I like the idea of that, but I don't think that's the fix, and that's my opinion. I think the fix is to help that industry, and it's not to keep them in a recreational limitation.

MR. LORENZ: James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just -- I know that I kind of threw that out there, but, just to play devil's advocate, you know, are we creating a loophole, where people can cram twelve people on a recreational boat and expect to have two limits?

MR. LORENZ: I guess just saying that I think we can handle that, on the private -- There's a difference between having a permit for this and what the rest of us will have a license, but go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: One thing I would like to mention, and I know Cameron is very aware of it, but, when you get to those levels of passengers, once you cross the six-pack license, the Coast Guard dictates a lot of what you have to do to that boat, and so you really change. That whole business changes from a recreational for-hire, and it changes into an industry of its own, simply because the Coast Guard is dictating that you have to have certain types of handrails, certain type of live preservers, everything, and so his economic world isn't the same as recreational and charter-for-hire, and it's a totally different animal.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, Tony, and I know some folks with those larger charter boats that have done that, and this individual in St. Augustine has been quite mad at some of those aspects, of, you know, how people are slipping -- You know, not having -- Taking away that type of business, and they don't have the equipment, and they are not safety ready.

MR. CONSTANT: Put up handrails for twenty around the boat and see what that runs you.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Conklin, did you have your hand up?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and so, in the recommendation, like in the bold part, maybe you should just make it explicitly clear that our intentions are for federally-permitted vessels.

MR. LORENZ: Excellent point. All right. Anybody else have any statements on this now? I think, hopefully, we've given Cameron and Mr. Johnson a little bit of support here, and so thank you. Mike, anything from us? Then that concludes today. All right. Chip Collier, come on and speak to us.

DR. COLLIER: So we're going to be talking about the MSE tomorrow, the management strategy evaluation, that Adrian has presented to you all a couple of different times, where he focused on red snapper and gag grouper, and we are also going to try to put black sea bass into that management strategy evaluation, and we developed a form for you guys to consider, and so that's going to be Attachment 6, or it's going to be under 6, and it is a heck of a lot of questions, and so I don't really want to go through it tomorrow, but what I would request is if you could go through it tonight, and it should take maybe fifteen or twenty minutes to go through it and answer some of the questions.

Just a precursor, and, you know, some of it is probably going to aggravate you, and so I guess shoot the messenger tomorrow, but it is -- We're trying to get your feelings on, you know, what you think would work, and what are absolute no-go, as far as what could work for the recreational fishery, and another piece of information -- Andy, I know you fish north of Cape Hatteras, and we do mention black sea bass, and so it's going to be black sea bass from south of Cape Hatteras, and it's not going to be the north of Cape Hatteras stock, and just keep that in mind, and I think that's the only other thing, and then we go through some of the findings tomorrow, and, if you guys don't like it, we can revamp some of the questions, in order to make it more palatable to you all, or maybe elicit more information from you, and so thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and, Chip, you're talking in two days, and you mentioned sea bass, and that's Thursday morning, right?

DR. COLLIER: But this is going to be part of --

MR. LORENZ: I'm sorry. I'm not reading the agenda. Sorry. All right. Thank you, Chip. All right. We've got some homework, and it's 5:00, and so we're adjourned until 8:30 tomorrow morning, gentlemen.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 26, 2024.)

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MARCH 27, 2024

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Good morning, Snapper Grouper AP. It's March 27. Welcome to grouper day, and it's the final countdown for us with Amendment 36 and 55 for comments and input and final recommendations. That will basically follow through with the council over their next two meetings. As far as processing today, of course, we all know we're up against a holiday weekend, and the people have it off, and it's an early rush tomorrow, et cetera, and we all live along the coast, and so the best we can do to keep our deliberations crisp, to the point, on point, and come to good conclusions, that's to all our benefit. I would love nothing more than to finish about a half-hour earlier tomorrow, but that's kind of personal.

We have a new AP member over there. Gettys, would you please introduce yourself to the group, your name, where you're from, or the port you like to operate out of, and how you're here as a stakeholder.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir. My name is Gettys Brannon. I am the President and CEO of the South Carolina Boating and Fishing Alliance. We were founded about four years ago now, and we represent the boating and fishing industry in South Carolina. In South Carolina, we have over twenty-eight boat manufacturers, the three largest fishing tackle manufacturers in the world, and it's about a \$6.5 billion industry to our state, and so we're certainly interested in what happens in these halls, and figuring out, you know, how our industry can offer as much as help as we can. I'm out of Columbia, South Carolina, and so I didn't have too far of a drive to get here, but I look forward to learning a lot this week and giving input where we can.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Gettys. Welcome from all of us. All right. We'll begin, and we'll get right into Agenda Item Number 5, and Mike is going to kick us off, and that's the gag and black grouper vessel limits for recreational vessels and the consideration to have a vessel limit or what we do with the black sea bass on-demand pots. I guess those on-demand pots are part of the whale protection thing, right, and is that? Okay. They're changing. All right, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Bob, and so I'm going to walk us through the discussion document that you have. It's Attachment 5 in your briefing book. For Reg Amendment 36, we kind of have two separate targets of this action, and so the first one is addressing gag and black grouper.

The council is considering adjusting the recreational vessel limits that were set through Amendment 53. Those were set as separate vessel limits for gag and black grouper, and, for the other retention limits that we have for gag and black grouper, those are actually aggregated. Those two species are aggregated, and so the council is considering an aggregate limit of two gag or black grouper per vessel, and that's one action in this amendment.

The other action, the other intent of this amendment, was there's been some work done, some experimental work done, on on-demand pots, and these are also called ropeless pots, or pop-up traps, that are used to commercially fish for black sea bass, and these were developed to reduce interactions with whales. There's been some ropeless technology that's been developed, especially in the Northeast, with the lobster fishery up there, and other associated trap fisheries in that area, where whales have, at times, gotten entangled in the gear, but, with these pop-up, these on-demand gears, the line for the trap doesn't sit in the water.

It doesn't sit vertically in the water, and it's actually stored down with the trap, at the bottom, until the fisherman is ready to come by and collect the gear, and then there's a release mechanism that pops up the buoy, and they go by, and they pull up the gear, and it greatly reduces the probability that that gear is going to get tangled up in whales passing through the area.

Some years ago, there was a closure of nearshore fishing with black sea bass pots, on a seasonal basis, when the whales are moving through, and so the traps got moved out into deeper water, out of that nearshore area, during that time of year, and this has kind of been experimented on in that nearshore area that's been closed to that roped fishery, but trying out this gear, to see if it's effective at catching fish, for one, and if it reduces the entanglements, and there was a workshop held with the commercial fishermen that participated in this study, and that was held in August of 2023, and it -- Basically, this type of gear got really positive reviews, both from the standpoint of folks -- The Protected Resources folks that are trying to conserve the whales, and trying to reduce these interactions, but also from the fishermen.

The traps are the exact same as what's legally allowed right now for regular black sea bass pots, all the dimensions, the escape vents. All the requirements of the actual fishing catch part are the exact same. The only difference is how the gear is retrieved, whether the line sits in the water or whether it pops up when the fisherman activates that release mechanism. There were a few different types of configurations that were tested out, and it seems like the one that is most popular, and probably has the most traction for long-term use, is just a buoy and a rope that is tied down to the pot itself, and it gets tripped off of a timer, off of a remote.

There were some other mechanisms, where things like inflatables were used, and so there never is any rope that goes in the water, and it just kind of blows up on a timer, or when it's released, and then it brings that pot to the surface, and so there was a lot of different testing of these types of mechanisms, but the one that seems the most popular is the one that has an actual like buoy and rope that's just tied down, and that seems to be what is most likely to be used in the near-term, if it's advantageous for fishermen to start using that gear.

The action in this amendment is geared towards basically making sure that that gear is usable, from a regulatory standpoint. There are -- If you look at the end of this document, kind of pop down to the appendix, and the appendix here has a whole list of the requirements of black sea bass pot gear, gear identification requirements, where they're allowed to fish, how they need to be stored while transiting through different areas, marking requirements, all kinds of things that are required.

We wanted to make sure we went through each of these points, to see how do these apply to this on-demand configuration of the gear, and make sure that it -- That it's in line from the standpoint of our regulations that are in place now, or change them, if need be, and so we kind of went through that list and came up with an action.

Largely, this type of gear seems to be allowable right now. That's the interpretation that we've gotten from the NOAA General Counsel, the lawyers that are kind of interpreting the regulations there. The advice that we've gotten is that this gear is allowable right now, and so we may be doing some outreach to those pot endorsement holders, letting them know that, hey, this is allowable as it is, and these are the requirements that you still need to follow, but kind of getting that communication going with them, as this process wraps up.

We have those two actions that are included in this reg amendment. The objectives for today's meeting, for you all, are to review the actions and alternatives that are considered here and then recommend what you think the council should consider as a preferred alternative. Also, provide any commentary that you have for support for that preferred alternative, and remember that, as the council chooses preferreds, and go through these processes, they have to come up with rationale. They have to have ideas, data, things supporting what their final decision is, and you all are an integral part of that process, and you can lend some support for the decisions, if they go with those alternatives.

The timing that we have for this amendment, and so it started in December of 2023, and we have two fairly basic actions that are in this, and so, right now, we've got folks started on the writing process. We did scoping in February. We got some direction from the council, and now our interdisciplinary planning team, and that's the group that kind of puts the amendment document together, and they are working on the writing for this document.

The plan is to take it to the council, to have it approved for public hearings, in June, and conduct public hearings over the summer, and then, in September, the council would consider it for approval to be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce, and so, with this timeline, that means that this is kind of the last time that it will come before this advisory panel for you all to give your input on what preferred alternatives should be, and so we'll go ahead and collect those today, when we get into discussion.

The purpose and need statements for this document are drafted here, and I'm not going to dive into those, and you can read those, but, if there's anything within those that seems inconsistent with what this amendment is aimed to do, please follow-up with me, after this meeting, via email, and we can make sure that those remarks are noted for the council in June. For reference, I have links here to the scoping comments that were submitted in February, and so you click those links, and you're able to see those comments and kind of take those into account as you're developing your recommendations.

Now, getting into the actions and alternatives themselves, the first one is revising the vessel limits for gag and black grouper, and, as a reminder, we do have vessel limits in place for these species right now, and they were put in place through Amendment 53, effective in October of last year, and so the current vessel limits are two fish, two gag per vessel per day, for the private component, and two black grouper per vessel per day, for the private component. For the for-hire vessels, which would include both charter and headboat, there are limits of two gag per vessel per trip, as well as two black grouper per vessel per trip.

The alternatives that we have in place right now, we kind of -- Just for the purpose of being able to write the document, we separated out -- One alternative addresses the private component, and the other alternative addresses the for-hire, the charter and headboat component of the recreational fishery, and both of them are geared towards an aggregate vessel limit, and so Alternative 2 would be an aggregate limit of two gag, or black grouper, per vessel per day, and that would be two fish total, of either of those species, and Alternative 3 would be two fish total, either gag or black grouper, per vessel per trip for the for-hire component.

If the council wants to do aggregate limits for both of those components, then they would select both of these alternatives as preferred, and so some discussion, and I've already kind of noted it, is the bag limit is aggregated, and we have -- Either of these species can contribute to the recreational bag limit of three grouper or tilefish per person for the recreational fishery, and so we'll get here, to you all's action and discussion, talking about the range of alternatives, benefits and risks of different alternatives. If you have an alternative that you would recommend that the council should consider as preferred, then we would look for you all to state that.

Given the discussion from yesterday, I do have, on hand -- Allie passed on to me some previous discussion that you had related to gag and black grouper, when Amendment 53 was being developed, and I'm not going to go through all of this, but just the highlighted portions, because we were talking about the headboat, and how that gets brought into the equation for these vessel limits, and so some of the conversations that you had previously, and this would be October of 2022, and there was a recommendation, at that time, for dividing up the fish that are in vessel limit per head count for all for-hire vessels, and so we have ranges here of ten to twenty people with six fish, thirty-plus people with ten fish, and what you ultimately passed as a motion, and this kind of shows the count, and there were a lot of folks that didn't vote on this motion, but it was passed five to three, with eight abstentions.

What passed was a motion that included that the headboat would be dependent on customer count, and so ten to thirty people was six fish per vessel per day, and thirty or more people was ten fish per vessel per day, and that was passed for gag, but, given the council is going in the direction of an aggregate limit, we could borrow similar language, if that's something that you wanted the council to consider for some type of aggregate -- For an aggregate of gag and black grouper, and so that language is there.

I will pull it to the side for now, but, if you want me to copy it in, so that there can be a discussion on it, just let me know, and we'll get it up on the screen for you. That's all I have. I will pause here, so that we can get discussion for this gag and black grouper action, and then we'll move on to the pots after that's completed.

MR. LORENZ: All right, Mike. One thing for Mike, or maybe Allie, and I don't know, or maybe Chip, is I did get an email from Jack Cox, and one of his questions was answered, which was what were the catch limits today, and I don't know whether he's online, but I thought it might be interesting to the folks here, but do you have a number for the number of snapper grouper for-hire permits that are out there today? That's just something that I thought would be interesting in the conversations.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We can work on that, and we can have some of the staff that are on the side work on that in the background, while the discussion is going on.

MR. LORENZ: Certainly, and that's why I wanted to bring it upfront, in case that becomes of interest to anybody. A little help here of where to take this, Mike, and do you want to go look at the alternatives? That's where we are now right, is to comment on the alternatives?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so I guess asking the AP, and do you have an alternative that you would recommend to the council as preferred, of the list here, or given your discussion yesterday, kind of coming up with or proposing an alternative, based on what was discussed yesterday.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Cameron. Kick us off.

MR. SEBASTIAN: As per our discussion yesterday, and the discussion that was held in the former meeting, you know, from the headboat side of it, you know, we would definitely appreciate a few more fish to be able to keep onboard the vessel. Now, whether it's a split from ten to thirty-four people, or thirty-plus-six people, you know, but just something to -- I mean, once again, as James said yesterday, and it's almost like the hogfish, right?

As long as they have the chance to at least catch a fish and bring it in -- Now, whether they ever catch a hogfish, or whether they ever catch a grouper in their lifetime, that's really not the point, but, if we can at least give them the hope that, hey, there's more than one grouper than can come up on a boat with seventy people, then people will still book, and they'll still go out, and they'll spend money with us to go out fishing, and, you know, hopefully be able to have affordable family fishing experiences for the rest of their lives, but, if we drop it down to just one fish, for a vessel that carries seventy, that's going to -- Some guys are just not going to go anymore, and, I mean, I'm just telling you the way it is.

If somehow we can craft something in there to -- I know it's just a recommendation, but four of those species aggregate, between ten and thirty, and six for thirty-plus, and, I mean, we can live with that, because that's something that at least a couple of guys can bring a couple of fish up with, you know, and it's going to be a big deal, just like when they shut down the speed limits, and we saw our Gulf Stream business plummet 76 percent when it went from you were able to travel at fifteen or eighteen knots, and get out to the fishing grounds, to you can't travel more than ten knots to get out to the fishing grounds, and the guys who fish -- Simple mathematics is, well, if I can only travel ten knots, I can only make it so far on a Gulf Stream trip.

You know, we've taken it on the chin for some of these species, but at least if we can recommend it, and whatever happens happens, and, I mean, at the end of the day, I've got no control over it, and neither do you guys, at the end of the day, but the recommendation, I believe, of that four

aggregate and six aggregate, depending on how many people they're carrying, would at least give the fishermen the illusion that I can go out and still have a chance at catching some grouper.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thanks, Cameron, and Cameron's, you know, recommendation is there is kind of a carve-out, or a special exception here, to take into account the number of passengers that a particular type -- That a headboat does carry, and that leaves us then with the regular, you know, how do we remain with the average six-pack charter business, and does anybody want to comment on that? Do you like what the council has provided? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and so I've been thinking about this a good bit, but I haven't had time to like discuss it behind the scenes with anybody, and so, I mean, I don't know if I want to make this a motion, but, I guess, formally, I probably should, to, you know, have formal discussion on it, but my idea was for, you know, federally-permitted, inspected, multi-passenger boat, which would be headboats, and they're not all huge. You know, there are some, you know, like that carry fifteen passengers, you know, whatever, and keep it in line with the alternative for the six-pack charter boat.

Then, also, thinking about, you know, what the headboats have been up against, my idea is to have a two-fish limit for every six persons onboard, not to exceed twelve fish per vessel per trip, for federally-permitted, inspected multi-passenger headboats, and then, probably to make it a little bit more appetizing for the council, and for NMFS, and maybe I shouldn't go there, but not to include the captain and crew limits and with no proportional, or fractional, limits either. The six passengers, that aren't captain and crew, equal one extra two-fish limit per boat, not to exceed a dozen fish per boat. Then we can have a discussion, if it passes.

MR. LORENZ: All right, everyone. That looks pretty good, and it kind of wraps a lot in there, and it takes care of what Cameron stated, and so it's --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I might need to come back to Chris, just to get numbers and places in the right spot, and so you were looking at not to exceed how many fish per trip?

MR. CONKLIN: Well, you could -- It doesn't have to be a dozen, and we could make it eight, ten, twelve, something like that, as a range of options, and that would be fine.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. I can throw out a number of eight for now, but I will do this.

MR. CONKLIN: If that doesn't suit your industry, Cameron, please speak up, because, if you need more, it's a good time to talk about it, but I think I heard, yesterday, that four or five fish might be an average day for gag grouper on a headboat trip.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron, you might want to make a comment there, I guess, because one of the things that will happen, when you pick that number, I guess at some point, is it will eventually -- I mean, there might be a maximum size boat, a hundred feet or something, and I don't know -- With a reasonable amount of passengers, and I don't know to consider what might be the largest headboats we would have operating in this fishery and still fulfill some of the things you would like, that there's enough available to generate some excitement, yet still have our conservation.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, it's sort of a blend between what Chris is proposing and sort of where I'm -- You know, in the business world, it's a very simple deal. You keep it simple, and sometimes it can work, and so that's why I was saying, you know, along the lines of if you just had a simple number of, hey, if you were carrying X number of people, this is the total number of grouper you can have on, and we can put it with Chris's wording that, hey, you can't exceed X number of fish per vessel, period, and, for me, because the council has got their back to the wall on what they can actually do, the lower the number, the more likely it is to have something more than what we have now, which is going to be one or two fish per vessel.

I'm just shooting for anything above the number that we're currently having, which would be advantageous, you know, for the charter headboats, especially with the headboat component, six or more passengers, because the reality is that, once you stop -- I mean, you just can't troll with ten people. I mean, it just doesn't work, period. If you're done bottom fishing, then you're really -- You know, you're really in a pinch, and we can go behind the shrimp boats, and catch big-ass sharks, but it doesn't work with ten people. It works with small groups of people that you can do that stuff with, and so we're really stuck to we've almost got to keep bottom fishing, if we're carrying really over like six or eight people. I mean that's just the reality of what we do. There's not a whole lot of other options out there.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. Chris, please.

MR. KIMREY: I have a question about the headboat permit, and I'm sure that Cameron can answer this, but is it any inspected vessel over six people that's required to have a headboat permit, if they're bottom fishing? What is the criteria to be a headboat?

MR. SEBASTIAN: I believe that's the case, yes, and so, if you go over, and you fall under the Coast Guard jurisdictions, anything over six persons is considered a headboat, and the council would have to correct me.

MR. KIMREY: So they're required to do headboat reporting then?

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes. Yes, they are. Absolutely.

MR. KIMREY: So that's my question, and the reason I asked that question is -- I mean, obviously, we want to do everything we can to emphasize how important it is for headboats to potentially be able to keep more than two groupers, when they have a lot of people onboard, and everybody understands that.

One point that hasn't been made, and I'm sure that everybody already knows, or assumes it, but, for our headboats, the chance of catching that grouper -- The grouper is the cream of the crop, when you're headboat fishing, bottom fishing, and that -- You know, like when the ruling went in with cobia, and they were restricted to two cobia, and cobia is more of a fish of chance, but anybody that's bottom fishing -- You know, a lot of them, their dream fish, on that headboat that day, is a chance at a grouper, and so it's more important say than it would be for cobias or something else that's vessel limited to two.

In my opinion, I mean, like Cameron said, you know, you want to give as much access as you can, but I would keep it as simple as possible, and what Chris is proposing seems like a great idea to

me, but there's also -- If you do it by count, and, you know, ultimately, there is going to be odd numbers, you know what I'm saying? If you do it by six, twelve, eighteen, and what if somebody is in between? Are they going to round-up, or are they going to round-down, and I think, the more simple you keep it, the easier it's going to be for everybody to stay inside the confinements of what is actually established, and I think the point Cameron made is to keep it as small as you can that's reasonable to allow that access, agreed or disagreed?

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

MR. KIMREY: Okay.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chris. Tony, you had your hand up?

MR. CONSTANT: I was going to say exactly what Chris just did. I think we all talked about it yesterday, about it being a really good idea for a headboat category, but what if that takes two years to put in? That will wipe them out, or not -- You know, the industry, and so, yes, keeping it simple might be the answer, because, for the interim, he's going to have to continue in business, and, if this goes into effect, this year or next, the headboats have still got to function, and so it's very well that we may look at something, permit-wise, but, for the interim, we need to figure out something that can continue in business.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. I'll circle back to Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: So the reason why I did the limit for every six people is we had discussion on it yesterday, and so I got the sense that that was probably it. I'm just thinking that, you know, if we slap a limit for multi-passenger charter headboats, and just say you can have ten fish per vessel, or eight or whatever, and they start -- I mean, I'm not saying it's going to happen, but I just know how discussion goes at the council level, and other people will come in and comment and say, well, they're going to start selling trips, and take private parties out, and there will be three guys, keeping ten fish, and paying a premium, stuff like that.

So this made the most sense to me, and that's why I wanted to have discussion on it, and I'm not stuck on anything. I don't operate a headboat, and I have great friends that do, and I would like to see perpetuate what they have left too, and so -- A side note is this was, I guess, gag and black grouper.

MR. LORENZ: Well, you're getting a good review of it here. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just giving some context, we do still have, in place, the per-person bag limits, and whichever limit is more restrictive is the one that would apply, and so, in the case that you talked about, Chris, if they took a trip out with three people, but, you know, there was a recreational vessel limit for that headboat that was in place of four fish, something like that, the per-person limit is still one fish, and so they would still be limited to their one fish per person, in that case, but I understand the overall concept of what you're saying, and I just wanted to throw out there that the bag limit is still in place, and the more restrictive limit applies.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Addressing Chris, but with everyone here, do we want to -- Can we summarize this somewhat in a motion, with the spirit of what Chris has said about the multi-passenger boats, and then understanding we also have the baseline of the individual. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Then, also, knowing when the council goes into committee, and reads our recommendations, they're going to want one clear, you know, idea of what we finally decided on, and not a list of -- A range of options or whatever that they might want to discuss, because, like he said, their time is limited, and, you know, they don't want to drag it out either.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. The way that this is written here, that any vessel over thirty-six passengers is still capped at eight, ten, or twelve, I mean, personally, I kind of -- I mean, I kind of think, for a boat holding, you know, seventy passengers, that twelve isn't out of the question, you know, but, for thirty-seven, you're still at twelve, you know, with two per six.

I mean, I think we're on a great pathway, you know, of allowing more fish. You know, if you take a look at things, you know, having one vessel, with a lot of people on it, you know, it's more efficient than having six, seven, ten boats go out individually and try and go harvest these species, and so, I mean, you know, a headboat is environmentally friendly, if you will, from that standpoint, you know, and you're not burning the fuel of six or seven boats to take, you know, thirty-plus passengers. I think we're on the right track here, for sure, and I would support something along these lines. I think we're really doing a good thing here.

MR. LORENZ: Paul.

MR. NELSON: An easy way to sum it up is you go 30 percent of the passenger count, with a max of ten grouper on the boat. Like say you have thirty people, and 30 percent of that is nine fish, but the most you can have on the boat, period, no matter how many people you have, is ten, or twelve, whatever way you want to make it. That way, your number is changing, and it's easier. It's easier to understand than -- That was a suggestion from one of the headboats in Florida, is 30 percent of what people are on the boat, with a max.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Paul, very good. 30 percent of the passenger count, with a max of ten fish per vessel. Okay. I'm trying to work that out on a couple of numbers. Sixty people -- Okay. That's a reasonable thing to consider. Anybody else? Anybody want to comment on what Paul has brought to the table, is, you know, what we're trying to do is eventually maybe move to one clean, crisp motion, or suggestion, to the council. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, we're putting a bunch of stuff up there, and, you know, my belief is that this -- That the more we can keep it very simple, with a number of people and a number of fish, the more likely we are to get traction on it. I mean, I can't imagine law enforcement counting heads and doing a 30 percent calculation out there, when they're trying to figure out what kind of fish they even are looking at.

You know, I'm just saying, from my aspect, and I've got probably more skin in the game than anybody else, and, you know, if we just keep it simple, and I'm not a good person to come up with exactly how it needs to be worded, but, if we just keep it simple, and at least we have a chance.

You guys know, as well as I do, that whatever we pitch out there -- There's a 10 percent chance that it might wiggle its way through and we get some traction on it, and that's just the way it goes.

You know, the lower we can keep our numbers on the fish, you know, the more the council might see that, hey, that is still a reduction, and so the graph yesterday was showing that, hey, there were so many trips where they caught over ten grouper. Okay. Well, so many trips, and so, if we take it down to like a six, you know, that's half of the ten, or the twelve, that were being caught, and I'm just trying to figure out a way just to get a couple more fish for the guys to keep on the boat, and whatever the -- James, you're great with coming up with the exact wording on things like this.

MR. LORENZ: James, start thinking. Tony helps us too sometimes. Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Chris, I think what you put up was a good idea, and would you be willing to do a motion, if you reworded that and took off the federal permit, and it went two fish per every six passengers onboard, not to exceed eight per trip, based on what Cameron was saying, and that's a little bit better than he was doing, and it really simplifies things.

MR. LORENZ: The challenge is on for Chris.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, it's his baby over there, and he started it, and that's why -- I think that would simplify it, getting rid of that --

MR. CONKLIN: So I was just texting a headboat operator in my town, and he said eight, eight fish, would be realistic, but I don't know why we wouldn't shoot for the moon here, fellas.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, then it might not grab traction at all, and that's the --

MR. CONKLIN: Come on now, and I don't understand why we would want to take out "federally-permitted", but, if you could explain more, no problem, but I'm prepared to make the motion, once we have discussion, and, if you guys want to wait, and bullshit over lunch, or whatever, and come back and come up with something more solidified, when we have our thoughts more centered, we can do that too, if the chair says it's okay, but please elaborate.

MR. CONSTANT: One thing yesterday is I also was in big favor of that federal permit, but, listening to Cameron, and his thinking about this for a minute, and you're hearing -- The way the council operates, the simpler it is, and the less the number, the more traction this is going to get, when it gets in front of them, and, from what I'm seen with recreational permitting, that federal permit may take years, and that may take -- That might be devastating on the industry alone, if they don't get some relief going forward, and with a simpler act, and that's just the method I'm thinking.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony, to that point, I think it's my understanding that these headboats are already federally permitted, and, you know, it would alleviate some problems with vessel bag limits that are in place already, if we could get moving in that direction immediately, and I don't know that we're really waiting for anything to happen on that.

I like the per-six people, because, if somebody asks me, well, why is it per six people, I can say, well, any regular for-hire vessel is a maximum of six, and it makes it divisible, and then you still have the restrictive vessel limit of eight. I mean, let's just say you have a headboat that's got, you know, a poor turnout of twelve people, and, you know, for those twelve people to retain four groupers is pretty attractive, you know, and that charter headboat can, you know, maybe do something a little different than they would with a boatload of people. They could go target those four groupers and have a good chance of providing a great trip for those twelve passengers. I like the divisibility by six, I really do, and I think that, if moving in this direction, we would -- You know, with these permits already in existence, we would be doing a good thing for them. Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: I have one question just for the group, for me, a recreational fisherman. When we're talking to federally-permitted multi-passenger boats, and so that's where we're talking about the people that get into the Coast Guard regulations and all, because I would think we have the snapper grouper for-hire permit, and that's a federal permit, and so I just was wondering was there some other language than the term "federally-permitted", and is there specific language that's used for the fact that people have to come under the Coast Guard's jurisdiction for safety requirements and all? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think the permit is the same for a six-pack boat or a headboat, and it's a charter headboat permit. The thing that separates the men from the boys is that the headboats have to go put big buckets of water on their boat, and have the Coast Guard go around and tap on it with a hammer and tell them whether they can operate it from year to year, and make it safe for passengers to go out, and a headboat, like I said earlier, doesn't have to -- You know, like Mark Brown's old boat in Shem Creek, and it's a multi-passenger, federally-inspected boat, and it's not your traditional, you know, crew boat, with seventy or eighty people on it, and it's more of a boutique boat that -- You know, I'm not sure how many people that he can carry or whatever, but he still falls under the same regs, and so, whether you're taking -- It's anything over six people, from what I understand, but they all have to be federally permitted. The thing that separates them is that they have to put up with the extra regulations from the Coast Guard to meet the safety requirements to carry more than six people, since they are inspected.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Chris, and that makes it also simple, because, as we say, we don't want to muck this up a little later. If we get into the situation of very wealthy people, who have a very large private boat, and can go out, they're not falling under this situation here, and they are still a private recreational boat, and we can have limits, thus, on those boats that -- You know, if you've got an eighty-footer, you're not necessarily going to be able to keep eight to ten grouper, and so we might be able to keep that clean, if that ever comes up, but, yes, I recognize Paul.

MR. NELSON: It's called a certificate of inspection that the Coast Guard gives you, whenever you get a multi-passenger boat.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. That's kind of what I was looking for, to get a little something of that in there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We can work out the wording of exactly what the name of this is, to get it into the reg writers' hands, but, just as a suggestion, the highlighted language here seems to fall under what you all are talking about, recreational for-hire vessels that are federally permitted to

carry more than six passengers. That's what we're talking about, and I think that's the language that you all -- If you're open to it, that you all can use in kind of crafting what you're doing, and so, that way, you know, what boats you're talking about there, and you can get more into the -- You know, how you're going to craft the for every six persons and then what the max should be that you'll be recommending.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: The word you're looking for is "inspected vessel".

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Andy. Thank you. That will certainly make it clear to folks like me, and we are going to have to make it clear to a million people like me, and so -- Because you will get up into the private boats that are larger, and they're getting ever larger. All right. Thank you, everyone, and so where we sit here is to -- If we can come up with Chris's motion, and I think we basically have it on there, if anybody with the gift of gab wants to give that a shot, and let's go -- Raise your hand, and let's go forward and try that now.

Other than that, I guess maybe I'll ask if we need a little more time, and we can, as Chris had suggested, we can circle back a little later, before we're finished with the amendment, but I really think we should come up with something hard and fast on this, and we had a lot of discussion on the headboats yesterday. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: **I would like to make that a formal motion.**

MR. LORENZ: Okay. To make the formal motion with a second by Tony. Okay. Let's read that. Mike has put it up, and you've put that up almost word-for-word, right, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I just need to know what max do you want to include.

MR. LORENZ: Let's go there, and I will read the motion first. Okay. **The motion that we have, by Chris, and it was seconded by -- I guess it was Chris, Chris Kimrey, for recreational for-hire vessels that are federally inspected and permitted to carry more than six passengers, there will be a two-fish limit for every six persons onboard, not to exceed --** Now we have to work on the number, the eight, ten, twelve fish per trip, not to include captain and crew. So the captain and crew may not take -- They aren't included. They can't fish, and is that clear? Okay. Anybody, except for the number, have any comment in cleaning the language up right here on the motion? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I just want to make sure that we're addressing some of the things in the action as well, and maybe clarify no -- You know, no partial -- That there will be no partial considerations. You know, it's six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, you know, and that's it, if we're only going to eight. I don't know if we need to add that in there, and, also, are we addressing the action of the black and gag grouper aggregate question? I mean, I think it's pretty straightforward, but I just wanted to make sure that we are addressing that portion of the action as well.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. John, you had your hand up?

MR. POLSTON: John Polston, Kings Seafood, and I think there's going to be an issue, the way that part of it is worded, the recreational for-hire vessels that are federally inspected. Every charter boat is federally inspected, or at least in Florida they are, and so, I mean, do we need to put "Coast Guard multi-passenger" in there, instead of just "federally-inspected", because, like I said, every one of our commercial boats, including the charter boats, have to be federally inspected by the Coast Guard, and I'm just saying -- I'm not looking for trouble down the road.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: It seems like, to me, from a very elementary level, and listening to the conversation today, we're really lacking a definition for headboats, as we're going into making this recommendation. Is there a definition that's already promulgated, or already in the system, that we're going off of now, because the headboat language -- To John's point, does it have to have recreational for-hire vessels that are federally permitted?

MR. LORENZ: Over the years, and it's been a number now, five or six, that has come up, and we have had a fisherman or two, someone who runs charters, and has the sole purpose of taking ten to fifteen people out on more of a custom, more elite, run for fishing, a more customized experience for them, and they're pre-booked. The parties pre-book with the size, and it's not as Cameron has, you know, the open boat, and come on, everyone, and welcome, and there actually have been people that have said I'm not really a headboat, and so we could talk all day on that, and, yes, there are people that have alternate points of view. All right. That looks like it stimulated some discussion. Mike first, for the staff.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to point out that I've pulled up, on the screen, and this is NOAA Fisheries recreational fishing glossary, and so this is -- That's what a headboat is defined as. They are vessels that take multiple individuals, and/or small groups of anglers, on a fishing trip, with a licensed captain and crew, and they are generally larger than charter boats, and they almost always take more than six anglers on a given trip, and so I think, within the conversation that I've heard here, yes, there is the discussion of -- I'm going to pull up the motion that you have here.

Yes, there is -- You know, boats may be inspected, but are they inspected and also permitted to carry more than six passengers, because, if not, if they're not hitting both of those categories, then they don't fall into what we're talking about, and I think that kind of defines the headboat, is it has that federal permit, and it can carry more than six passengers.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. That's great. I didn't realize that -- Okay, and so that exists from the federal government. You know, from my things with the federal government, they do try to make it a little larger, a little more interpretive, and they don't beat it all the way down to some kind of little microcosm, and so good, and that kind of answers Gettys' question. I had Chris up here first for a question.

MR. CONKLIN: Mike summed it up. You have to have the permit, and you have to have the COI. That way, a cruise ship can't go out there, because they probably won't have a permit, but they have the COI, and so you have to meet both criteria.

MR. LORENZ: Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and I do need to clean up the definition as well, because Chip brought up the Code of Federal Regulations, and that has a definition for a headboat as well, and a headboat is when it carries a passenger who pays a fee by individual, but, again, there's the -- If we're talking about boats that are six passengers or more, then I think this covers what we're talking about here, and I think the council can take that language and understand what this AP is getting at. I see shaking heads from the council members over there, and so they get what you're talking about with this motion, what your intent is.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so, quick around, I'm going to go with Andy, and then I have to turn to my right.

MR. PILAND: A six-pack boat is an uninspected passenger vessel. To legally operate a headboat, you have to have a master's license. I've got a six-pack license, and I can only carry six people, no matter what size boat I'm on. If it's an eighty-foot sport fishing boat, with an OUPV license, I can only carry six people, six customers.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Andy. I think we're getting pretty -- This one, especially when it's in the CFR and everything. Back to Mike for clarity.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to note, before any vote gets cast on this motion, what Jack had asked for previously, as far as the number of federally-permitted vessels. There was a presentation at the last council meeting, and so I just want to bring up this slide. This is the number of permitted vessels, recreational permitted vessels, over time, and so you can kind of get a gauge of where it was in 2020, and then, as of January 2024, there were 1,931 charter and headboat snapper grouper permits, and that's from the Southeast Regional Office website, and, for vessels that report to the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, that's about 140 vessels, and that does include both the South Atlantic and the Gulf.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. I guess we're still -- We're still having discussion on Chris's motion, and then I will look to the right, and sorry that I haven't been, and so, Cameron, did you have something to say?

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, and so, you know, we're past the COI stuff, and so, you know, the number of eight, ten, twelve, I just say, hey, and, once again, I'm the guy who probably has the most skin in the game, but drop it lower to six, and just let it roll, and see what the council can do, because, right now, we're at the point where anything is better than nothing, and nothing is what we're getting, and so six is a 200 or 300 percent increase over two, and so, the lower that number, the more appetizing it might be for the council to possibly put it in, and possibly give us a couple more fish.

MR. LORENZ: All right, Cameron. I would just ask you to think about that, and that's very nice, but sometimes, in the art of negotiation, you come up just a little higher than what you want, and so I just put that out there for the eight, but certainly you're the man on this.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Scorched earth here, and so --

MR. LORENZ: Yes. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: So we're not confined to one number in this, and we're recommending -- Our motion is to recommend the council add an alternative, or we could put a range of alternatives, with different options for them to decide, since they're ultimately, you know, going to be the people that make the decision, and so we should give them a recommendation of a range, and, with my experience, that's always a good thing to have, is more than one number to pick from. Otherwise, they're just going to -- I mean, you're always going to have the no change, and then you're going to have the two, and so we should definitely -- I like that idea, that we should recommend a range of alternatives, and that's what we're doing with this motion.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and that's great, Chris. I see that's in there, and that kind of addresses everything, some of the thoughts that all of us I have. Andy, did you have something, Andy Fish?

MR. FISH: Yes, sir, and it's similar to -- It starts with carrying more than six passengers, and then a grouper vessel limit for every six persons, and maybe keep it at six passengers, and that would keep the people from bending. I mean, I know it says limit the captain and crew, but keep it at passengers.

MR. LORENZ: Six paying passengers, based on what that CFR had in the -- In what they stated a headboat is, that people pay to get on. Anyone else with a comment for the language in this motion, before I re-read it and we bring it up to a vote? No? Great. I will read the motion. **Recommend the council add an alternative for recreational for-hire vessels that are federally inspected and permitted to carry more than six passengers to have a two-fish aggregate gag and grouper vessel limit for every six passengers onboard, not to exceed a maximum number of fish per vessel per trip, that ranging from six to twelve fish, not to include captain and crew limits.** I see Matt, and I'm going to change to your name from Joe. Matt Matthews.

MR. MATTHEWS: Thank you. I just have one suggested tweak there, to clarify a little bit. Right now, it says a two-fish aggregate gag and black grouper vessel limit, and I would say an aggregate gag and black grouper vessel limit of two fish for every six passengers onboard, and so move the "two fish", and, instead of calling it a two-fish aggregate bag limit, calling it an aggregate bag limit of two fish for every six passengers onboard.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Matt, and that's coming from a lawyer.

MR. MATTHEWS: It's not a legal opinion.

MR. LORENZ: Anybody want to comment and say, wait a minute? Okay. I will re-read it one more time, for the record, and thank you, Matt. **Recommend the council add an alternative for recreational for-hire vessels that are federally inspected and permitted to carry more than six passengers to have an aggregate gag and black grouper vessel limit of two fish for every six passengers onboard, not to exceed a maximum number of fish per vessel per trip, ranging from six to twelve fish. Not to include captain and crew limits.** Is there commentary? Good job. I'm proud of that one. We'll have a vote here, and I think -- I will take a numeric vote, and I tend to like that. **Everybody in favor of this motion, raise your hand.** All right. **We have fourteen in favor. Do we have anybody that objects, any nays?** All right. **We have one nay. Any abstentions? Nobody abstaining. The motion passes.** It will be presented to the council in June. Thank you. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just clarifying, because this is -- I probably should have written this into the motion, but we can have this clarification here, and the council is here to hear it, and does the AP view this as this is what the council should select as a preferred alternative, and like the motion is to add it, and do you want to have another motion where you are saying you're recommending this is selected as the preferred alternative for this action?

MR. LORENZ: May we make, I guess, just a statement under that, and then I guess we could put a vote that the motion is the AP's preferred alternative. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would just like to ask if we're meeting the action in Action 1, and are we even really getting, you know, to the recreational vessels that are, you know, under -- The six people or under, are we addressing that? I mean, we've kind of tailored this to the charter headboat, you know, the headboat, but are we answering the question -- I mean, maybe this is in addition to what we're already being asked, and I need to be clear on that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, James. That's a good point. We do have -- So, yes, if you all have -- You all are recommending another alternative, and so Alternative 4 would be for the headboat, as what you all have suggested, but then there would -- There also is the question of the aggregate vessel limit, as applied to the other components of the recreational fishery, the private component, the charter component, and so what you all would recommend to the council as what they should prefer for those portions of the sector as well.

MR. LORENZ: I will recognize the vice chair, James, first, who brought this forward.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob, and so maybe, with everything that we voted on, we can develop another alternative that adopts one of these alternatives. You know, say we want, you know, just hypothetically, want Alternative 1, with the provision that we adopt, you know, what we just voted on with that, you know, and so it would be let's keep Alternative 1, 2, or 3, with this new action, and can we do something like that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and this action is kind of designed that, if the council is changing the -- Like all the components of the recreational sector, they would have multiple preferred alternatives, and so Alternative 1 keeps it as it is, where we have two separate bag limits, or not bag limits, but two separate vessel limits for gag and black grouper.

Alternative 2 creates an aggregate vessel limit for gag and black grouper for the private component. Alternative 3 creates an aggregate for the for-hire component. Right now, we have it as charter and headboat, based on the motion that you all just passed, and you might include, in your recommendation of what you would recommend the council prefer, that they remove headboats from Alternative 3, if you want to recommend that they do the aggregate for all of the different components of the recreational sector, and so, if your intent is to make everything an aggregate vessel limit, using the motion you just passed, and then for the private and for the charter, then I guess I would recommend to you to craft a motion where you're recommending a preferred of Alternative 2, Alternative 3, with the removal of the headboat, and the motion that you just passed, the added alternative that you just passed.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Mike. Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: My opposition to the wording here is a large headboat passenger has one-third the potential to go home with a grouper that somebody on a smaller headboat would, and I think you should stick with something like was mentioned earlier, the 30 percent, or some percentage, rather than narrowing it down to where very few people on that larger boat get a chance of a fish. If you take the Stacy there, where I'm at, and they will run eighty-five people, and so, out of them, one out of ten has a potential to get a fish.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Robert. Any points, or counterpoints, on what Robert Freeman stated? Matthew.

MR. MATTHEWS: I see what you're getting at there, and it makes sense, and, I mean, we can simplify it more than saying 30 percent. We can say one fish for every three people, and the math works out the exact same, but I see what you're getting at there. If we've got a headboat with, you know, eighteen people on it, or if I'm doing my math right, but, if we're one shy of three six-person limits, then your number of fish per people is off. I get what you're saying, and I just think overcomplicating it, with percentages, is -- To Chris's point, I think, and to Paul's point, I think we're getting into the weeds with that.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and, at this point, the way we have our motion written, with that large band there, and we take into account Cameron saying, well, I'll go conservative, but, with the larger number, that is -- That is seventy-two people or so on a vessel, is it not, or something to that effect, and so we're kind of there, keeping some simplicity in the air, without further complication by numbers. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: So the council has or has not picked preferreds on Action 1? They looked at it, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: They have not selected preferreds yet.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so they're charging us with wanting to go through and pick preferreds, and is that correct, or just to talk about it, because we didn't really like read through all of Action 1, is what James is saying, and I agree, and so we did jump straight into, you know, more passionate discussion, which is fine, and it was great, and we worked real hard, and so I think maybe we should go back and work through and make sure that we pick, or at least do what the council wants us to do, and I don't know if it's just to say it's okay, or pick some preferreds or whatever, for Alternative 1, 2, and 3, and then the motion adds another part to one of these other alternatives, which is fine, and we could -- I mean, we could put a whole encyclopedia of alternatives on there, if we wanted to, and so, if you're worried about -- I mean, not worried about it, but I think we do need to circle back, and I think you're right, James.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you. Noted, and we'll come to that. Chris Militello, do you have something?

MR. MILITELLO: Mike, are we doing what we're supposed to here though? This is a whole separate thing that we need to break out, and we're not answering the questions you asked, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So you've answered it, in the context of what to do with the headboat portion, and I guess what I'm -- What is still needed is probably a motion saying that you all recommend

which alternatives as preferred, that the council select these alternatives as preferred, and so, if you want, and I can start writing, if you would like, just so that you can have something that you can, you know, put up or shoot down, but, if you are onboard with the aggregate vessel limits, then I can put up a motion, start drafting a motion, that includes approval of -- That you recommend Alternative 2, which would be for the private component, an aggregate bag limit, or an aggregate vessel limit, of two gag or black grouper for the private component, Alternative 3, with the removal of headboat, and your newly-crafted alternative, and you can consider that. I will start writing.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Mike. I am just wondering if we didn't -- I might have wanted to ask to go back to that other list, but I will hold that for a minute, Mike, because I'm going to ask James to drop in with what he wants to say, because I'm also going to ask him, and he seems to have his arms pretty well wrapped around this, and, if he could help lead here, and that would be a nice thing, James. Thank you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I just kind of wanted to summarize, and so this would be Alternative 4, essentially, being written, and then it would be in the list, and the panel would say that we recommend Alternative 4, as created, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I wouldn't phrase it as Alternative 4, because it doesn't officially get a number until the council puts it in there, but we can reference, you know, the alternative developed at this meeting, or the alternative developed in the previous motion, something of that sort.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. Tony. Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: I guess where we're at is to move forward on this, and, as much as I would love to offer up Alternative 1, I think it has no traction with what we're looking at, and so, in essence, Alternative 2 and 3 would be an option, as well as including what we have here.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony, and that was a good statement, and I would address Mike. I mean, would we want to state in there, as we're writing this, that it looks like the panel here has essentially rejected Alternative 1, and does that help? Also, I mean, besides just the ones that we're deciding, are there some that are, you know, no, and we can eliminate that pretty quickly, although I think the council would also, but -- Okay. James was telling me that I'm being a little redundant there, and we already have eliminated it, by doing this.

Okay, and that's it, Mike. I won't read this right at the moment, pending some thinking, and so there's the draft motion, with those two, and do we want a quick flashback what those were up there, just a quick look on 2 and 3? Everybody take a look at that. It's Alternative 3, recreational private, and for-hire. All right. I guess we can go back to the motion. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just so I'm clear, and maybe I'm just having a brain fart here, but, in this, the two fish could be both black grouper or both gag grouper?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes. They could be any combination of gag or black grouper, and so it would be two of either species. You could have two black grouper, you could have two gag, or you could have one of each.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you so much, Mike.

MR. LORENZ: All right. I will read the draft motion, which was kind of a group action here, and we will still need to proceed with somebody taking responsibility for the motion, and somebody seconding it. **The draft motion that's been offered here from our work is recommend that the council select Alternative 2, which focuses on the private recreational, Alternative 3 for for-hire, with removal of the headboat component, and the new alternative recommended for the headboat component is our preferred, which is our motion which is below.** Any comment, or discussion, on this draft motion, or does anybody want to make it their motion?

MR. MATTHEWS: I think maybe I'm splitting hairs, but that seems like what we're doing this morning, and so I think it seems like we're all onboard, for the most part, with Alternative 2 for the private sector, and it seems, to me, that it's more of a request to modify Alternative 3, to split out and treat the for-hire vessels in two different categories, and so it's kind of a modified Alternative 3, and I don't know if a statement one way, versus another, makes it easier for the council to process, and approve, as opposed to coming up with a whole new alternative, but it's more a modified Alternative 3.

MR. LORENZ: This is almost a footnote to our other motion, but James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Mike, will we see this again, as an actual alternative, in the future, something, or is this going to be fast-tracked, and the council is going to look at what this panel has put in front of them and make a decision, because, I think, with what Matt is saying, you know, that will all be washed out, if we are going to see it again, but, if we're not going to see it again, then we should clean it up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So this will be -- You're not going to see this again, with the current timeline that this amendment is on, and that's kind of -- Again, the council is here to understand the context that you all are speaking on, and that's why I included this portion with Alternative 3, and I didn't just flat out say Alternative 3, but I can add the word "modified" with the removal of the headboat component, if that satisfies your needs for how that needs to be changed, but I think the council gets your point of what you're trying to say, that the headboat is not included in that Alternative 3, and that headboat is addressed with the new alternative that you have recommended.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: That's what I wanted to echo, and I saw some council members shaking their heads that they understood what we meant, and, if I'm not mistaken, somebody from the AP is there to reiterate our discussions to the council at the council meeting.

MR. LORENZ: With that said, Chris, and so is this -- Is this draft motion -- I guess what I'm looking for some help here, and is this needed for a motion, because, to me, this would come right ahead of what we had done, and finished, or it could be almost an informative footnote.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and I was wondering if we didn't cut that and put it above the work we did previously, with the Alternative 4, but this is our intent, I believe, and it sums it up, and I think it will get us moving ahead.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just from an, you know, organizational, being able to present this to the council standpoint, if this motion captures all the parts of this amendment that you all want to support, or all the parts of this action that you all want to support, then making this motion, approving it, that would be the cleanest option, because it's all captured right there in that statement. That way, the council isn't looking at different parts of your discussion, and your end result is all in one place.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Let's do that, and, Mike, when we do present this to the council in June, this one will be first, right, because that would lead right to the other motion. This kind of leads to the other motion, does it not?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and we would need to show the other motion first, because we would be -- You all are recommending a new alternative, and then you're referencing that new alternative in this motion, and so we'll present the new, and then we'll say this new is one part, in addition to these other two parts, that you're recommending as preferred for this action.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Understood. Tony, did you have a statement here?

MR. CONSTANT: I believe that Matt put it good, that this is the horse, and the cart follows, and so we probably ought to make this motion now, and then the cart is the headboat amendment, which is later, and let's keep the horse before the cart.

MR. LORENZ: All right.

MR. CONSTANT: I would be willing to make that motion.

MR. LORENZ: Please make the motion. Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: **I will make this a motion to move forward.**

MR. LORENZ: Motion made by Tony Constant. Second? Matt Matthews seconds. I will read it. **Recommend that the council select Alternative 2 for private, Alternative 3 for for-hire, modified with the removal of the headboat component, and the new alternative recommended for the headboat component as preferred for Action 1.** Any last discussion, or comment, before a vote? All right. **Those all in favor of this motion, raise your hand, fifteen. We have no rejections of this motion, no nays, and no abstainers.** All right. **It's unanimous.** Very good, gentlemen. Thank you. Mike, I'm thinking of a small break. It's 9:51. All right, folks. We've got ten minutes, okay, and we'll readjourn at 10:00, or 10:01. I mean reconvene.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right. It's 10:05. Just by our planning, we're a tiny bit slower this morning, to finish well on time, and so just noting that, and we always have lunch to play with a little bit, and so we're going to move on to the second part of this agenda item, which will be the stowage requirements for the black sea bass pots. I don't believe we have any sea bass pot endorsement holders here right now, and I know we did with -- We do, with John? Okay. Great. So let's move on. Okay, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Bob. For Action 2, we are addressing kind of this on-demand gear for black sea bass pots, and we're trying to make that useable in the fishery. One thing to note, with this action, is we are not talking about any re-openings of the nearshore area for the black sea bass pots. That's something that would need to be addressed in a separate amendment. Right here, we're just talking about the use of the gear itself in the areas where black sea bass pots are currently allowed, where roped pots are currently allowed, and so we're not talking about changes in, you know, effort harvest in this context. That would be addressed in a separate amendment, potentially Amendment 56, that you all will talk about on Thursday, tomorrow.

For this action, we went through all of those regulations, that list that I showed you at the bottom for black bass pots, and, really, the only thing that wasn't even necessarily restricting the black sea bass on demand gear, and it was just kind of making it a little impractical, was the requirement for transiting through closed areas.

Alternative 1 shows the current transit stowage requirements for these pots, and they need to be unbaited, and all buoys need to be disconnected from the gear. When talking about these on-demand pots, where you have a buoy that, when it's stored at the bottom, it gets tied down to the gear, and it gets a little cumbersome to take that buoy off and put it on as you're going, and preparing your gear, to have it for transit, and so the adjustment to that Alternative 2 is that the pot would just need to be unbaited, not minding whether the buoy is connected to the gear or not.

Alternative 3, there is actually another -- A different requirement for transiting through the seasonal closed area for on-demand pots than there is for transiting through marine protected areas or special management zones, MPAs or SMZs, and so, when going through the nearshore closed area, the buoy can be connected, but it needs to be stored within the pot.

If the buoy is connected, it's stowed within the sea bass pot, and then the gear can remain out on the deck, and so we kind of took that requirement, and that's how we came to Alternative 3, and so this would make the requirement, for these on-demand pots, that, while transiting through an MPA or SMZ, they could either have their buoy disconnected, or they could stow the buoy within the pot, and the point of all of this is to be able to indicate to law enforcement that this gear is not being actively fished right now. We're going through this area where -- You know, the operator is going through this area where they can't fish this gear at all, and it's illegal for them to fish the gear, and they're showing they're not actually fishing in that area. They've got the gear out on the deck, but it's not in a fashion where they could actually use it.

These alternatives have been taken out for scoping, and we did get comments back, from some of the endorsement holders that have used this on-demand type of mechanism, and they seemed to be mostly in support of Alternative 3, and putting the buoy inside the pot didn't seem to be an overly cumbersome thing. It's an indicator that law enforcement can use, and so that seemed to be the direction that those stakeholders were leaning.

The question to you all is, within this -- You know, within this range of alternatives, or if you have something else that you would prefer, and what would be the benefits and risks of different alternatives, and what would you ultimately recommend that the council should select as their preferred option?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Mike. It's fairly cut and dried, as far as no bait and where the buoys are. Let's start some conversation on your thoughts on that, and I will look over to the left, and we have our endorsement holder, and, John Polston, I will offer you the first chance to speak, should you wish.

MR. POLSTON: Yes, I will speak, but I would have to lean towards what Jimmy Hull has said, because I'm not currently fishing my endorsement, and Jimmy was saying that, and am I correct, that it's okay to store the buoy in the pot, and there's no problem for him to be doing that, and, like I said, I haven't been fishing my -- It may be fished here in this next year, but I'm sure we can do it if he can do it.

MR. LORENZ: All right. That's great information from you guys that know and live and contact Jimmy on a regular basis. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: Does the on-demand -- Does that mean they're using like pop-up buoys, and is that specifically to that, or to straight-up buoy fishing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that's specific to the ropeless, the pop-up buoys, and there's been different words used for it, but those that don't have a vertical line sitting in the water column, those that have the vertical line either stored at the bottom or they don't use a vertical line at all, and that's what we're talking about here.

MR. FISH: I like Alternative 3.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: In my area, we have some guys who are horrific repeat offenders and poachers, who never follow any rules and stuff like that, and I don't know how they're still in business, but yet they are, and so, whenever you have a pop-up gear that can be easily hidden, or something along those lines, in my mind, it's just like those guys are going to have a field day with it. I mean, they get caught with their buoys inside the twenty-mile range all the time already, and so, you know, it's going to be what it's going to be, and there's no stopping them, because they don't really care about the laws and stuff, but, on Alternative 3, maybe you should have an exception that, if you're a repeat offender, you must take your damn buoys and put them in the bottom of your boat while you're transiting the areas.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. I'll take that as frivolity, and we do have one issue, and we do know that, in North Carolina, and that is we could use some more dollars towards enforcement to even the playing field, for those who play by the rules, but we know how that goes, and that money just never comes from either side, and so thank you. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. I wish Jimmy was here to ask this question to, but I was just curious about the cost associated with the pop-up gear, and if it's, you know, economically feasible, and, I mean, I assume that it is, since it's made it this far, or is it an alternative just to keep fishing? Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: Mike, do you want to -- We had a run of this in Georgia and all, right, with folks that used these, Jimmy included, right, and everybody liked it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, there is a group of the endorsement holders that has participated in kind of the experimental use of this gear, and so they would already -- So there's a group of the endorsement holders that have already -- You know, already have access to this type of gear. I don't know that it's terribly -- Like especially in the way of having just the buoy and the line strapped down to the pot itself, and I don't know that it's terribly like cost-prohibitive for the fishery, and I know --

I mean, the hope, for a lot of them, and the comments that we heard at that August workshop, are that folks really want access to that nearshore area again, and, if this is the gear that, you know, kind of is the step that makes that happen, then that's something that they would be leaning towards. Whether that access -- You know, the access discussion is on a completely different amendment, and that's going to be something that gets talked about in another context, but that's something that got brought up and is kind of associated with considering this.

MR. LORENZ: Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: That's what -- I used to bass pot fish for years, but that's what Jimmy was implying, that they were hoping that the accepting of this gear would let them have access, eventually, into the whale area, the closer-to-shore area, but it does cost more money to use ropeless gear than it would with the roped gear, if that's what you're asking, but all this is saying is that you're going to allow it, isn't it, and that's all this is saying, and so, yes, I would agree with it.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so the endorsement holders are setting up, with the hopes of a brighter future, and I am seeing that it looks like -- You know, from what all we're hearing, Alternative 3 is a pretty obvious choice, and so we may possibly move to a motion, but, before I do that, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: With that being said, and so, obviously, you know, the ropeless gear is to come into the inshore waters, and, when we get to that point, then we start talking about -- There is major, major deal for charter, headboat, and recreational, and stuff like that, because what has happened, in the last however many years it's been in place, is we've actually had to -- We've actually gotten a better fishery, because we can actually fish in the shoreline, to twenty nautical miles offshore, and customers can catch fish.

You know, I know it's not for the gear-specific, but the ultimate battle is going to be, hey, it's going down the road, and how do we splice that, and so I'm just wanting to put my two-cents in that, you know, it's going to come down to, hey, can they trap inside, and, if so, how does it get spliced out, and do the numbers have to get changed, to make it more fair to an industry that was able to keep going, and now we're going to look at losing all that real estate.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Cameron. A warning for days ahead, and years ahead. James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would also like some clarification on if the gear is currently not allowed, the pop-up gear, or we're just looking for clarification on how the gear is to be stowed and transit through the closed areas. I mean, if it's allowed, and we're just looking for reaffirming information, to say how it's supposed to be stowed on deck, and is that what we're doing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, within this process, all the regs for black sea bass pots were written in the context of roped pots, and that was before this technology came online, and so, now that we have this technology available, the question, that came with this amendment, was how do those regulations get interpreted, in the context of this new technology, and so we've gone through the regulations, and the advice that we've gotten, from our General Counsel, is that there is nothing that is prohibiting the use of on-demand pots right now, which is -- You know, we thought this might be a bigger lift, in terms of changing regulations for the on-demand pots, than what it turns out to be, is we have just this change in the transit that makes it a little bit more practical, but there's nothing -- As long as they are marking their lines, as long as they have their identification on the trap, all those things are -- All those boxes are being checked, like any other roped gear would, and then there's not an issue that would prohibit endorsement holders from using this gear in the areas where roped gear is allowed right now.

Along with this, we are aware that -- There's kind of a need to let the endorsement holders know that, so that there is -- We do know that there is going to need to be some outreach to the endorsement holders, just clarifying, for them, the clarification that we've received, that this is something that you all have access to.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Mike. **Then, with that, I would like to make a motion that the panel recommends Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative in Action 2.**

MR. LORENZ: All right. The motion is presented by James Paskiewicz for the preferred to be Alternative 2. Do I have a second to that motion? Andy Fish seconds the motion. Discussion? Any further discussion on this? This is interesting, and, you know, the right whales -- It looked like they might ease up a little bit, and, I think, a week or two ago, someone -- Another one got caught, up in U.S. waters, and we went a long time without that, and so the protection of that whale is just -- It isn't going to end, and I think it's going to keep ratcheting down, and so they're heading this -- These endorsement holders are going to have to go to this gear eventually anyway.

**All right, and we have a motion and a second to recommend Alternative 3 as the preferred for Action 2. All in favor, fourteen in favor; no nays; and we have one abstainer. All right. The motion passes.** Thank you. Good job. Okay. Just a brief mind pause here, and the next thing is Item Number 6, Snapper Grouper Management Strategy Evaluation, the Update and Input, and this is the Blue Matter Science initiative, or, you know, they've been contracted for, you know, this modeling and all of assessments and that sort of thing, and, Chip, you're going to present today on that, and so, Chip Collier, and it's all yours when you're ready.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so I was a really bad teacher, and I gave a lot of homework last night, but I think we still need some more classroom participation before I'm ready to present it. I don't want to present the information right now, because it is very few people that have submitted responses, and I don't want the submitted responses to be criticized or anything like that, and I just want us to have a discussion on it, and I don't want the submitted responses to bias your opinion, and so if we could take fifteen or twenty minutes to go through that form, or you guys go through

that form, while we're just sitting here, to make sure we get your answers in there, and then we can discuss what pieces are most important to you, and what pieces are not that important, and, that way, we can have a better direction on how to take this MSE.

I know some people haven't been here for the entire process of the management strategy evaluation, but what we're trying to do is figure out a better way to manage this recreational fishery. When we're thinking about -- Or when we've been managing red snapper, a lot of the concerns, and a lot of the fishing mortality, which is leading to overfishing of the stock, is due to the dead discards from the private recreational fishery, and so that is something that needs to be addressed. In order to end overfishing, we have to do something with the amount of dead discards in the private recreational fishery.

We want to go behind just thinking of red snapper, and we want to begin to think about other species that are very important to the fishery, and so we have two other species that we're trying to incorporate into this, and one is gag grouper, and the other, that we're going to be adding in this year, and you will see it probably for the first time in October, is going to be black sea bass.

You're going to get a presentation on black sea bass later in this meeting, and things are not going very well for black sea bass, and so we're likely to be in a bad situation for that one as well, and so we want to get your feedback on how to respond, or how to incorporate some management measures that will be beneficial for red snapper, black sea bass, and gag grouper all at once, and see how this can work through the stock assessments and to develop sustainable fisheries, and so, with that, I know there were some hiccups in the form that I gave you. Unfortunately, I did not get to have a beta test for this, and I didn't get a lot of reviews, just due to time constraints, and so I have modified it, and I know there was issues with not being able to select five items.

Well, it started off, yesterday, that you couldn't even respond, until I clicked on another button, and so I fixed that, and then there was also you couldn't respond to -- You couldn't select five items, and I have fixed that now, and so you should be able to select five items, but if we can take fifteen minutes to go through this, just to get your opinions, and the form automatically generates a presentation for me, and I don't even have to do anything, and it's much smarter than I am, and then we can talk about the findings of the group, make sure that everybody understands the direction that things are going, you know, what are they key components of it.

Even if you're not a recreational fisherman, it's still good to get your input on this, just to make sure that you're seeing the fishery the way that everybody else is seeing the fishery, and so, if you don't have a computer, I did bring two tablets with me, and so everybody can respond to this, and so let's just take a few minutes to go through it. Sorry about being a bad teacher.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: Advisory panel, we are reconvening. I'm going to hand things back to Chip, and I think we have all finished our homework assignment, or today's little pop quiz. All right. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so most people have had a chance to finish up, and so, based on the form responses, we have the results that get automatically generated here, and, basically, when we're looking at something that is of concern, it's going to be showing up more to the right side of the graph, and so, if you look at the first one here, where we're talking about how concerned

you are about the following impacts of the recreational red snapper releases on the snapper grouper fishery, you see it's -- For most people, it was a big concern, is the ability to retain a red snapper, due to regulations.

Other things that weren't as important, if you scroll down to something like reduced patronage on for-hire vessels due to high regulatory discards, but, as we get further down, one of the big items here that I'm seeing pop up is lack of robust data, and trusted data, to estimate recreational red snapper discards, but we're also seeing measures to reduce dead discards may lead to other more restrictive measures, and management is not responsive to new information, and then the negative impact red snapper is having on cooccurring species.

Some of the items that people typed in, in response to other concerns, and there is mortality, season, data, recreational dead discards, and so we're getting a varied response here, but we're getting a lot of good information from the AP. Other concerns that were mentioned, once again, is seasons, genetic distribution, recreational permit, historic age, weight of fish, largest species, and so, once again, a variety of different topics that we can dive into when we're looking a little bit more into the information.

For gag, one of the big concerns is red snapper, but it's also the for-hire fishery and the commercial fishery potentially having some impact, and another thing that's probably pretty interesting that's popping up here is modern electronics, and, within that, I would say that trolling motors are in there. Other concerns, once again, we're seeing red snapper pop in these other concerns, and we're also seeing a closed season in January, and we see it pop up here and over here.

Going into some of the concerns for black sea bass, we are seeing some reduced angler satisfaction, due to potential regulations coming in for black sea bass, reduced patronage, but we're also seeing the lack of trust, and this is continued for both black sea bass and red snapper, and then management measures may lead to other restrictive management measures is coming up as a major concern, and then management is not responsive to stakeholder input.

Other concerns for black sea bass, red snapper is popping up here, as well as down here, where it's predation of black sea bass, and some people are indicating that black sea bass may be okay, and then other items that come up are the ropeless gear, and we're seeing spawning aggregations, the recreational and commercial sectors, and I believe that was trying to make the size limits the same between the two.

The MSE, we're going to be looking to involve a variety of management strategies, or a combination of strategies, to achieve that, and, once again, when we're looking at this, what we should be looking at is items with a higher percentage, and so one of the things that is popping up, on this first group that we're looking at, is to match the minimum size for black sea bass between commercial and recreational fishermen, and that came in at 11 percent.

Another item that came up as a very important strategy is to improve compliance with current regulations, and that came in at 10 percent. Expand the recreational red snapper season came in at 8 percent, and then develop new surveys to estimate red snapper releases came in at 10 percent, and then it's looking like most other items were less than 5 percent.

Other desired objectives are looking at economic backgrounds, potential closed areas, and that's where this one square mile is coming up, and red snapper is coming up, recreational open, and I imagine that "open" is talking about seasons, and then healthy fisheries, opportunities for recreational fishermen, and, in addition to those listed above, other management strategies, we're having the season should open, improve data collection, research in habitat, those lock-trolling motors, and the ability to be able to harvest.

Going into gag grouper, one thing that I noticed in my preliminary look at this is I was seeing a lot of people were -- There was a lot fewer further to the right, but we did see items -- You know, reduced patronage came up as a high one, and we're also seeing a lack of robust data, and trusted data, and then some of these management measures are going to lead to more restrictive items, and those are all popping up as important pieces.

One thing that has been showing up, at least for black sea bass and gag grouper, is that climate change doesn't seem to be having -- It's not a huge concern, due to the productivity of those, and then there's not much concern about closed seasons or closed areas not being effective, and so the results of the MSE may impact the fishery, due to possible -- Due to possible changes to future management, and we're just trying to get the fishermen's perspective on this, the AP's perspective in general.

Looking down this real quick, what came up as most important was to maximize the number of days the recreational snapper grouper fishery is open. Other items that came up as important, and it looks like 7 or 8 percent was the next round, which is to maximize the chances that a trip will be allowed to land a red snapper, to maximize the chance that a trip will be allowed to land a legal grouper, and I didn't define "grouper" well for you all, but it looks like you were thinking probably along my pathway here, where grouper is going to be the larger groupers, which is red grouper, gag grouper, scamp, black grouper, snowy, some of those larger fish. Maximize the ratio of kept versus released red snapper, and those seem to be the biggest ones, and then also maintain the shallow-water grouper closure to protect spawning grouper.

Then there was a question on the aggregate limit for recreational snapper, and I know you heard Jessica talk about their idea on an aggregate limit for the snapper grouper fishery, and we're seeing a variety of numbers here, ranging from ten to thirty, simply to keep fishing, and so I do want to ask a few additional questions in regard to this. You know, when we're talking about an aggregate limit, it's -- In my mind, I'm thinking about how to analyze this.

If there is an aggregate limit of let's say ten to thirty fish for a snapper grouper trip, and this would be including all snapper grouper species, and so it could be a triggerfish, or it could be a grunt, or it could be a snapper or a grouper, and how would captains, or private recreational fishermen, change their behavior if you do have an aggregate? If somebody is wanting to catch a gag grouper, are they going to go to those gag grouper spots first, fish for gag grouper, and then, if they're not biting, they might switch to something else, or are they just going to go out to their spots and fish normally, and whatever they get first is what they get first, and they're not really going to change their behavior?

If they get to the aggregate, would they stop fishing at that point, and then we reduce the number of releases, and so, with that, I welcome any comments, or responses saying that I'm completely off-base and need to start rethinking.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Comments for Chip? We'll start off with Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Chip, I don't think that would necessarily be a change. I think, currently, the anglers -- I know we do, but we don't go target our major species first anyway, and so I'm going to go hit grouper, hit snapper, if it's open, and then work my way down, and, if we catch, along the way, something like triggerfish, that's just a plus before we get to them.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Anyone else? Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, for charter headboats, it's kind of different, and so we're just fishing for pretty much everything at one shot, you know, and, with the numbers of passengers that we carry, you know, an aggregate limit, you know, would be something that, you know, they would try to maximize, that everybody on the boat reach their maximum limit before they would stop, which is how things would probably proceed, which I would assume would be very different if somebody had a smaller boat, and they catch their aggregate, and they can troll for a while, or do something -- You know, they have a lot more options to do something different, once their limit is caught.

MR. LORENZ: Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Chip, correct me if I'm wrong, but you said the current -- If you added the individual species together now, the current aggregate limit would be around fifty?

DR. COLLIER: Jessica might be able to correct me if I'm wrong, but it is around fifty, or slightly less, or slightly more, than that, when you're thinking of all the species.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone on the aggregate and fishing? Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: I fish center console boats, and I do a fair amount of bottom-fishing trips, and most of my trips are going to be anywhere from one to four people, and, you know, it's a lot different than a headboat. There's definitely a group of anglers, whether it be recreational or for-hire guys, that, if there was an aggregate limit, and if they have clients that are trying to fill the cooler up with fish, that, when they reach that aggregate limit, they would stop fishing.

You know, I mean, that's kind of how I do it, I mean, and I may be an exception, and I know there's some other recreational guys, and charter-for-hire guys, that kind of operate that way, and I think everybody knows that, in the recreational and for-hire sectors, there's also another group of people that, with that aggregate limit, they're going to try to maximize the size of the fish in that aggregate limit, and that's just a mentality. I'm not going to say it's right or wrong, and it's probably detrimental to our fish, when you're fishing through a bunch of legal fish and trying to get bigger fish, and so that's something, Chip, that you might want to be mindful of with the aggregate limit.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. Anyone else with some input? Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I also, as a private recreational angler, and I take young kids out a good bit, and we go out there, and they just want something to pull on the line, and I don't know that you can necessarily assume that everybody is going to stop dropping to the bottom as soon as they get their aggregate limit, and they might be just catch-and-release fishing to fill the day out, and, you know, make sure that they have maximized their tank of fuel.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: Up my way, the gags are protected by the red snapper. I have tried to, on a science trip, to catch groupers. We got zero groupers in places where groupers should be, and all we caught was red snapper, and, I mean, one of the ways that I avoid red snapper is using small bait, and, you know, you're looking for triggers and beeliners, but to target groupers, gag groupers or black groupers, in Hatteras, from the Hatteras Inlet, is -- Without heavy interaction with red snapper, it's impossible.

MR. LORENZ: Just one thing, and I don't think it's actually that significant, but I know, in my crowd, we also had what probably works for conservation, is sort of a distraction factor. You start out there for a bottom-fishing trip, which, of course, everybody likes, because everybody is participating, and everybody is active and has a rod in your hand, but, depending on where you are while you're getting sea bass, vermilion, and a lot of white grunts, and that's your, you know, bread and butter to take something home, and suddenly you can be distracted by seeing a little group of African pompano go under, or a school of smaller dolphins go by, and you say, oh, the heck with this, and we'll go chase them down for a little while, and cast and retrieve, and, I mean, even poppers for a dolphin, and so I don't know how great that is, and how many do it, but I'm sure quite a bit of us get that distraction factor, and then we go back, and we don't catch the fish anyway that were on the bottom, and so I don't know if a survey has ever been done on how often that happens, but there's your offset with recreational fishermen.

When they go out, you know, the first thing is the camaraderie, and having a good day, and, if you're not picking something up or something, you do move on to something else, in and out, as you prefer, and, if you're private, you're not bound to anything, and you don't have a client that signed a contract saying I want this.

DR. COLLIER: In response to that, I will say that, looking at the MRIP data, we can see that the trips are very diverse. You can catch -- Some trips have blueline tilefish and striped bass on it, and so it's an extreme offshore species and an inshore species, potentially, and so we're seeing all kinds of stuff on there, and we're seeing the diversity of a recreational trip, and it is very hard to define a recreational trip.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Anyone else? I guess I will give it back to Chip to take us forward.

DR. COLLIER: I think I've punished you guys enough. I mean, I really appreciate the responses to these, and I know some individuals didn't get a chance to indicate five choices on some of the questions, and so, if the responses seem to match what you were allowed to pick, that's great. If not, please let me know now. That way, we can adjust it to make sure it will be reflective of what you would have picked, and I believe it was -- Was it these management strategies, where people were limited and didn't have an opportunity to select five of them? If anything didn't seem right, just let me know, and we can talk about it offline as well, and I will put together a report for you

all with these responses in it. That way, it's a little bit easier, and you guys can mull it over, to make sure it is reflecting exactly what you want in there.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chip. I would like to see that. That was interesting. That was interesting. I thought, when making the five choices, the one thing that I got a little befuddled was the list was long, without a printout, and it didn't completely show up on the screen, and so I had to remember what I was thinking about. In order to pick a priority of five out of twenty-five, that takes a little bit of discipline.

I guess that concludes Item 6, Mike, as I'm looking over it, for the snapper grouper management strategy, and I did not see Allie, but I see Allie is here, and we'll talk with her, and, Allie, could you move in soon? All right. Why doesn't everybody -- We'll take just a quick five minutes, to let Allie group up, and we'll come up with a game plan here of into lunch and how far we go. Thank you, and so take five.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right, everybody. For Item Number 7, Amendment 55, scamp and yellowmouth grouper, it's been decided that we have continuity in our discussion, and there did not look like an adequate break time for lunch, and so what our decision has been is to start lunch early, and so I guess, if you particularly want to leave this area, it gives you a little jump on any traffic out there, and so we will adjourn for the time being, with a return time of 1:00, instead of 1:30, and so our lunch break starts now, and we return at 1:00.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: Okay, AP. It's 1:04, and we'll reconvene our meeting, and, as we continue grouper day, we are now going to move to scamp and yellowmouth grouper, the Snapper Grouper Amendment 55, and we have Allie Iberle to kick us off and host us through.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so you guys saw this in April, and it was a little bit more preliminary, and so kind of the goal of today is we'll go through, review the actions and alternatives and the preferreds that the council has selected so far. There are some actions that don't have a preferred, one of them being the bag and vessel limit. You've had a decent amount of discussion on that, but we'll stop and kind of mull that over.

I guess I'll go ahead and jump in. For background, I want to kind of set us up, because this amendment is a little unique, in that it's establishing a new complex, and so what we think of as the shallow-water grouper complex includes all of the shallow-water grouper species, and so gag, scamp, red grouper, black grouper, the hinds, graysby, coney, and then yellowmouth and yellowfin, and so all of these species are in what's considered the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper complex, and they're grouped in that complex because of that annual spawning season closure, and so, in the regulations, that group is subject to that annual spawning season closure.

Then, looking further into that group, gag, scamp, red grouper, and black grouper are the only species within that bigger South Atlantic shallow-water groupers that have individual catch levels and accountability measures, and then there's kind of a smaller subset, and so your hinds, graysby, coney, and yellowmouth grouper, or, sorry, yellowmouth and yellowfin, that have a single catch

level and accountability measure, and so these are kind of thought of as just a big group, when we think of catch levels and accountability measures.

The assessment that this amendment was responding to was SEDAR 68, and that assessment gave us recommendations for scamp and yellowmouth grouper together, and so it treated those two as a single species, because of identification issues between the two, and so the assessment indicated that the stock was overfished, but not experiencing overfishing, and all of those catch level recommendations are for both species, and so you can think of scamp and yellowmouth now essentially as a single species, when you're thinking of catch levels and accountability measures.

There's a little bit more that has to get done in this amendment, because of that action from the assessment, and so this is kind of the list of everything that needs to get done for this assessment, and so step-one is to remove yellowmouth grouper and kind of combine it with scamp, and so scamp was something that already its own individual ACL, and so we're just taking yellowmouth out of the group, with the hinds, coney, graysby, and yellowfin, and we're lumping it in with scamp.

Then, next, this amendment will establish that new scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex, and so we'll take the recommendations from SEDAR 68, and the council will then establish catch levels, allocations, and accountability measures and so forth, and then, finally, we'll have to modify that -- Okay, and so we've got this huge acronym, and, if you've tuned into council meetings, this has been lovingly termed as OSASWG, even though that's not technically how that would be pronounced, but, if you hear OSASWG, that's what we're referring to, and so that's that remaining group of shallow-water groupers, and so your hinds, rock hind and red hind, graysby, and yellowfin, and so we need to look at that ACL and take out the portion that was allotted, for lack of a better term, or allocated, for yellowmouth grouper, because the catch level is already accounted for in what was recommended and will be established for that new complex, and so, if we left it in, we would be double-counting for yellowmouth.

That brings us to our acceptable biological catch levels, and you have those there. We started in total removals, and we now have those in landings and dead discards, and this fishery is tracked in whole weight, and so, again, kind of for this meeting, we'll just review actions and alternatives and preferreds, and then you can provide any feedback that the AP sees fit. We are scheduled to have the council approve this amendment for public hearings in June, and so this is the last time that you guys will see it, and then scheduling final approval for this amendment in September.

I kind of covered what this amendment is aiming to do in the background, and so I'm not going to go too much over the purpose and need, because I kind of covered it in those bullets, essentially step-by-step what we need to get achieved in this one. Before I move on to actions and alternatives, I know that was a lot of acronyms and grouper names said over and over again, but are there any questions with what needs to get done, as far as scamp and yellowmouth in the new complex, or anything like that?

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Questions for Allie? No? Then go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Sounds good. Thanks. I just wanted to make sure, and I feel like I go through it really quick, and I want to make sure that it makes sense. All right, and so, like I mentioned, the first step is to reorganize that other South Atlantic shallow-water grouper complex,

take yellowmouth out, and establish this new complex. This is a pretty simple action. There's only two alternatives. One is to do nothing, and then the council's current preferred is just like I mentioned, taking scamp and yellowmouth, creating the new complex, and removing yellowmouth, and so you're left with these species that have that complex ACL. This action doesn't involve numbers or catch levels, and it's just kind of the formality of saying we're going to establish this complex, and so a pretty simple action here.

Then Action 2 is setting up stock parameters, essentially, and so, because this is a brand-new complex, we need to set parameters on the stock, to know what's the maximum sustainable yield and when we're overfishing and what our optimum yield is, and so SEDAR 68 gave recommendations, but, ultimately, it's the council's determination to set these stock determination criteria, and so we have this kind of split out into subactions, and so the first one being MSY, and, as a reminder, MSY is the largest long-term average catch that can be taken from the stock under current conditions.

The council chose to follow the recommendation, and I apologize, and I'm going to be going back and forth to this table, but the council chose to select the preferred that mirrored the recommendation from SEDAR 68. For Subaction 2b, that sets the MFMT, and this is the level of fishing mortality above which overfishing is occurring, and, again, this is based off of the MSY, and so, again, the council is just following the recommendation from SEDAR 68, pretty much all the way through.

MSST, that is the spawning stock biomass at which the stock is declared overfished, and so, again, these are just setting the parameters, and so that -- There is an amendment, and I believe it was Regulatory Amendment 21, that kind of updated how MSST is defined, and, right now, scamp has what we think of as the, I guess, old way of defining MSST, and so the council's preferred kind of updates that method, based on Regulatory Amendment 21, and then, finally, in 2d, we're looking at the optimum yield. The council has not selected a preferred yet for this subaction.

That was kind of a lot, but all of these actions just kind of, again, are setting the goalposts for this new complex, and that brings us to Action 3, and so, since SEDAR 68 determined that the stock is overfished, but is not experiencing overfishing, the council is required to establish a rebuilding timeframe. The assessment indicated that rebuilding is possible within ten years, and so the council was bound by a T<sub>max</sub> of ten years, and the lower bound for the rebuilding timeframe was five years, and the council's preferred is currently at ten years, and so the longer rebuilding timeframe. Then Figure 1 is from SEDAR 68, and you can kind of see here when this line crosses the probability that the spawning stock biomass is above those percentage levels.

That brings us to Action 4, which is setting the ABC, ACL, or sorry, and I'm so used to saying "and OY", but we did that in Action 2, and so this is just the ABC and the ACL, and so these numbers are inclusive of recreational estimates from the MRIP survey, and the council's preferred is currently to set the ACL equal to the ABC, and, for some context, the scamp ACL is also -- Just scamp is currently set at ACL equal to ABC. All right. Any questions? I feel like I'm going through this pretty quick. If you have any questions, just feel free to stop me at any point.

All right, and this one we'll spend a little bit more time on, and so this is -- Action 5 will go over sector allocations and sector annual catch limits. Alternative 1 here is no allocations, because, again, we're establishing this complex, and so we don't have any allocations in place, and we have

kind of a benchmark for what the current scamp allocations are, and those are 65.34 commercial and 34.66 percent recreational.

The council considered -- I believe it was four additional alternatives originally, in addition to Alternative 1, and two of those looked at a distribution of landings from -- A five-year distribution and a three-year distribution of landings, and, in March, they decided that those weren't alternatives that they were willing to consider, and so those were removed. The two remaining alternatives are what we've been calling the split reduction method, and so you saw this, and it kind of got started with Amendment 53, gag and black grouper.

What this method does is, when you have a reduction in ACL, specifically one that's a pretty significant reduction, you reduce each sector's ACL proportional to their landings for a set time period, and so, in this case, the preferred alternative is 2018 to 2022, and then Alternative 3 is 2013 to 2022, and then, each year, as the ACL increases, you take that poundage increase and split it evenly between the sectors, and so, essentially, the method is trying to capture -- We originally called it share-the-pain-share-the-gain, and I think that kind of encapsulates what the method is trying to do, and it's reducing each sector proportional to how it's already operating.

There is a link, in this discussion document, that lays out an example of how this method works. The second page uses numbers in a fake fishery, and it's pretty even numbers, and it outlines -- You can watch the numbers as they move through the years, but that's why you're seeing a different percentage, and a different poundage, for each year, and so the poundage, and the percentage, will change, based on how much of an increase you get from year-one to year-two, year-two to year-three, and so on. Then, when you're looking at 2029, that poundage, and percentage, will be locked in until it's modified through a different amendment.

If you're wanting to think of a long-term allocation scenario, you could -- For the council's preferred, you would be looking at a 62.59 percent commercial and 37.41 percent recreational, and so pretty similar to the current scamp allocation. The poundage is going to be different, because the ACL is reduced, but this is what the long-term allocations would look like after this method moves through time, and so I want to stop here, and see if there's any discussion on allocations, and then we can continue moving forward.

MR. LORENZ: All right. You know, this is something we often talk about, but I know, Allie, for all of us, this might be a little difficult. I know, at the council, this discussion would be led by Jessica, who is a mid-career fisheries management professional, and I don't know if I'll be able to top that or not, and so what do you all think? Is this fair, or looks like it will work? How do we know? Comments? Chris, go ahead.

MR. MILITELLO: Why do you want to separate them? Just so you can measure them closer, scamp and yellowmouth?

MS. IBERLE: This amendment is actually combining them, and so the thought was they were having a hard time with identification, and I think -- I don't want to speak to the data that went into the assessment, because I'm not an assessment scientist, but they didn't have a lot of confidence that -- I guess the yellowmouth -- I am looking more towards Chip, but that -- The identification issues were making it really hard to know how many yellowmouth landings that we were actually having, and I think there's even a question on whether or not the species are

genetically separate, and Chip is shaking his head no. I think Chip will probably be better to talk about this.

DR. COLLIER: As you guys know, differentiating between scamp and yellowmouth is very challenging, and so, even in a lot of the commercial markets, they would sell them as a unit labeled under scamp, and so they didn't always differentiate between a scamp and a yellowmouth. Some individuals did, but, for the most part, it was labeled as the more dominant species, which is typically scamp, for a lot of the fisheries.

Then there is also questions on, within the recreational data, whether or not it was being identified properly, whether it was in the headboat survey or whether it was the port samplers identifying them, or then it goes into releases, and you have to rely on people indicating what species they're releasing, and so it was extremely challenging for these two species, and, I mean, there's even some debate, when you get pictures back at the dock, what species it was, whether it's a yellowmouth or a scamp, and so it's just they're really challenging, probably as difficult as black and gag grouper, to differentiate which species it is, and that's why they've ended up putting those two together.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. All right, and, Allie, what I'm seeing up there with no allocations, that's like start with a white slate, and the combined goes in, and you're just going to start gathering information, which, on the catches, will be MRIP for recreational and, of course, the landings for commercial, correct?

MS. IBERLE: The reason that you're seeing kind of clean slate for Alternative 1, and you'll see that throughout the rest of the amendment, is because, in Action 1, we said, okay, we're going to create a scamp/yellowmouth complex, and, essentially, after saying that, you have nothing, and so you have to implement catch levels, and the stock status criteria, and allocations, instead of normally, when you would be looking at this -- So, if we were only adjusting allocations for scamp, Alternative 1 would just say, okay, keep the current scamp allocations at 65.34 and 34.66, but, since we are creating this new complex, we're factoring in yellowmouth.

The other thing that I will note too is that, when you're looking at landings, and so, obviously, this is taking -- That percentage allocation is based off of landings, either from 2018 to 2022 or 2013 to 2022, and those landings are looking at scamp landings and yellowmouth landings, and so, when our analyst is calculating that, both landings streams are factored in, because, again, we're looking at scamp and yellowmouth and considering it as a single species, for the purpose of this new complex.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so, AP, to me, it sounds like the homework was done to come up to the 65.34 and 34.66 split, and so any comments, or are we okay with this? Do you all agree that it looks pretty fair, or somebody says, well, my sector should have a little more? Go ahead, John.

MR. POLSTON: I am not sure if the numbers are right, but I would say probably -- I remember when we used to unload quite a bit of scamp, and it was quite a while back, back when we had a lot more bottom fishermen than we have now, and most of the longliners, but I do know, for a fact, because I was the guy that input all the data into the trip ticket system, that I have never listed a yellowmouth grouper, and it all went under scamp, forever and ever, and that's forty years in the business, and so, I mean, obviously, bad on me, but I'm just giving a true example of forty years,

and I really honestly believe that, over the years, over the forty years, and it was back in the 1980s, that there was bad misidentification, and it wasn't actually misidentification that we didn't know what was what, but, on the trip ticket, you had two things.

You had black grouper, and the other choice was mixed grouper, and, if we had snowies, we had warsaw, and we had kitty mitchell, and we had all that stuff, and, when you wrote it in, it was under mixed grouper, and it wasn't ever broken out. Then, when the science started getting done on it, and I know this for a fact, they came back and they said, well, you guys must have caught all the warsaw, and the this and that, because there's none listed, and, well, it was listed, but it was all under mixed grouper, and it's a shame that we weren't educated to break each individual species out, and we knew what the difference were of them, but we just put it under mixed grouper if it wasn't truly a gag grouper, but, back then, you just listed it as a black. I'm glad at least this part is being, you know, joined up and separated out, and I think it's a good idea.

MR. LORENZ: Well, thank you, John. That's good input, and history, and I'm sure that follows nice for Allie. I don't see anybody raising their hand, Allie. Go ahead and move on.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us to the start of the management actions in this amendment, and so the first is Action 6, and this would reduce the recreational fishing season for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. Currently, again, like I mentioned at the top, all of the South Atlantic shallow-water grouper are subject to that annual spawning season closure, and the only kind of caveat to that is red grouper, and we've got some stuff that's a little bit different off the Carolinas, but, for the purpose of this, we're going to think of that May 1 opening, and then it's open until December 31.

The preferred alternative currently is retaining that annual spawning season closure, and so this action is not intending to modify that closure at all. The season would open on May 1, and then end on August 31, and then Alternative 3 would open May 1 and close on September 31.

In looking at landings trends from 2018 to 2022, the way that the fishery, the recreational fishery, has kind of been operating, based on the landings from that year range, is that, when the season opens in May, landings shoot up, and so everyone is fishing right when that season opens, and so there's a peak right when the season opens, and then there looks to be another peak in July and August, and then, mid-August to early September, landings start to just wane off naturally, and so, when we looked at the -- Figure 2 is kind of illustrating that, and so opening in May and June, and we have a peak here, and then again in July and August, and then, by September and October, landings have kind of tapered off for the year.

When we were looking at projections for this season length, we have some Wave 4 closures, and so Wave 4 is this July/August wave, and, when we were kind of looking at the projections from thirty-thousand feet, they were hitting -- The closure was hitting this kind of sweet spot, right before landings were naturally tapering off, and so that reduced ACL was causing that closure, kind of right before landings would naturally taper off in Wave 4, and so those projections are going to be in Table 2.

This shaded block right here is the council's current preferred, and so, in 2025, 2026, and 2027, we're expecting a Wave 4 closure, and, again, that's right when landings are naturally tapering off, and then, by 2028 and 2029, there is expected to not be a closure, with that season length, and so

the council talked a lot about having the season -- Making sure that the season was open for the majority of the time that those landings are really peaking, and so right when the season opens and then the start of the summer, when the landings ramp back up again. I will kind of pause here. I know that the council has a preferred, but I want to see if the AP wants to provide any input.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James, go ahead.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Just for the sake of discussion, would it be possible to trade October, November, and December for the month of January? Could we just like throw an open month in there, because I've heard a lot of discussion about January being a really -- You know, kind of a curious month for grouper, and, you know, it might get people to have their grouper fix, you know, on a short-term basis, you know, knowing there's only a short season, you know, ahead, from May to July, or to August.

MR. LORENZ: That sounds good. I like that. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, if we're looking at a potential closure in September, and so, you know, the way I'm looking at it is the major true recreational guys, and not charter headboat, you know, that's when the peak of their season is, is through there, and so this goes back to what we've been talking about for the last couple of days. You know, if a headboat gets shut down, and we've got no grays, and now we've got no scamps, and now we've got no nothing going into September, the reality is -- Who is going to pay me what to go do any fishing in the fall whatsoever, and, you know, it comes back to that question of what can be done for the headboats to be able to still take fishing, because I guarantee, if they can catch zero grouper at all in the fall, then we've just lost our fall, and you're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars that are needed to go for 2025, next year.

MR. LORENZ: Allie, I saw, up above there, there is not a season for the commercial, and I presume the logic is they are well monitored, and so, if they're running too hot in the year, you can slow them down, or stop them, whereas we're a little -- The recreational are a little harder to document, and then we also historically have come in with a desire to know when we can fish, rather than have it be more variable, and so that's how this got backed in?

MS. IBERLE: Correct, and, actually, when this amendment came to the council in March, the commercial sector was included in this action, and, at that meeting, the commercial sector was removed from this action.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Tony Constant and then Cameron.

MR. CONSTANT: Let me see if I'm following this, too. When we have two separate species, and we can keep six fish, and now we're going to combine them, so we can keep two out of both species, and now we're going to reduce the open season, down to X amount of months, and is either sector hitting their quotas, currently, or, the current quotas that we're looking at, are they close?

MS. IBERLE: I have to look back for -- It's kind of difficult, because you have to look in two different places to get to that, because, right now, the yellowmouth landings are tracked under that other shallow-water grouper, and scamp is tracked separately, and, obviously, scamp is going to

be the majority of those landings. I believe it's recently been hovering around 40 percent, but I would need to check and make sure. Sorry, and 40 percent of the ACL, but let me check on that. I think I may have it in the appendix of this document. If not, I have it in the full document, and I can get back to you on that.

MR. CONSTANT: This, to me, seems a bit of a shell game. It doesn't seem like we're -- It seems like it's all take, and nothing given back, and, I mean, we're combining two species, and so we're getting rid of half of the catch right there, and now we're going to shorten the season, and we're not meeting the ACLs already, and so I don't see the need for this kind of drastic reduction.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Cameron, you were next in the queue.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So this is a whole new sector they're cutting out, and, pretty much, this is starting from absolute scratch, and is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: It's a new complex, yes.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So if the complex is starting from scratch, then this would be an absolutely ideal time to look at factoring in and doing an allocation for charter headboats, because there's nothing on the books for it so far, and so this can be the first stepping stone into -- I don't know how it's done, or what is done, but it can be the first stepping stone into being able to look at, hey, I mean, because we can manage our stuff.

We do reports every day on what we catch, just like the commercial guys, and they know when their season is winding down, you know, and we can pump the brakes on it, and slow it down to extend it, because, for us, it's all about the possibility of somebody going out there and catching, and, if everything is shut down, it's going to be a virtual bloodbath, unless, of course, if you can get the federal government to allow us to do like marijuana cruises past three miles, and shit. I will be golden. I will stop fishing right now, today.

MS. IBERLE: I'm not going to lie, and I didn't think that marijuana cruises was going to come up during scamp.

MR. LORENZ: I might run a transport bus for you. Please, go ahead.

MS. IBERLE: You mentioned headboat allocations, and I want to clarify, and so are you talking about the vessel limit discussion that we had a little bit earlier, or are we talking about separating out an actual like percentage allocation for headboats, and I just want to make sure.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Sure, and so, I mean, if we're starting from scratch, and we have a totally blank page, it seems like, to me, this would be the time to bring it up and look at it and see if it can be done.

MR. LORENZ: The thought I would have, Cameron, is wouldn't we want that under Alternative 1, to get you that data? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: This amendment is responding to a stock assessment, right, and it needs to put in place a rebuilding for scamp, and so the council is under a statutory deadline, and so, if they

were to start adding something like what you're suggesting, Cameron, I think it would mess that timeline up, and we would miss the deadline, but I think they intend to continue the conversation, but just not -- There would have to be a separate vehicle to sort out all those things for headboats in particular.

MR. LORENZ: Allie, maybe that could be just noted there, for the record, that it would have been nice, if it would have been practical, and it was mentioned that this would have been a great opportunity to start looking there for that allocation for headboats. Thank you. Gettys and then Chris.

MR. BRANNON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To Tony's point, it seems like this is all take, and no give, and forgive my greenness to this particular subject, and looking through these wave closures, but do you have any examples of when these sort of management practices worked, and, at the end of the day, actually given more days back to the recreational angler, because, from the outside looking in, it seems like, yes, you have here the projections that in, 2028, it would be a full season, if there are these closures, and what's to say that the stock assessment is going to come back and not cut it back even more, and so I just want a little bit of historical data here to understand, as a recreational angler -- Are there any promises that can be made, through any sort of decisions here, or, obviously, at the council level, that this doesn't continue to restrict, and we don't get ourselves in the position that we've been in with other species quite a few times? Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Gettys. I think I had Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure, and so, basically, you know, the reason why we haven't been catching the scamp is because they just haven't been there like they were, and so the ACL for that species is really high, and there hasn't been a trip limit, and they're not getting caught, because we can't catch them, and it's because they're not there. I think that the reason why you have to start a new complex is because people who are supposed to know the difference between a yellowmouth, which is in the other category, and a scamp, which has its own ACL, can't tell the difference, and so, hence, you have to group them together and start a new one, and so that's why.

Then to have a statutory deadline, and all this other stuff the council is up against and stuff to meet, you have to show drastic reductions, right, that would -- So, if the fish aren't there, and we can't catch them anyway, you can come in with some new lower ACLs that shows to the federal government that the council is doing all these different things to, you know, reduce the ACL, and the catch and everything, and I'm not 100 percent, you know, super sharp on all these, and I know I should be, but it's just so much.

So, if we demonstrate that, and we're not -- It's kind of like the gag grouper, and how Tim, on the council, was explaining that we're not really losing a ton, because we're not catching them anyway, and we can't catch them anyway, and we know they're not there, and so we would like to rebuild them, and this is a vehicle for us to do it.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. I think, Tony, you were in the queue.

MR. CONSTANT: Thank you, Bob. That's a good way of putting it, Chris, and what I am -- To do that, it looks like we're literally cutting not only the quotas, the ACLs, but also the season, in

half, and so you're taking two species, and combining them into one, which cuts your ACLs in half, which we're not meeting anyway, and it's understandable why, but then the season is -- The preferred alternative is literally cutting the season in half, and that's pretty drastic, especially on the season side, on the headboat side of this, but, as far as that goes, the charter guys have to make a living too.

I mean, when I was chartering, these guys -- From the fall of the year, grouper and snapper were my bread and butter, and especially going in through September through December. There was a lot of Christmas trips, and a lot of people come to the low country in the fall, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and take charters for grouper and snapper, and we're looking at closing it from September to December, and that's pretty rough.

MR. LORENZ: So you might expect to see more cutback than originally anticipated. Matt, did you want to comment?

MR. MATTHEWS: Tony hit on my point already.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Kind of, as a merger between Chris's point and Tony's point, you know, maybe we could look at being more restrictive in the ACL itself, and, you know, since we're not catching the fish, and, really, this kind of goes with what Cameron's point is as well. Since we're not catching the fish, making an extremely low ACL, and then it would trigger an in-season closure, if it was being met, or close to being met, and, if it's not, because the fish aren't there, the opportunity still exists to catch the fish in those months of September, October, November, and the new closure, and, you know, maybe we can meet in the middle there, and just have a lower ACL, since it's not the, quote, unquote, peak time of those trips anyway.

One more thing, and I know I saw a couple of other hands, and, Cameron, like for the headboat portion, for this specific snapper grouper complex, is the scamp and yellowmouth -- Is that something, you know, that is that important for your boats? I mean, I'm just -- I don't know. Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Go ahead, Cameron, since you were addressed in the discussion.

MR. SEBASTIAN: Just to respond, and so yes. The grouper is extremely -- Scamp grouper, gray grouper, they're extremely, extremely important. I mean, once you take -- That is all my general customers -- That is grouper, and, without those two, there's nothing else.

MR. LORENZ: I had Chris Conklin and then John.

MR. CONKLIN: I didn't listen to the March meeting, and shame on me, right, but what was the rationale for the council choosing Alternative 2 in Action 6, to even put an end date on the season? I mean, I heard you say the recreational wants to know when their season is, but why wouldn't you just pick Alternative 1 under Action 6, and that would give -- I mean, no one would, obviously, know when it's going to close, but at least, if the waves come in, and the landings aren't there, then the recreational people could continue to catch them.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Did you want to reply, Allie?

MS. IBERLE: So I think, from what I am understanding, the rationale was, if you were constricting the season, if the season didn't have an end date, and there was a quota closure, the wave data can come in delayed, and then you could be exceeding that recreational ACL, but, if I didn't get that right -- I'm getting the thumbs-up from Jessica, and so, if you're restricting that season, and I guess ahead of a quota closure isn't the perfect way to put that, but you wouldn't be possibly exceeding the recreational ACL.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so that makes sense, and what are the accountability measure for the species? Is there a payback for the following year, where there potentially wouldn't be a season at all?

MS. IBERLE: This is going back kind of to that clean slate, and so, essentially, there is no accountability measure, and so the action -- There's a lot of actions in this one, and I forget the number, but we're going to get there, and so we have two actions, one for commercial AMs and one for rec AMs, and my apologies that I don't remember, off the top of my head, which one was selected for recreational. Let me make sure this is the right one.

Right now, the preferred is no in-season closure, and then there is a post-season AM where the season is reduced in the following year, and not the ACL, and so the season is reduced, only if the recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and so you would no longer be tied to the total ACL or stock status, and so, currently, with scamp, you have to exceed the recreational ACL, and you have to exceed the total ACL, and the stock has to be overfished to trigger that post-season AM, and so you would be removing those other two triggers for the post-season AM, and so this is the current preferred for the rec AMs, and this is Action 10.

MR. CONKLIN: So, with our discussions, it's important to know that maybe that's why we need to have a set season, to make sure that you have one for the next year, and is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so this AM wouldn't have an in-season, and so, if you had an in-season closure, if the recreational landings reached that recreational ACL, then the season would close, and so, because you already have a season closure, it's essentially capping that season, and then you're not relying on the AM to have that in-season closure, and you're only relying on the post-season AM to shorten the following year's fishing season, if that recreational ACL is exceeded.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you. John, you had your hand up, and did you want to comment, or have a statement?

MR. POLSTON: I've got a question, actually. During the shallow-water grouper closure, and I know why we had one, but, the best I can remember, it was basically done because of the gag, the gag grouper, but what about all the other species, and like now we're talking about scamp grouper, but what about the red grouper, and all the other species that are thrown in there, and has there been any studies done? Were any of those quotas being met during that timeframe, or were any of them in trouble?

Where I'm going with this is, I mean, is there any room, if they were to look into the other shallow-water grouper, that it's a possibility that, yes, we still have to have a four-month closure on gag grouper, but do we have to have a four-month closure on all the other shallow-water grouper, or could they all be looked at individually, like you're talking about the scamp and yellowmouth being looked at individually now, and what about the rest of them? That was a question.

MS. IBERLE: I believe, and this might be more of a Chip or Myra question, but that there's several of those species that spawn in aggregations, and that closure was helping to ensure that fishing wasn't occurring on those aggregations, but I'm not sure if there's been discussions on -- I guess, maybe to clarify, so you would be allowing access to some of the other grouper species during that spawning season closure, and I don't think there's been discussion of that, and I know, within the context of Amendment 55, the council has not expressed wanting to modify that closure at this point for this amendment. If it is something that's modified, it would, similar to that allocation discussion -- It would need to get done outside of this amendment, just because of the deadline, but that's something that, you know, we could bring up to the council, if it's a recommendation, you know, from you guys.

MS. BROUWER: I will just add a little bit more background, and so, over the years, the Snapper Grouper AP has made a recommendation that the council go back and evaluate how that spawning season closure has worked over the years. It is on the council's radar. It's one of those things that, you know, there's other priorities and things that they need to address, but it has come up. I know Rusty Hudson has made the motion to go back and evaluate that spawning season closure.

It came up also when the council was developing amendments that resulted from that snapper grouper visioning, and remember when they did that back in 2015. When the council was looking at changing management for red grouper, it was another time when that discussion was had, and, for red grouper, the council actually ended the closure off the Carolinas, in response to fishermen saying, you know, we're still catching red grouper in May when they're still spawning, and so the council changed it based on that, but there hasn't been an evaluation of that, and I suspect it also has to do with lack of information.

You know, here, we're talking scamp, that has a stock assessment, and gag has a stock assessment, and red grouper has a stock assessment, but some of the other ones in that complex don't have -- There's not enough information to do the more in-depth evaluation of things like that.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Myra. Andy Piland, you had your hand up, and are you settled, answered, or did you want to have the floor?

MR. PILAND: I've got a question. I'm really confused about the potential closure, and I thought I understood you to say that we're only catching 30 or 40 percent, and did I miss something?

MS. IBERLE: We're going to check the fishery overview, just to make sure that -- The number that I'm remembering is looking at ACL monitoring, and how much of that ACL is being used, the percentage of the ACL that's being used, but Myra is going to check on that for me, because I want to make sure that I'm not misspeaking.

MR. PILAND: I'm all for a spawning closure, but, if we're leaving -- If we're just throwing 60 percent out there, I don't see where -- You know, these headboats are going to get cut off outside of a spawning closure. That's just my confusion.

MR. LORENZ: We'll circle back to Myra, since she's looking some things up. Chris, did you have your hand up and want to say something?

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and so I was looking ahead in the document, and Action 7 is looking at changing the bag limit for the species. Would the analysis in Action 6 change, as far as the days in the season and all, if the bag limits were changed?

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: The way that the projections that you're looking at in this table -- They are siloed, and so the only thing that kind of carries through is the total ACL and the preferred allocation, and so think of it as your total ACL, and your sector ACL, are set for the rest of the time, but we're not looking at -- At this point in the game, we're not looking at a season projection on top of those bag and vessel limit projections, and so, when you're looking at the projections for bag and vessel, it's just the current -- That's for the current season, only the bag and vessel applied.

We were kind of limited. The planning team was kind of limited on time, and, when we were going into the March meeting, we didn't have a preferred for allocations, and, at that time, I think were up to like five alternatives, and so it was a lot of carry through, and a lot of projections. Now that we've got some more preferreds selected, the planning team will be whittling down that analysis and hopefully creating a decision tool that will be able to look at all of those things together in a little more holistic way.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Chris, go ahead and continue on.

MR. CONKLIN: So, I mean, I know it's more for you guys, but I would like to ask the council to ask for analysis on what a season would look like if you changed the bag limit and slowed the rate of harvest on the recreational sector. Then see if it would lengthen out the season, and you wouldn't have to pick Alternative 2, and close the season, and you could stick with Alternative 1, no action, and, ultimately, it would probably be a lot less work, all combined, if it looks like it would last on through, and nobody would worry about it, and we wouldn't have to sit here and speculate and argue, and then I would also encourage us, and the council, to come up with -- Anyway, that's it.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. Gettys, you've been waiting patiently.

MR. BRANNON: To my question a little bit ago, just trying to understand the historical nature of these sort of restrictions, that are supposed to lead to better days, have we seen the better days? I'm just -- The more I learn about this, the more I feel like there are more restrictions, with no give, and where do we start seeing that, and sorry to rephrase my question from earlier, but I just don't feel like there was an answer to it. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: I think that's a really valid question. At this point, I don't know that we've went back and kind of analyzed how these bag and vessel limits have operated in the past. I will note

that the MSE, that we just talked about, is a really great place to see how these -- How the modeling is expected to -- You know, how these things move forward. I know scamp and yellowmouth aren't part of that MSE, and those species aren't included specifically, but, in looking at the MSE, maybe what you're seeing for gag could be a good, you know, basis for scamp, and it's a similar fishery, and so I will say the MSE is a good place to kind of start thinking about how these management measures could benefit, and whether they are benefiting the fishery, and I know the reason that they were brought to the table within this amendment is just thinking of ways to constrict harvest to those lower catch levels, and this is the way that it's previously been done.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, are you there to answer the circle-back from the other question?

MS. BROUWER: Not to that point, and I was going to go back to what Andy has asked about the ACL, and what percentage has been harvested, and so, for commercial, it's been about 40 percent, but this is 40 percent of the old ACL, the one that's for scamp, right, which was around 335,000 pounds. That is diminishing quite a lot, and so that's why you're going to be coming up and bumping into a potential closure. For the recreational, for the 2021-2022 fishing year, it looked like it was about 6 percent of the ACL was harvested, but, again, this -- Again, for the recreational, we get into the Coastal Household Telephone Survey units, versus the new Fishing Effort Survey units, and then so you can't really make that straight comparison, but just to give you a perspective.

MR. LORENZ: Chris, go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: Sorry to -- I just keep having all these great ideas, you know, or thoughts, and so, if the council were to pick a preferred in Action 6, if they stick with -- If they were to pick a preferred, or if they ultimately looked at the -- If there was some sort of another analysis that, you know, revealed that a season would last longer than August 31, or September 30, to where the fishery could go on into or up against the spawning closure of December 31, it's my experience that, if you -- If the fishery were allowed to continue, and you closed it, but there was still fish to catch, and, either way, you're catching -- You're creating discards, and we know what that does to both sectors, and I'm just not a fan of it, and so I'm going to have a motion, here in a little while, to hopefully -- So they can take a look at it, and request the analysis, because discards hurt both sectors, and it's not a sector thing, and it's about the health of the fish.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. When appropriate, Chris, raise your hand, and we'll do that. I am looking to the right. Okay, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Along the lines of what Chris was saying, and I like the new way of looking at it, and, if neither sector is getting anywhere close to the old ACLs, and what Myra just was speaking of, and the numbers were huge, and this is a fraction, on the commercial sector, of what they were catching, according to the old numbers.

Along the lines of where Chris is headed, if we've already cut -- We already cut it in half, by creating one species out of two, and, granted, they weren't accountable correctly, but, if they're cut in half, at that point, you have a reasonable ACL, and it seems like that season could stay open, and that's the biggest thing that I'm looking at, is closing half the season is hurting more people than it seems like it's affecting the fishery.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Tony. With Tony endorsing Chris, I'm just wondering, Chris, if you want to make your motion now, or you want to wait a bit, and you're trying to capture this bit about having -- Balancing this fact of having a season, while we still have fish to catch, and kind of finding a sweet spot, so to speak, is the way that I see it. Do you want to make your motion now, or should I move Allie on?

MR. CONKLIN: I'm still trying to write it. I don't want us to get into like earlier, where we spent a half-hour talking about it, and I'm trying to finish my thoughts.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. All right, Allie. We're returning to you.

MS. IBERLE: Sounds good. That brings us to Action 7, and this is going to look very familiar from what you guys talked about with gag and black grouper earlier this morning, because these were alternatives were modeled off of Amendment 53. The only difference here is, with gag and black grouper, the bag limit for gag and black grouper, even before Amendment 53, was already one gag or black grouper per person per day, and so you already had the most restrictive bag limit.

For both scamp and yellowmouth, currently, they have a three-fish bag limit, and so Action 7 is split into two components. 7a looks at modifying the bag limit, and then 7b is that same suite of alternatives proposing a vessel limit, and so, in 7a, Alternative 1, no action, would keep the bag limit at three fish. Alternative 2 would drop it to two fish, and then Alternative 3 would drop it to one fish. The reason that this is crucial to kind of nail down, or think about, as we move on to the vessel limit, is that the vessel limit, and we talked about this -- You know, you guys talked about this when we were thinking about gag and black grouper, and that is, regardless of the vessel limit, and depending on how many people you have on the vessel, you would still be constricted to the daily bag limit.

7b are those alternatives for the vessel limit, and so, right now, 7b is separated into private and for-hire, which is, again, considered charter and headboat, and either two or four fish per day, per vessel per day, for the private component, and then -- Sorry. That's 2a and 2b, and then 3a and 3b are either two or four fish per trip for the for-hire vessels, and, again this is -- We talked a lot about an aggregate vessel limit, and this will be just like gag and black grouper, and so it's two fish of either species, and you don't have to identify, and its two of scamp/yellowmouth, and so that's how that vessel limit and bag limit will operate, and so I know you guys had a decent amount of discussion on this.

This is a new complex, but the council was considering these alternatives, kind of for consistency between scamp and gag and black grouper, and so that's why these were on the table, and they were discussed a lot in March, but the council has not picked a preferred for either Subaction 7a or Subaction 7b, and so I'll turn it over for discussion.

MR. LORENZ: So where we are is, I guess, our opinions of 7a and 7b -- Since there is no preferred alternative picked by the council, we're up ahead of that. Let's kick it off with a discussion. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: Just to clarify, Action 1 is a three-fish-per-person-per-day aggregate, and Alternative 2 is moving to a two fish per vessel, and is that correct, and the same with Alternative 3, and one fish per vessel?

MS. IBERLE: Sorry, and this is -- There's a lot of alternatives in this table, and so above that like thick teal, light-blue line, all of those are bag limits, and so, when you're looking at the chunk of the table that's for 7a, that's saying, okay, step-one is what bag limit do you want, and do you want to keep it at three, reduce it to two, or reduce it to one, and then, from there, you say, okay, that's our bag limit, and now do you want to go a step further and establish a vessel limit, and so there currently isn't a vessel limit in place.

If the council chose to, they would say, okay, we would like this vessel limit for the private component, this vessel limit for for-hire, and then those vessel limits would be limited to whatever -- If the situation was more limiting for the bag limit, then you would still be restricted to the bag limit, and does that clear it up a little bit more? Sorry, and there's just a lot going on with these subactions.

MR. LORENZ: So, on a for-hire boat, Alternative 1, with a full complement of six folks, would be eighteen fish come in, versus twelve, versus six, as they go down the line, without any boat limit?

MS. IBERLE: Yes.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so without a vessel limit, and then, when we get to Subaction b, that puts a little more control on it, because we start to implement a vessel limit, and so we bring it down via the boat. Okay. Any comments on that, particularly from the for-hire folks? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Kind of going along with where Chris Conklin was headed, you know, if we did take a more aggressive approach, like Alternative 3 in Subaction 7a, and, you know, Alternatives 2a and 3a in Subaction b, and how do we know what that's going to look like? Maybe this should have been ahead of the previous discussion that we had about possible season closures outside of the spawning season, because, if we nailed this down first, I really feel like we need some imagery of what it's going to look like, based on what we choose.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, James. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I would agree. You know, if you're looking at Alternative 3, and in your Alternative, I think, 2a and 2b, so that -- Anything that has the potential to extend the season, or extend when people can pay to go fish, is going to be more valuable than having the season shut down. You know, to like inject it now, and everything that we're talking about needs to be put on the board and looked at, because, when you look at everything that we're talking about right now, in totality, it's a pretty bleak picture, going forward, for headboat charters. I mean, that really has to be looked at, and I think the council should be mandated to come up with a way to make sure that, you know, that part of the industry doesn't just, you know, disappear in the next five or six years. The fish might be here, but you're going to knock down all the guys who are low to middle income who can go fish for them.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron. Good point. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I would be -- I am leaning towards Alternative 3, which would be the one per person, and I think that that would extend your season as well as not be throwing -- I guess you would be

throwing more back too, if you're catching, but it would prolong your season, but, after it closes, you would not still be fishing, having those discarded, and, I guess, either way, they're both discarded, but I don't know. That's my initial thought.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy, and I'm kind of thinking -- I kind of had the thought that we evolve the -- When we start the discussion of then a vessel limit, does 7a kind of -- Could that sort of become obsolete, because of 7b being closer to other discussions that we had, but that's just my thing, and you could really capture a lot of conservation in 7b. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The way I'm thinking is, if Alternative 2 or 3, in 7a, gets you where you need to, then you can shitcan 7b. Like why would you need to even implement a vessel limit if Alternative 2 or 3 -- Then you can go back and say, well, we either need to have a set season or we can let this thing fish on through.

MR. LORENZ: Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I was getting ready to say the exact same thing. I'm looking at it as Alternative 2 needs to be the answer, and even Alternative 2 has at least a 50 percent cut over what's currently -- No, and it's more than that, because it's a 50 percent cut just combining the fish. The recreational was at 6 percent of the ACL, and the commercial was at 40 percent of the ACL, that were tremendously higher than what we're looking at, and I understand they're not -- That we're not seeing the fish, but the ACLs were set for a reason, and now we're talking about -- I didn't do a rough number, but, Myra, was the old ACL -- Did you say 390,000 pounds for commercial?

MS. IBERLE: (Ms. Iberle's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. CONSTANT: But now we're looking at 50,000 pounds, roughly, and that's a huge reduction, and so, if we're reducing the ACLs to those numbers, and we're reducing the catch limit to two, why do we need to kill the season as well?

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Interesting points by Chris and Tony, and then, again, in the interest of things that have been said of keeping it simple, and we also know that we're going to try to do something to address a headboat issue, with many people, are we looking at potentially a motion, or I will call it a motion for a suggestion, where our ideal is keeping it simple, to roll with, as reductions are needed, to make it a simple -- One of a simple per-angler alternatives, which is in the 7a bucket, and is that something to think about and maybe look at going forward, and back off a little on this boat limit? I don't know. Thank you, Chris. Yes.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm going to try to make a motion. Are you ready? **My motion is going to read to ask the council to unselect a preferred in Action 6 and ask the council to ask the staff to analyze what a season length would be with the bag limits in Action 7, and then to make an educated decision based upon the information that comes out of what the council asked the staff to --** Anyway, I'm struggling here. Maybe I should look at what you're doing. **Ask the council to unselect the preferred in Action 6.** Maybe we should make that one motion and then do another one, and so I'll stop there, and then we'll do another one.

MR. LORENZ: I guess, Allie, maybe we'll see that again, and you're the best one to show us and explain.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I have the motion as -- We could have recommend the council unselect.

MR. LORENZ: That's recommend at this point, for most, I think.

MS. IBERLE: So recommend the council unselect the Preferred Alternative 2 for Action 6, and does that read correctly?

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Tony, and jump in.

MR. CONSTANT: Chris, would that be basically picking Alternative 1, meaning --

MR. CONKLIN: Well, they're not picking anything, and I'm not sure if this has gone to the public yet or not, but, if they unselect a preferred, and then what I was going to move forward and ask was to analyze what a season length would actually look like based on the different Subalternatives 2 and 3 in Action 7, which would be a two-fish-per-person bag limit and a one-fish-per-person bag limit, and I'm not on the webinar, and so -- Perhaps it would make the season go a lot farther than having to stop at August 31, or September 30, and create a bunch of unnecessary discards.

At that point, then, if it looks like it's going to do the deed, then why the hell would you need to put a vessel limit in? Do you see what I'm saying? It's just way more cumbersome than it really needs to be, and, I mean, I just don't want to see a bunch of discards start affecting the rebuilding of this stock, because it's super important to our state for sure, and the last thing we want is more discards, because, unfortunately, having a scamp season that ends on August 31, or September 30, isn't going to put a band-aid on the recreational problem of other people going, you know, uncontrollably fishing and still catching and throwing back scamp, and so it's going to end up just like red snapper.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Tony. Thank you, Chris.

MR. CONSTANT: I would like it -- I would have a similar motion that would read that we chose Alternative 2 and then have the season not be closed, but it would close when we reach that ACL, the new ACLs that are being chosen, and those could go off of the preferred method, if I'm not mistaken, the new ACLs, which were basically 60/40, or 65/35, commercial to recreational.

MR. LORENZ: I will let James jump in here. He's been thinking about this, too.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Tony, and I -- Like that was my initial suggestion as well, and I think that the problem was that, you know, there's not time in the season to really identify if there's actually -- If we're actually going to hit the ACL, and that's why they wanted to take a few months anyway, just to kind of see, as the data trickles in, because, in this sector, there really isn't, you know, reporting, and all the good things that we have in other sectors, but, to your point though, you know, I agree that the season needs to stay open, with a lower ceiling, and hopefully we can find a way to get that.

To what Chris was saying, you know, is that bag limit is going to be an integral part of, you know, yellowmouth and scamp not being discarded while other, you know, grouper fishing efforts are being made. You know, I mean, we don't want these fish to die just because we can't take them.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. I have Chris first, and then Tony, please.

MR. KIMREY: Chris Kimrey, for hire. First off, I mean, I'm all about access, right, and I'm a charter guy, but my question for you, Chris, is I just need clarification. I mean, longer seasons are better, when you're a charter guy, and we all know that, but I'm confused. You keep speaking about discards, and, I mean, obviously, if you close, after a four-month season on scamp and yellowmouth, after that, there's going to be discards, but, if you lengthen that season, to target that one complex, how many discards are you going to have of everything else that are caught in the same areas, using the same baits?

I mean, I'm a grouper guy, and so like, if I go out there and try to target scamp, I'm not going to - - You know, during that two months of extra potential season, and say it be September or October, and, I mean, I don't think the amount of discards that I would have from not having that season, and having to release scamps and yellowmouth, is going to be anything to the number of discards that I'm going to create in gag groupers and red snappers, by fishing two more months, because you're catching, where we're at, basically the exact same way, and, in a lot of times, the exact same areas, and so I'm just trying to get some clarity on your discards theory.

MR. CONKLIN: Maybe I'm not seeing the whole picture, but I didn't -- At least I don't remember seeing that gag grouper was going to close on August 31, or September 30, and with that -- Well, it could be, but, you know, if that's the case -- I mean, I sort of hear what you're saying, but it's either -- You either have to have the hooks in the water or out of the water, and, I mean, this is a damn conundrum, if that's the problem, but, you know, it just doesn't seem like it's rational, to me, to be asked to make a decision if we should cap the season without seeing how long it would last if you reduce the bag limit, and that's all I'm saying, and I'm saying -- Maybe my discard, you know, reasoning is wrong, but that's the gist of what I'm trying to get at.

MR. KIMREY: I am certainly not trying to be the devil's advocate, because, again, I'm all about access, and I just -- You know, like you said, and you said it first, and said it better, and, you know, the release mortality, and the dead discards, is one of the things that continuously is nipping at our hind-ends, you know what I'm saying? Continuously, and so I think that, as we move forward with stuff like this new complex, that we should be very mindful and weigh the potential pros and cons between access and creating more potential dead discard and release mortality issues, and that's all I was saying, because they're always biting us in the butt.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. I'm going to put a stop on the AP input for a minute, to get a little information and clarity here, to our left, with Allie and Myra, and so please help us out.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Robert. I just wanted to just bring some more information to the table, to add perspective, and so, for gag, for 2024, we were informed -- The council was informed, in March, that, because of the reductions in the catch levels, the season is going to go from May 1 through June 15 for 2024, and some of you may have already seen the Fishery Bulletin that just came out a few moments ago, reducing the commercial ACL for gag, because there was an overage before the catch level was adjusted, and so now the commercial ACL for gag, for 2024, is going

to be somewhere around 62,000 pounds. Again, you know, we're seeing the whole picture, or at least as much of it as we can from this table.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Then, Chris, to your point, the analysis of looking at the season and the bag limit together -- Our plan, as the team of people that are working behind the scenes on this amendment, is to, hopefully in June, bring the council a tool where we can do a little bit more plug-and-play and look at these things a little bit more cohesively than we did in March, and so hopefully we'll have a little bit more clarity on what those look like come June.

MR. CONKLIN: But I still don't know the council's rationale, and I'm not asking for an answer or what the discussion was on why they did pick a preferred in Action 6, and that's all. If that's also the case, maybe we should make the action to close scamp on June 15 too, just to make the government happy.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Chris. AP, where we are right now is we're still discussing the wording or what is Chris's motion, and we haven't had a second yet, but I have had, you know, some people still raising their hands, and I would say, Cameron, did you have something to say?

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, and, you know, I was just going back to, you know, everybody is talking about the back and forth with the discards and stuff, and, you know, I've got a hard time seeing the information and following that that's an actual fact, or it's true, and so, you know, I mean, it goes back to what we've been saying for years and years. If the science is bad, the information that comes from the science is bad, which means the discard stuff is bad, and so, you know, it sort of sometimes seems like, to me, it's just pie-in-the-sky that we're looking at, and it's not what is really happening, and most of these fish are making it back down to the bottom.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: You know, when we get fish that have to be hit this hard, a lot of the council's recommendations were -- Or not so much recommendations, but they tell us that this fish has to be reduced by 70 percent, or 60 percent, and that's what is happening here, but it almost was that it came in under the table, and we're not -- If you compare this current to what it's offering, this fishery is getting hit by those kind of numbers, and am I missing it? It's a 60 or 70 percent reduction, but it didn't come across the table like that, and now it's not only the numbers, but it's the season as well.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Allie.

MR. MATTHEWS: Just to add to that, I think it's something that -- You know, it goes back to we need to look at this from a bigger-picture perspective, because we're impacting -- You know, we're impacting people's ability to fish pretty broadly, when we start dropping these numbers down, and we've been doing it over and over and over again, and folks are getting really frustrated, and so, at some point, we're going to have a bigger compliance issue on our hands, when people can't fish anymore, or everything they pull up is a closed season.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Matt. From where I see where we are right now, we've had a lot of discussion and commentary related to 7a and 7b and the conservation. What we do have though has been a motion forward, which we haven't even seconded, and so I was wondering whether we could push that through, whether the motion stays on and gets seconded, and then that allows us to see our path forward a little more. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: **I want to withdraw it.**

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Chris withdraws the motion. All right. Thank you, Chris, and so we do have the commentary, and that is probably going to be six or seven pages on the transcript, and so that is out there, with respect to the cutbacks and things, and I will take it over here to James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Bob, and just for -- I know that this particular circumstance is under a pretty critical time limit, and will this panel see this again? Are we at liberty to ask the council to do things, so we can see it again, or should we just really tighten it up, you know, and kind of make sure that we're all on the same page, so this can move forward?

MS. IBERLE: So, right now, the tentative schedule is to have final approval for this in September, and so it wouldn't come back to you again in October. The council is -- We're anticipating it being approved for public hearings in June, and so we'll go out to the public post the June council meeting, and then they'll select any remaining preferreds, review public comment, make any changes, and, again, tentatively, final approval in September.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Allie. I'm handing it back to you.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, again, moving on from Action 7a and 7b, and this, again, was the bag and vessel limit, and that brings us to Action 8, which would establish an aggregate commercial trip limit. Currently, scamp -- Neither scamp nor yellowmouth have a commercial trip limit. There is currently five alternatives, 200, 300, 400, and 500 pounds gutted weight. In March, the council selected Alternative 3, 300 pounds gutted weight, as the preferred. I will note that the commercial ACL is currently tracked in pounds whole weight, and the commercial weight -- We discussed this in March, and the council would like the trip limit specified in pounds gutted weight.

The commercial trip limit, you're still going to be seeing those numbers in pounds whole weight. If you're following this through the council process, in June, you're going to see this commercial trip limit shown in both pounds whole weight and pounds gutted weight, and so you can kind of look at an apples-to-apples comparison of the trip limit and the sector ACL.

Figure 5 shows a distribution of the scamp and yellowmouth trip harvest between 2020 and 2022, and so a decent amount catching zero to fifty pounds whole weight per trip, and, again, this is whole weight, and we haven't had these updated yet, and then, again, less trips from fifty-one to a hundred and 101 to 150, and going down. Then this is that same trip harvest, just broken out by year.

Then Table 4 is going to show you the percent reduction for each alternative, and the one other thing that I wanted to note was the alternative that is currently selected as the preferred does match

what was chosen in Amendment 53 for gag and black grouper, and so there is some consistency between these two species, and, with that, I will turn it over for discussion.

MR. LORENZ: All right, Allie. Again, I was just wondering, and we've been going for a while, and just for us to get the big picture and put a little more together, and do you have more of all the actions to go through, and so we essentially, while we sit here for the remaining time, have an overview of it, for the whole picture, rather than going step-by-step, and, after a break, and people can talk, and we'll come back to things you want from us with this discussion.

MS. IBERLE: Sure. So I can go through the rest of the actions, and then we can kind of circle back, if that works. Okay. Perfect. We don't have too much more, and so I'll go ahead and round us out. Action 9, and I jumped to this a little bit earlier, and so these are the commercial accountability measures, and so we looked, really quick, at the recreational. This is going to be for the commercial, and so, again, I mentioned that we're establishing this new complex, and so Alternative 1 is just no AMs, because we don't have anything established.

Alternative 2, and I tried to put kind of cheat codes under these AMs, and AMs are kind of complicated, and so I tried to shorten it down, and so this one I just labeled as status quo for scamp and yellowmouth, because this is what is currently in place for both of these species as they are now, and that is a commercial in-season closure, where the current commercial season closes when the sector reaches their sector ACL, and then there's a post-season AM, and so, if you're following this chart through, the first two columns are the in-season AM, and the second two columns are the post-season.

This block here essentially tells you the conditions for your post-season AM, and so, for Alternative 2, the commercial ACL is reduced, in the following year, if the commercial landings exceed the commercial ACL, the total ACL is exceeded, and the stock is overfished, and so all three of those things need to happen for the commercial ACL to get reduced in the following year.

Then we have the current preferred alternative, Alternative 3, and we've been calling this the uncoupled post-season, and so this alternative retains that same in-season closure, and so, again, in the current fishing season, if the commercial landings reach the commercial ACL, the season closes. However, in the post-season, the commercial ACL is reduced, in the following year, only if the commercial landings exceed the commercial ACL.

Then that brings us to the recreational accountability measures, and so, again, Alternative 1, we don't have anything on the books, because this is a brand-new complex. Alternative 2 is that current status quo for scamp and yellowmouth, and so this is essentially the same thing across-the-board that we just went over for commercial, and it's just for the recreational, and so you have an in-season closure, and then you have a post-season AM that's dependent on these three triggers. The only difference here is that the commercial ACL was reduced in that status quo alternative. However, here, the recreational season is reduced.

Alternative 3 retains that same in-season closure, but it uncouples that post-season AM so that it's only reliant on the recreational landings exceeding the recreational ACL. However, this alternative considers an ACL reduction, and so kind of mirroring that commercial AM, and so your actual ACL is reduced in the following year, and then Alternative 4 looks exactly the same. Sorry. I messed that up in my head. Alternative 3 reduces the season. My apologies. Alternative 4 reduces

the ACL, and so the post-season -- The actual post-season AM is the difference here, and so Alternative 3 reduces the season, and Alternative 4 reduces the ACL.

Then there is the Alternative 5, which is the council's current preferred. That removes the in-season accountability measure, and we still have a post-season accountability measure that's triggered only by the recreational landings exceeding the recreational ACL, and that AM is a season reduction.

Then the final action -- So, if you remember, all the way back in Action 1, we removed yellowmouth from the OSASWG, or that other South Atlantic shallow-water grouper, complex, and that complex had an ACL that was attached to that complex, and so Action 1 was kind of just a formality, saying, okay, we're taking yellowmouth, removing it, and creating this complex, and there wasn't numbers attached to it, but, when you do that, we have this ACL, that 104,190 pounds whole weight, which currently includes about -- It's like four-thousand-and-change that's allotted for yellowmouth grouper.

That ACL that we're establishing for this new complex already factors in the landings for yellowmouth grouper, and so, if you retained this one-hundred-and-four-thousand-and-change pounds, you would essentially be double-counting, and you would have doubled the landings allowed for yellowmouth grouper, and so what the council is doing, through this action, would be to just remove that four-thousand-and-change poundage for yellowmouth out of this ACL.

There was a lot of discussion, when we first started this amendment, because these numbers are in that Coastal Household Telephone Survey. These species are rare-event species. They're not assessed, and so the SSC has to figure out the best way to revise this catch level, and to essentially modernize it, and develop a new ACL that incorporates the MRIP-FES estimates. Because of the deadline that we're on for this amendment, it's not feasible to do it here, and so we're doing a simple subtraction of that yellowmouth poundage and keeping the total ACL in the CHTS, or Coastal Household Telephone Survey, units.

The ABC will remain 104,190 until we're provided more information to better update that ACL, but that is, again, like some of the other things we've talked about, an action for a different day, and a different amendment, and so that is the end of the action lineup for 55, and I will hand it back over to you, Bob.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Allie. We've now gone through the action lines, all eleven, for Amendment 55. We're going to take a break, and then we'll circle back and discuss a lot of the items. You know, we've had a lot of commentary and bag limits and boat limits and seasons for recreational, the conservation part, and then we have accountability measures and the ACLs. Since Allie just completed the accountability measures and the ACLs, is there anybody that has a question, to just understand what he had just presented in the last five or ten minutes? Any questions there, before we break? All right. No one? Then let's take about a nominal ten-minute break to think about things, and then we'll pick it up again. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right. We'll reconvene on the discussion of Amendment 55, and, you know, we've been through, and we had a lot of commentary on things like the bag limits, the conservation

and the bag limits, boat limits, seasons for the recreational anglers, those kind of tools that can be used to limit the take. We went on, and we had a motion come up, and then withdrawn, trying to kind of merge things together into one, and then Allie completed, before our break, with the accountability measures for the commercial and recreational components, along with the ACLs.

I think, at this point, Allie, I would like to just go back and make sure if anybody has any comments or anything on the commercial and the recreational accountability measures and the ACLs, and maybe we can roll back and roll through all the eleven little -- The eleven points, and maybe the main spirit is look at the council's preferred alternatives, and let's try to focus on like if you really like one or you really hate one, and we're getting down to that, and that's about where we'll probably end today, pretty well knowing that any other individuals of us that want to comment, rather than the power of the group, will be out there with public comment, probably after June, and so, if that's all right, Allie, let's go through the accountability measures, and I believe commercial first, and let's take a look at that.

Does anybody have comment on that, with the paybacks that could occur for that and over catching? All right. I see no one with any questions, or comments, and you saw the preferred alternative. Then the recreational accountability measures are here. Any comments, or statements, there? Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: What is the reasoning behind not tying the stock -- The ACLs to the stock status and the ACLs on recreational, but doing it on commercial?

MS. IBERLE: Let me -- Hold on one second. I wanted to make sure I'm --

MR. CONSTANT: On the triggers.

MS. IBERLE: So both AMs, the preferred for both AMs, are going to uncouple, if the preferreds stay the same, and so both the commercial and the recreational AMs would have an essentially uncoupled post-season AM, and so they would only be limited to that sector's landings exceeding that sector's ACL.

I know the discussion -- Because, previously, the preferred alternative for the commercial AMs was Alternative 2, and there was a lot of discussion on keeping it consistent between the sectors, so that the trigger, the post-AM trigger, was consistent between rec and commercial, and so that's why the Alternative 2 was unselected, and Alternative 3 was selected, just to, I guess, even the playing field, AM-wise, between the sectors. Then, in thinking of how this AM operates, essentially, it's the sector wouldn't be -- I'm trying to think of the best way to word this.

While it would be more easily triggered, because you're only relying on that sector's landings exceeding the sector ACL, it's kind of putting the onus back on that individual sector, and then, because they're both uncoupling, you don't have one sector that's still reliant on the total ACL, and the stock status, whereas the other sector is still -- It's only reliant on that sector's ACL, and does that -- Did I do an okay job explaining that?

MR. LORENZ: Yes, please, James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob, and I think, at this point, that the stock is overfished, and the box has kind of been checked, and, I mean, with the reduction like we're seeing of 60 or 70 percent in the overall ACL, and I think that, moving forward, if the stock were to come out of the state of being overfished, and still triggering these AMs in this uncoupled state, it might still be beneficial for the two species in this complex. I mean, I think that's just kind of how I'm seeing it, I mean, and maybe there's an implication that that's the case that we're seeing here.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, James. Anyone else? All right, Allie. I think where we are would be -- I guess, as a matter of due diligence, just a quick scroll all the way through, and down, to give everybody their last chance at a look on it, if any brilliant ideas surface, and, again, focus on what you truly think is the best, or things that you would truly dislike, and I think that's about all we can do with this, with the tools we have.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Actions 1, 2, and 3 are kind of -- We have preferreds, and we didn't really hear too much feedback, and there weren't any questions from you guys, and so, if there's not any additional -- Just for time's sake, if there's not any additional feedback on those, and to give you a recap, that was just -- Action 1 was establishing the complex, and 2 was setting those stock determination criteria, and so kind of the bounds on your new complex, and Action 3 was your rebuilding timeframe, which the council has kind of got really tight parameters on. Then we can kind of start with Action 4, and does that work? Heads are nodding.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, it does for me, and everybody else looks good.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so -- Again, this one -- We had some discussion about maybe having a more conservative total ACL, and so I will remind you that, right now, again, Action 4 is establishing the ABC and total ACL. Right now, the council's preferred is to set the total ACL equal to the ABC, and you've got your coordinating total ACL values there, in pounds whole weight, and so I will pause here.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any comments there with what Allie summarized for us on this? All right, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Then that brings us back to Action 5, and, again, this was sector allocations, and the council's current preferred is what we've been referring to as the split reduction method, or the share-the-pain-share-the-gain, which is a reduction to that new lower ACL, proportional to what each sector has been landing from 2018 to 2022, and then, as that value increases throughout the remainder of the rebuilding plan, the increase in poundage is split equally between the sectors. This causes there to be a small shift in allocation percentage, and poundage, each year, with the values in 2029 remaining in place until modified, and so we've had a little bit of discussion on this, and I believe I -- I think I recorded that in a different section, but I will turn it over.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and there was commentary on that, and so the council's preferred Alternative 2, with the split between commercial and recreational, and I presume everybody -- It looks fair, and it looks kind of doable. Any comments there? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I just have a question, and so, in 2030 then, essentially, allocation is going to be reviewed again, and then, moving forward from that, and is it just a review, or will it continue, or what?

MS. IBERLE: So, in 2030, the allocations will remain at 62.59 commercial and 37.41 recreational, and then the corresponding poundage, and that will remain in place until it's modified again, and say the council makes a decision to modify allocations or it's in its response to another assessment.

MR. LORENZ: Myra, you're recognized.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Just to add to what Allie said, the council has an allocation review policy, and so, if you go on our website, there's a button that you can choose, and it tells you what all the allocations are for everything the council manages, and a tentative schedule, and, right now, it's still tentative, because there's a lot of it that's tied to the SEDAR schedule, and that's one of the times that the council can review sector allocations, but they can review allocations any other time they want, such as, for instance, when you guys put together a fishery performance report, for example, if there's indication that the council needs to re-look at the sector allocations at that time, then they would do that, but there is a system, just so you know, that the council has a schedule to review all the sector allocations moving forward.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Myra. All right, Allie. Returning to you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us back to Action 6, and this was reducing the recreational fishing season, and so we've got three alternatives. Again, Alternative 1 is keeping that status quo, not modifying the annual spawning season closure, and Preferred Alternative 2, which would reduce the season from May 1 to August 31, and, again, not modifying that annual spawning season closure, and then Alternative 3 was through the end of September, and then we've had some discussion thus far, and I will turn it back over.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so that was the alternative with some pretty good, spirited discussion, because the council's preferred alternative is actually a narrowing season, and discussions of the great impact on the headboats, which we hope will be noted, and there are some of our recommendations that went in there, and are to be noted, and does anybody have any other further, or last, comments on this one? James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Bob. **I would like to have some discussion, amongst the panel here, of if a motion was made to change the preferred alternative to Alternative 1, which is no action, keeping the season open, the way it currently is, please and thank you.**

MR. LORENZ: All right. James is recommending that a motion here be for Alternative 1, which keeps the season as-is, the May through December. Any discussion or commentary? Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: (Mr. Brannon's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. LORENZ: Thank you so much for that, and so we already have a motion. We needed a motion and a second. Okay. James, your statement has become now a formal motion with a second, and do you want to read, or review, it and see what you feel on that?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Well, as far as the discussion goes, I guess I will have some discussion on my own draft motion here. The rationale behind that is really with the accountability measures, and the uncoupling, you know, basically tied to each sector individually, and, you know, if our ACLs are met, you know, there are accountability measures in place, and so, you know, moving forward with this, let's see if keeping the full season open the way that it is, and let's see if we trigger our accountability measures, and see if we're going to have to take some more drastic action later, and I think this potentially keeps people in business longer, and it gives the public the opportunity at the fish, while undergoing a drastic reduction in an ACL, and so that's kind of my rationale beyond this, and I appreciate the second. **The motion is to recommend the council to deselect Preferred Alternative 2 for Action 6 and select Alternative 1, which is no action, for Action 6.** Okay, and that's acceptable, as far as my intent on the motion.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. Very good. Thank you for articulating that and sort of putting conservation measures, and let's see where we're going to go. Nobody is going to feel they're going to lose the race while they're still standing at the starting line, and that sounds decent, but we still have others that just want to comment, a brief comment, a little pro, or a little against, the motion, before we vote. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I just wanted to say that's exactly where I was headed with my comments and so forth, and I agree with that motion 100 percent.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Anyone else? All right. Let's take a vote. **All in favor of sending this motion on to the council, I have fourteen yea. Anybody no? Zero no and one abstention.** All right. Thank you. Very good. Did you have something, Allie? Not totally what I expected, but good.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Are we ready to move on to Action 7?

MR. LORENZ: Yes, ma'am.

MS. IBERLE: All right. As a recap, Action 7 is split into two parts. 7a deals only with the bag limit. Currently, scamp and yellowmouth grouper have a three-fish bag limit. Alternatives 2 and 3 consider a two-fish or one-fish bag limit, respectively, and then, independent of that bag limit, 7b considers establishing a vessel limit. These alternatives are modeled off of Amendment 53 for gag and black grouper. Alternative 2a would set a two-fish-per-day vessel limit for scamp and yellowmouth for private vessels. Alternative 2b would set a four-fish-per-day vessel limit for private vessels, and then Alternative 3a would set a two-fish-per-trip vessel limit for for-hire, which currently, within this subaction, refers to both charter and headboat, and then Alternative 3b would establish a four-fish-per-trip vessel limit for for-hire vessels, and so I will turn it back over.

MR. LORENZ: This one had absolutely the most discussion, and it seems like -- That's good, and it's covered up there, and it seemed like people really were making a recommendation that the council rely more on the bag limit, instead of the vessel limit, at this time. I think we even had discussions that, hey, if everybody gets a fish, that's okay, and we'll take it from there. Any comments on that? Yes, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So we need to keep in mind that this is the last time that we're going to see this, and this is going to go to the council in September, and they're going to approve it, probably, and send it on up to the Secretary, and so whatever we leave out of this right now will have repercussions, or could have extreme repercussions, for in particular the headboat fishery. Unfortunately, without analysis on Subaction 7a, I personally couldn't make an educated decision on whether to choose Alternative 1, 2, or 3 in 7a.

While I support all the actions in 7b -- You know, I think that's a good range, but, for businesses, like headboats, I would recommend that we mirror the same exact motion, that we make a new Subaction 7c and mirror the gag grouper vessel limit for headboats that we did in one of our previous -- I can read it verbatim right now, if you prefer.

MS. IBERLE: Is this what you're --

MR. CONKLIN: Sorry, and I'm not on the webinar, or I am, but I'm not looking at it.

MR. LORENZ: Allie has it up on the screen.

MR. CONKLIN: Yes, and that's exactly right. I don't know if six to twelve fish is the right number, and I spoke to another headboat captain in Murrells Inlet, who is a very good fisherman, and he said ten, and so maybe a range of eight to twelve, or eight to fourteen, would be appropriate, but, if we leave it out now, we need to forever hold our piece, and, like I said, we need to be deliberate in what we inform the council on, our intentions, and if at least -- **You know, we're here to try and think through some stuff for them, to save them time, and it just would be a disservice to the headboat operators not to put this in, and so that's my motion, and I will do the six to twelve fish.**

MR. LORENZ: I think that's a great point, Chris, because, actually, the council did not have a preferred motion on those other ones anyway, and then Chris is putting out the caution that, you know, we've all been worrying about for a couple of meetings now, about the headboat industry, and so I believe it's prudent to add that under there, that this our output, what we saw about it, and there are so many mixes and matches that you can do, if you have the data, and you can plug in the numbers of what bag limits and boat limits all mixed and matched actually do, but the big concern, at the end of the day, is this motion that Chris has, and so could we transcribe that again under our part for the appropriate there for Amendment 55, and so Chris can make that a motion, and we can see if we can get a second on that and vote it up.

MS. IBERLE: I went ahead and changed the species that we're talking about to the right fish, and so we are good to go.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Have you got some legal counsel there, Matthew?

MR. MATTHEWS: It's not legal counsel, but it's just a thought. I would say to consider whether we're putting the cart before the horse here, because we haven't decided, or maybe I missed it, but we haven't decided about imposing any more restrictive individual bag limits or vessel limits on this, and so this might be an if-then motion, as opposed to a straight-up recommendation, or do we need to discuss the individual bag limit reduction, and the vessel limit, before we get to this, but so, at a minimum, I would say that my proposal in this would be that we limit this to an if a vessel

limit is imposed, that a specific for-hire headboat vessel limit be imposed that allows more than just the vessel limit on those headboats.

MR. CONKLIN: I was reading through it, and I had some amendments, and so exactly what you said. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: That's real good, considering, as I said, the council still didn't have a preferred, and so they're going to be talking about this a lot, between the two things. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Bob, and I think that, if this portion of the motion -- If, like Chris said, it could be Subaction 7c, and, you know, we could still take a look at 7a and 7b, and, you know, maybe 7c would -- You know, it could also be dependent on Subaction 7a, and I know that you said that you couldn't really decide on which way you would be leaning on Subaction 7a, and I think that, for the cart and horse situation, that it's probably best that we have some discussion about Subaction 7a right now, and then we can move forward with modifying the motion, and really narrowing down what we want our message to be to the council.

MR. LORENZ: With that, James, and so we would be coming out then with a specific recommendation on individual bag limits then, with 7a, correct, based on what you just stated?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and a vessel trip limit for charter headboat. The two and one, like I think the directive that Chris was really trying to push across there, is that we need to have all of our Is dotted, and our Ts crossed, because we will not see this again.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So we could just change the vessel limit either to X fish for every six passengers, or one or two fish for every six passengers onboard, and then that would probably get us to where we need to be without having to decide, because I can't make a decision on Alternative 1, 2, or 3 in Subaction 7a, because I haven't seen if that would extend the season out past August 31, or September 30, but, if it's imposed, I think this probably would get the message across to the council of what our intentions are, but I wouldn't hold it to two fish for every six passengers, and maybe just put an "X", or you could put "one to three", but what do you think?

MR. LORENZ: James, did you want to comment? I have Tony over here, also.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No, and I completely understand your perspective now, and, really, what your point is, and, like we left it kind of open-ended in the previous discussion about blacks and gags, you know, where we're not exactly sure of what we want, but we know what a range is, and I like that. You know, it gives some leeway, you know, especially since we have some council members here, and I think that they could really understand our general position on this, and, really, having already stated that we really don't want any more closures in the current open season, and I think that they could interpret the science better than we can, sitting at the table here, of what the numbers should be.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Chris, go ahead. It's your motion.

MR. CONKLIN: The only thing that really sucks, or maybe it doesn't, is, in Subaction 7b, the alternatives are three fish, two fish, four fish, two fish, four fish, and so it would be one to four, right, because, if they picked -- In 7a, if they picked Alternative 3, and it was one fish per person, then that doesn't give you -- Maybe I am looking at it -- Anyway, I see four fish for 7b, and we're saying one to three, and so it could restrict the vessel, if it's -- Do see what I'm saying?

MR. LORENZ: Please, Allie. Go ahead.

MS. IBERLE: I want to make sure that the wording -- That I am recording the wording of the motion correctly, and so we mentioned adding language for if a vessel limit is imposed, and I think this maybe should be if a bag limit is imposed, or if the bag limit is modified, but I want to make sure that I'm recording that right, and then this range is correct, and so if you are wanting one to four, and I just want to make sure that I've got it recorded correctly.

MR. LORENZ: I want to recognize Matthew, because he's trying to help with some clarity here.

MR. MATTHEWS: Just to clarify, my reasoning in doing the "if then" is that, if the council decides not to impose a vessel limit, then it wouldn't be fair to then impose a more restrictive limit on the headboats, and so this really only comes into play if there's a vessel limit that limits them more than the per-person bag limit, which is why I go back to the need for us to do something to address the individual bag limit as well, and make a recommendation on that, and I hate to continue to condition everything that we're giving to the council on this, but I think it's all tied together, because our -- You know, from my perspective, my willingness to agree to a reduced bag limit is going to be conditioned on that extending the recreational fishing season, and so I'm happy to catch two fish instead of three on my trips, and I get to fish more days.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, it is all wrapped up, and I think that is extremely important, and I think that's what we're wrestling with. I've got a lot of comments here. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: My comment is along Matt's lines, and we currently have 7a, Alternative 3, and it also relies on the reduced bag limit instead of a vessel limit, and I just wanted to point out that we already have that up there, which that, along with this, I think is a very good package, or as good as we're going to get.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: I don't know if it would be helpful, but if, as an AP, if we had a general consensus that we were more in favor of bag limits, versus vessel limits, and we stated that, either in Chris's motion or prior to his motion, and it seems like it would add clarity to the whole situation here, because, just like everybody has already said, there is -- There is no need to worry about a vessel limit if you're fishing on a bag limit, or, you know, a per-person bag limit, and so I was just wondering if there's some way if we could -- I don't know, but add to Chris's motion or -- You know, underneath the -- I mean, I see that it's rely on a reduced bag limit, instead of a vessel limit, and, I mean, I see that, but, if there was some way that -- If we could fine-tune that, to say, if this is the general consensus of the AP, we would prefer a bag limit. However, if not, let's be mindful of the headboats and -- That's where you add in, you know, the vessel limits being different for headboats.

MR. CONKLIN: (Mr. Constant's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. KIMREY: It's almost like we need a precursor to the vessel limit stuff for the headboats, and I guess that's what I was trying to say, and it just took me a really long time.

MR. LORENZ: Chris, you don't think we have it with the recommendation for 7a, Alternative 3, one fish per person, and you're saying that, no, don't put like a preferred reduced bag limit, instead of a vessel limit, and I kind of get it, but you're saying --

MR. KIMREY: Which part are you referring to, Bob? I missed that. Are you talking about the rely on the reduced bag limit?

MR. LORENZ: The review the discussion points and provide feedback, and there is that recommendation for 7a, Alternative 3, and then we get all the way down to -- Then we had a motion by Chris in that, and that's kind of confusing there, and then we have, Chris, the current motion here on if the vessel limit is imposed.

MR. KIMREY: I mean, that's a recommendation, versus a motion though, and I guess I was saying -- Maybe I should motion to have the AP vote, so that maybe it carries a little more weight, and I think, but I don't know for sure, unless we took a vote, that the AP would definitely prefer a bag limit over a vessel limit. Then, if that was the case, lead into Chris's motion, because Chris's motion isn't going to matter if it's determined that they're going to manage off a bag limit, and that's all I'm saying.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James, and then Cameron is waiting, also.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would then ask Matt to have that -- You said if a vessel limit is imposed, and couldn't that change if a -- If an individual catch limit is imposed, then we do this, because, at this point, there's no -- There wouldn't be a vessel limit, and then we would be asking for a vessel limit to be, you know, set forth for the charter and headboat, because there's no way that the charter and headboat could operate for every six passengers, you know, and have an aggregate, and have that extrapolate to seventy-something passengers, and we would have to have a restrictive vessel limit in place for the headboat, the charter and headboats.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I guess I'm looking at it more in terms of fairness. I mean, I don't know that we need to get into this specific of providing an alternative that the council didn't propose for the headboats, when, if we reduce the bag limit to one per person, and somebody fishing a charter, on a six-pack, can go catch six scamp, then I think somebody running a headboat, with seventy passengers on it, should be able to go catch seventy scamp.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I'm just making sure that's the intent. Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron, and he's been waiting.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, this is going down the same line as the other grouper species, and so, you know, in my view, what the council is trying to do is reduce the amount we're going to

catch overall, and so, of course, if you do a vessel limit, over a per-person limit, you're going to bring less fish back to the dock, is sort of the way I look at it, and so, to me, it would be an if-not-then, and so, if not a bag limit, then we go to, you know, Chris's motion, and, in my personal viewpoint, it's probably not going to be the bag limit. They're moving towards vessel limits, and that's the way it's going to be, and we either figure that out right now, or we sit here and kick around the bag limit, which seems to be going by the wayside.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so I finally thought through what I was trying to say earlier, and, if you look at the documents, and I just don't want to get in a pickle, and maybe it's not our place to throw up a bunch of different numbers, and I think there's like staff that works through them, and would catch our mistakes, but, if the council picked Alternative 3 in 7a, it would go to one fish per person, right, and then, if they picked 3b, it would be four fish per boat, and so, to keep in line with what we did with gag, you would make it a four fish for every six people, and then you would make it eight, twelve, sixteen, and it seems that it would need to be in multiples of four, versus one or -- Sorry. Six to twelve, and so six isn't two limits of four, and that would be eight, and do you see what I'm saying?

MR. LORENZ: Yes.

MR. CONKLIN: That's just where I was getting caught up. Would it make sense now?

MR. LORENZ: It does, and where we are now is we do have somebody stated a motion, and so I think, procedurally, at this point, to take all this into account, what Chris said, what both Chris's, and Chris Kimrey over here also, is that that motion that's there now is -- I guess let's call it a draft now, and we're kind of offering it, and it's up there, and the thought is there, and now we have to fill in what the Chris's have been stating, get that kind of into a language, because I think what I've heard here is, for this draft motion to mean something, the other things that Chris just talked about should be a little head of that, and so can we get language for that, where we actually would have two draft motions?

We would have the one that you need before getting to the one that's currently listed, that we have them both up there, and then we can proceed, procedurally, that you make them both formal motions, and we'll get them seconded and voted on, and does that sound reasonable, or am I getting tongue-tied now?

MS. IBERLE: So we've got this motion on the board, and it's reading correct?

MR. CONKLIN: It's not one to four. It's just four.

MS. IBERLE: Just four, or one to four?

MR. CONKLIN: Well, I guess it seems it would be one to four, if they stick with no action, and it's three, and I don't know. This is a -- I'm not sure that it even really matters, I mean, because the council is getting our intent, and I'm not sure if -- I think one to four would be better than to have a definitive four, right?

MR. LORENZ: Okay. To get going, and to be procedurally correct, let's make this a formal motion. Chris, I believe this is your motion, correct, as written, and do we have a second on that? Cameron gave a second on it. **All right, and so we have a formal motion that, if a vessel limit is imposed, recommend the council add an alternative for recreational for-hire vessels that are federally inspected and permitted to carry more than six passengers to have an aggregate scamp and yellowmouth grouper vessel limit of one to four fish for every six passengers onboard, not to exceed a maximum number of fish per vessel per trip, ranging from eighteen to sixteen fish, not to include captain and crew limits.**

Are we okay with that? We've had discussed, and we've noted that there should be maybe a little something in front of this, for this to mean more, but let's keep this motion clean and see if we can get a vote-up on this, as it is, and this will pass on to the council. Do I have any objections to that, before I call the vote? All right. **Everybody in favor of this, raise your hand.** Okay. Great. **It's unanimous. Nobody opposed and nobody abstaining.** Okay, and so, before we leave this, is there anything we need, any crutch motions here to make that one work a little better?

AP MEMBER: Not particular on that part, but I'm just clarifying, and so we're leaving Subsection 7a and Subsection 7b without any formal recommendations from the panel?

MR. CONKLIN: They didn't give us any.

AP MEMBER: They didn't give us enough to make an educated choice, and is that what you're saying?

MR. LORENZ: The word is, from the co-chair, is that we've actually moved on from that.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: No, I don't think that we've officially moved on.

MR. LORENZ: We haven't officially moved on from that, and everybody is saying we don't -- That we haven't covered anything with that, I would just go up to the top there, the recommendation of 7a, Alternative 3, one fish per person, relying on reduced bag limits instead of vessel limits, and that's not covering anything? It's a recommendation.

MS. IBERLE: To that point a little bit, so, when we package the discussion from this meeting to go to the council in June, the motions are, obviously, going to be -- You know, it's a formal motion. However, recommendations, in the overall discussion, will be summarized, and the discussion that you guys have had on 7a and 7b will be captured, if there isn't a formal motion to say, you know, the AP wants to select this preferred, and so I did want to note that, that the council will get an overview of the discussion on those actions in totality.

MR. LORENZ: Then the powerful bit of this is, yes, we know there is conservation coming, and it's going to hit both the sectors, but we are, with this, saying uh-oh, but keep in mind just how much everything that's being done can slam the headboat industry, and that's the biggest thing that comes out of this, and we have our concerns and are putting up a little bit of a protective mode here. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thank you, Bob. Allie, along those lines of what you were saying about how the discussion is summarized and reviewed, I was -- I would be wondering if it would carry

some weight if our discussion led us backwards a little bit, but not too much, to say, okay, well, if being a little bit more conservative, and adopting a vessel limit for the scamp and yellowmouth complex, if the council feels like that limitation is going to support the longer season opening, you know, the current opening, as status quo, if they feel like a vessel limit will help substantiate that request, then the panel feels very strongly that they should follow that pathway. As far as discussion's sake, and for simplicity of length of words, absolutely. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: I guess my only other -- I want to make sure that it's captured correctly, and so, typically, when I'm writing "the AP", that would imply a consensus statement, instead of just a recommendation from an individual AP member, and so that's one thing that I would want to clarify for the council, is whether or not that would be a consensus statement.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so a little vote on the recommendation, but I had Cameron, and did you want to make a statement?

MR. SEBASTIAN: Yes, and, I mean, I agree with what James is saying. I mean, the whole purpose for what I think our consensus is, it's whatever we've got to do to extend the season is what we want the council to do, period, end of story.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Kimrey.

MR. KIMREY: So our first three recommendations are very conflicting. I mean, okay, 7a, Alternative 3, a one-fish-per-person bag limit, and the next one says to rely on a reduced bag limit, instead of a vessel limit, and the one after that says the AP would prefer a vessel limit to retain access to the fishery through December, and they're very conflicting. I mean, I don't think we can recommend everything, and we have to narrow it down, don't we?

That was kind of what I was getting at before. I love Chris's motion, but I just think we need some clarity before that. 7a, Alternative 3, a one-fish bag limit, it's up there, but that was -- I don't know that we did, you know, a vote on that, a motion vote.

MR. LORENZ: We did not do a preference vote, and maybe that's what we have to have, and definitely I can see your point, and we don't want to have like, oh, just for your information, we want a reduced bag limit, and, oh, by the way, we would rather retain a bag limit, and so I'll go to James for a minute.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. To the fairness of everybody sitting in this room, you know, sometimes, with no strikes on you, you swing for the fence, and, you know, since there wasn't a preferred action in either one of these subcategories, you know, having this panel support Alternative 3, which is a reduction, and then asking the council if, you know -- Like maybe we could get the bag limit change and get the full season opening. You know, I mean, we're kind of giving them the range of, okay, we'll take the less of a bag limit, no vessel limit, and the whole season.

It's kind of giving them freedom, you know, where they hadn't made a decision before, to kind of have some support, from this panel, in multiple in areas. I mean, I get where it's like they're taking all the candy, and I completely understand your perspective there, but I think that we're putting it

out there that the panel would support a combination of any of these things, as long as it led to a May through December grouper fishing season.

MR. LORENZ: Please, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: So I modified the consensus recommendation to be a little bit more vague, and so I removed the blurb about a vessel limit and just stressed that -- Again, it would essentially imply, you know, any combination to retain access, and so the point, the main point, of the consensus statement is that, regardless of the methods, retaining access would be the most important part.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. That sounds reasonable, and I understand it. Since we're saying it's a consensus recommendation, I guess what I would like is is there anybody that wants to state that they don't like this, because we could make -- You know, I could make it a for-information vote kind of thing, but -- Matt.

MR. MATTHEWS: I would just add, to that, that, you know, we're open to the reduced bag limits on that condition, with the understanding that it's for the purpose of keeping access open May through December, and, if that's not the consensus, I will stand corrected, but that's kind of the feeling I'm getting from the room. I would say it's more willing to -- Well, that works, I guess.

MR. LORENZ: The only problem I have is, that consensus recommendation, does that directly conflict with the recommendation and discussion right above? Chris, please help.

MR. CONKLIN: Just a question. The motion that was withdrawn, that says to recommend the council unselect Preferred Alternative 2 in Action 6, is that the one we voted on when James -- Is that the one that he made, or is that the one that I withdrew? I cannot remember, and so the one that we voted on with James, is it still in the document? I can't scroll, and is it underneath.

MS. IBERLE: This one has been approved.

MR. CONKLIN: That one, but didn't we change and make a motion for --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I believe I did, and that was to recommend to the council to change their preferred action back to --

MR. CONKLIN: Did we lose it in the document?

MR. PASKIEWICZ: It was approved, but he's not seeing it.

MR. CONKLIN: It was Action 6, I believe, and I just wanted to make sure that it gets on there.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Am I at liberty to move on with Amendment 55, Allie? I think we wrestled with this the last meeting also, and so does the council. Okay. Go ahead.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and I just want to make sure, and so the only other actions are just the AM actions in that OSASWG ACL, which we kind of recapped again after coming back from the break, and so I just wanted to make sure there's no other final thoughts or anything that you guys

would like me to record or stress for the council, and, other than that, I appreciate your discussion on this and working through this document for us.

MR. LORENZ: You're welcome, Allie. I think Gettys has a comment.

MR. BRANNON: Just one more thing on this, and so I think we've made it abundantly clear, in the recommendations, that this is a rather statement, as opposed as to we don't want to see a bag limit or a vessel limit and a restriction of the fishery from May to December, and I just don't want us to get in a point where it's read as either/or, but I think that already does that, and so I apologize.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and those are the three tools the council has, particularly to reduce, you know, the recreational take, is the season, the bag limit, and the vessel, and so I think we're kind of covered where we're most comfortable and to keep the most people whole. All right. Thank you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Thank you, guys, so much, and I'm not sure what's next on the agenda, but I will turn it back over to you.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I have one more.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James, for keeping us straight.

MS. IBERLE: You're right, and there is one more action before the AM actions, and thank you so much. My apologies. This is the commercial trip limit, and so, again, we've got Alternatives 1 through 5. Currently, scamp and yellowmouth grouper do not have a commercial trip limit. Alternative 1 would keep it that way, and then Alternative 2 would establish a 200, 300, 400, and 500-pound trip limit, respectively, and the council's current preferred alternative is 300 pounds gutted weight, and, again, my apologies for almost skipping over this.

MR. LORENZ: Well, that's right in the middle, and that's the kind of poundage, over the years, that they kind of live with pretty well, and the commercials seems to accept that when it comes, but, coming from anybody here, does anybody have any comments on that Preferred Alternative 2 by the council? Go ahead, Andy.

MR. FISH: I think a lot of the commercial boats that go after scamp are mostly three to seven-day boats, and I think this is going to hurt a lot of those guys, but, also, I mean, I think I would hope that they understand the situation that the scamp is in, and I'm -- It's just I understand it all, but I just think it's going to penalize a lot of these long boats, but either you can fish longer or you can -- And have smaller limits, or you can have bigger limits and fish shorter, and so I think this might be acceptable for some, and I don't know, and I'm just saying that, because I'm invested in this.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Kind of to speak to that, Andy, just looking at the graphs here, I mean, I would normally be all over that with you, and in absolute agreement, but it just doesn't seem like there's a whole lot of trips, and, you know, something that did have more than 300 pounds of landings. However, on the trips that you get on the scamp and yellowmouth complex, and have the ability to really add onto, you know, your overall numbers for the season, you know, and those

trips may be so few and far between that, you know, they're a nice bonus, and so, you know, maybe that is something to talk about, you know, me being a commercial fisherman as well.

You know, sometimes you get, you know, one day out of the year where you may be able to capitalize on an excellent bite, and you need that production to really sustain your business, and to be viable in this industry, where it's really become so complicated to do so, and so, you know, just to kind of make my point, there are so few trips over 300 pounds as it is, and what's the harm in having a larger trip limit, you know, and what's really the up side of decreasing it to 300 pounds, and how many fish are we really saving in doing so?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, James. Did you want that in some kind of comment in that list that Allie had produced, the spirit of what you said, or --

MR. PASKIEWICZ: For me, it was for the sake of discussion, and it's not a species that I harvest, but I did want to make it known where I align, just as a commercial fishermen and knowing how hard it is sometimes to make ends-meet. Andy had brought it up, and it was kind of in support of that.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so these are just concerns that we're expressing for consideration by the council. Andy, I will hold you, and John Polston was ahead.

MR. POLSTON: I was just going to say that I'm basically with Andy there, and I agree with you that it's tough on the commercial guys that are going out there and doing a three to five-day trip, but, at the same time, let's face it, and our commercial boats have turned into boutique fisheries, and you've got to go get your beeliners, and you've got to go get your porgies, and you've got to get whatever you're allowed, and so, if 300 is where they're seeing the middle of the road -- I mean, 300 pounds of scamps are -- That's a pretty good little chunk of change, and 300 gags, and, you know, if you were fortunate enough to catch everything you could, and so, with that being said, I would say that, obviously, I would like to see more, but at least it's middle of the road.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, John. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I would agree about the boutique, but I think, north of Georgia, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, it is a big-boat fishery, when you're talking, you know, a true commercial fisherman, and I kind of see where James is going with the would a 500-pound cost us that many more, or shorten our season that much, and I don't know, but I'm just -- I'm just worried, and that's all.

MR. LORENZ: We really needed Randy McKinley here today, who does hit scamps periodically, and, Kerry, you sat down, and so I will recognize you to speak to us.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry to interrupt, but just a quick question that will help, I think, us, when we talk about it later, is sort of along the lines that you all had for the bag limit number, to sort of have a discussion about is it more important to have more pounds on a trip, with the potential that the season could close earlier, or would you rather have a longer season, and so, just to the extent that you could have that discussion, that would help us form our decision. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Kerry is asking for length of the season versus the large opportunistic haul potential. Is there discussion? Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: For my commercial boat, I would definitely be in favor of just keeping it and doing a 300-pound limit. Then, that way, the season can go on, and they can add some jacks to it, and they're not -- You know, they can keep going, and, right now, grouper is at a phenomenally good price off the boat, and so, you know, 300 pounds is a good lick.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Cameron, thank you. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: So what I heard James say is exactly what was captured in the comment, and it seems -- I think that your intent, after agreeing with Captain Fish, was that maybe more than 300 would be good, if you had the opportunity to catch them here and there, and then you said that -- I'm just trying to clarify, because of the way it's reading here, and, if the council reads this, they're going to say, well, maybe they think it's, you know, not going to work, and we need to be even more restrictive, which probably is not -- If it was your intent, that's fine, but, if you do take all the trips over 300 pounds, and you stack them up, and imagine what that would look like on the bar graph, and I would imagine that it would be closer to 7 or 8 percent of the trips, which is actually substantial. I'm fine with the 300 pounds, and I think there will be some lost opportunities for our guys, several times a year, but we're willing to make a sacrifice to, you know, get the fishery back.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. I do see that second one, and you just brought a thought to me, and is the 300 pounds gross weight trip limit going to be restrictive, and the conservationists would ask if that is restrictive enough for conservation, and James' comment was to be restrictive of economic vitality, and I think we need to put something like that in, to be very clear.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Chris, to kind of saddle-up to what your point is, that's kind of why I wouldn't have made an official recommendation for some of these guys that are on these boats, making these long trips, and I just kind of know that, you know, how I feel with, you know, the idea of being efficient, with fuel and stuff like that, when it does come down to those opportunities at those fish, you know, but, if it's the consensus, among those fishermen that make those trips, you know, that 300 pounds could be lived with, then, you know, by all means, we should proceed with that, and I'm just kind of chiming-in as a commercial fisherman here.

MR. LORENZ: I see that Allie is working on that. Allie, I do think we do need to put -- So if that that is not construed as restrictive enough, from a conservationist, and the words that I used was "economic vitality", and there may be a better word for it, and, you know, it means it's worthwhile for the commercial to make ends-meet with that kind of a limit, and it is not anybody questioning whether we're digging in deep enough to reduce take of the species.

MS. IBERLE: Does that capture it?

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and is the economics that are brought up, and it is not conservation on that one. Anyone else have a statement, or a comment? I thought I saw some hands up. Okay. Then we're good, Allie, here.

MS. IBERLE: Okay. I think that's now actually all that I've got, unless we want to revisit AMs. Again, I really appreciate your discussion, and I know the council really appreciates your discussion on this one, and we'll definitely package all the feedback up and take it back to the council in June.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Allie. Next time, make it a little tougher. That was a little too easy. We'll take about two minutes here to switch over, to move to recreational seasons for deepwater snapper grouper seasons. Then we'll finish the day, and we do have to get through, also, to the electing a chair and a vice chair, and so that's what we'll do today. We have more full, big agenda item.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right. We'll call to order at 4:03 for the last topic of our agenda for today, and then we'll go into the election of the chair and vice chair, and so the presentation for the recreational seasons for the deepwater snapper grouper species, and we're going to start with the overview from Mike, and so, Mike, take it away.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Bob. You've got a document in your briefing book that I'm going to talk through very quickly, and that's Attachment 8, and so this is addressing recreational seasons for deepwater snapper grouper species. In March of 2023, the council requested that you all have a discussion regarding the season start dates for some of these species. The end dates for these seasons can vary, depending on what the accountability measures are for each species. Some of them, if they have in-season closures that occur, the end dates aren't really something that can always be lined up, but the start dates are something that the council has a little bit more control over when things start.

There was some concern that was expressed, I believe through some public comment, about -- Golden tilefish was kind of the topic that brought this up, but the fact that golden tilefish is not in line with some of the other deepwater species start dates, and, if people are spending the gas to go out to that deepwater area, there was some desire for them to be able to target several species that existed in that area at that time, and so that was kind of the motivation to have this discussion, and so the council requested that you all take a look at these deepwater species, when the seasons start, and give your feedback on if you think things are fine as-is, if you think that anything needs to change in this regard.

What we have included here, and I will tab this down, just so that we can have it all in one place, is I put a table in of our deepwater snapper grouper species, and so these include snowy grouper, wreckfish, and I'm skipping over a couple, because they're in a complex together, blueline tilefish, golden tilefish, and then we have a complex of species called the deepwater complex, and you will notice that several of these have the same ACL, that 23,411, and that's not for each of these species, and that is the complex ACL, and so misty grouper, yellowedge, blackfin snapper, queen snapper, silk snapper, and sand tilefish. That is the recreational ACL for all of those species combined. It's not in any proportion out to one or the other, but it's just all the landings of all those species for the recreational sector.

We have the ACLs listed next to the species that they correspond to, noting some of these are still in those Coastal Household Telephone Survey units, and some of them haven't transitioned over

to the FES from their assessments, and I do also want to point out, for a couple of these, namely the tilefishes right here, blueline tilefish and golden tilefish, that the season length is shown here as what the season length could potentially be, under current regulations. For both of these species, the Fisheries Service announces the recreational season.

Now, as of Amendment 52, they give an announcement, kind of similar to how, each year, they announce the red snapper season, the length of that season. For blueline tilefish, they are going to -- Starting this year, and they've done it for golden tilefish, and they will announce blueline later on in the year, because that has a May 1 start date, but they will announce the length of that recreational season, and so it could be anywhere between May 1 and August 31, but it depends on the catch rates from the previous year and how long that season is going to be.

Golden tilefish, based on the catch rates from the previous year, that actually only went through the end of February this year, and so that was -- I just wanted to make sure that that's noted, that this is the potential season, and not necessarily the effective season every year, because we have that different accountability measure in place. Because of that season announcement, both of those species don't have in-season closures anymore as part of their AM, and so it's just a set announcement annually, based on the catch rates of the previous year, but that season doesn't get shorter if they hit the recreational ACL at that time.

This is kind of the situation, where we sit as far as the start dates, and just kind of laying out that information for you all, and the question that the council had for you is along the lines of, you know, comment on any risks, or benefits, of either keeping these, or changing them, and is there a possibility that alignment of seasonal start dates for any of these deepwater species -- Could these have benefits, like increased trip efficiency, or reducing out-of-season discards, something of that nature?

I know one thing, for these deepwater species, one of the things that we deal with, from a data standpoint, is that, if there are seasons where there's not a whole lot of effort directed at these species, if we get an intercept of blueline tilefish, or golden tilefish, and they happen, that trip, to be able to catch a lot in one trip, and it happens, you know, at a time when there's not a whole lot of recreational effort, say in Wave 1, January and February, or Wave 6, November and December, and then that can make for a really uncertain estimate of the recreational catch, because that does get expanded through the MRIP data, and that's something that, you know, they're trying to find ways to correct for, but, as the data collection goes right now, that's something that can affect that, and so I did want to make sure I note that, because that's something that we deal with when we go through stock assessments of some of these less-frequently-intercepted species. I will pause there, and I guess I'll see if there are any questions before you guys provide your comments.

MR. LORENZ: It looks like most of our deepwater group is to my left, and so, to start with the questions, Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: Like when we have to pay back, in the accountability part, how long does that last? Is it just a one-year payback, or do we have to pay back all of the overage?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So there is no payback accountability measure, and you're thinking of for like blueline tilefish?

MR. PILAND: Or golden.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Or golden, yes, and so there's so no payback accountability measures for those. What happens is the service, NOAA Fisheries, they look at what the catch rates were, how many -- You know, down to the point of like how many tilefish per day are people to have estimated to catch, and then how many days will it take before that annual catch limit is reached, and then they set the season based on that length of time, but there isn't a payback for an overage of the recreational ACL, and there is no in-season stop of that recreational season, once it's set.

MR. PILAND: So, moving ahead, should we assume that the season is only going to be two months?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Because it depends on the previous year's estimates, and I know, for golden tilefish, in the situation that we're in now, golden tilefish -- That one can vary pretty widely, in terms of its catch rates, because of some of that rarely-intercepted data that we were talking about estimated through the MRIP program. If you look at the time series of recreational catches for that, you have low catches, for several years, and then you see a big spike, and then you have low catches, for several years, and then you see a big spike.

Sometimes that variability is going to end up affecting it, but, other years, it will look more, I guess, quote, unquote, normal, based on the data that we see right now, and so I can't say that it's only going to be two months every year, because, some years, you may have a bit more reliable information, just because the catch rates -- You didn't have that rare out-of-season intercept, where it's gotten extrapolated to a very large value, and, in that case, then the season may be projected to be much longer.

MR. PILAND: We were at 1500 percent of the ACL last year.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and that would have been one of those big spikes, but, if you look at say the last five years, several of those years are going to be -- You know, right now, the ACL is, what, 2,600, and that's a new number, but several of those years, in the previous five years, have been under 2,000 fish, something like that, and so, yes, you have that big spike, and that's going to significantly shorten the season, but I don't -- I can't say that that would be an every year occurrence.

MR. PILAND: We had four months, last year, that we were real close to -- I mean, four reporting periods, two-month periods, that were close to the ACL itself. You know, it was over a thousand fish in a two-month period, and I don't think we can hope that we're going to have a year-long season, with catches like that, and is that safe to -- Is that a safe way to think, moving ahead?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I suppose so.

MR. PILAND: You can say I don't know, and I will take it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the better answer is I don't know. I don't know. The data are too variable for me to really give a good year-to-year reliable estimate, and so I wouldn't -- It's hard for me to predict, because the data themselves are -- They vary widely.

MR. LORENZ: All right. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Is the start date, for each respective season, always going to be the same, or will they choose a window, based on a previous season harvest rate, during a certain timeframe, and maybe have access longer, you know, projected longer access, you know.

Then, kind of going back to what Andy was saying, you know, in one of those breakout years, those anomalies, those spikes, however you want to define it, and the next year kicks in, and the projection is for, you know, a six or eight-week season, and then that season opens and closes, wherever it falls on the calendar, and then the projection for the season after that, I would assume, would be a much longer season, just because the year before was so short. I mean, I think you're going to see like a rubber-band effect, when it comes to this type of management, when you're reacting on what happened the previous year, and, I mean, I could be wrong, but it just kind of seems, to me, that it's going to spring like that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I will address your second part first. Yes, probably, at least for these species where we have very high uncertainty for our recreational estimates, and, yes, it could be that. Going to the other portion of the start date, no, the start dates would not change, and the start dates are set within the management plan, you know via previous amendments, and so these start dates are when the season would start every year, and then, depending on what the accountability measure is that's in place, there may be an in-season, you know, closure, if that species has that type of accountability measure, or, if it's one of the ones where they announce the season, then they may vary the end time of that season, but the start date would be the same every year.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: With the ACL of golden tiles and snowy grouper being very similar, in the 2,000-fish range, it would seem that those two species, both deepwater species, would start at the same time, and we can only have one snowy per vessel, and one golden per boat, or one golden per person, right now, and it would seem that starting goldens with snowy would be very reasonable, in my mind.

MR. LORENZ: Agreed, Andy, and it's on the board, and that's one of the objectives of this discussion, is talking about potential alignments, so you can have, you know, a better trip, and better economics because of it. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: At least in my area, in a lot of the yellowedge bottom, they also catch snowy grouper and the blueline tile, and I know a lot of guys that like to go yellowedge fishing, but I think it should align, but I would hate to see those guys lose four months, and, right now, snowy grouper is not open, for recreational, until May, but I think they should all coincide, but I don't want to see people losing out on four months of fishing either.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Andy. Anyone else with any comments on the seasons and alignments and the groupings? A lot of it looks like a full year. Andy Piland, go ahead.

MR. PILAND: I am not trying to bogart.

MR. LORENZ: No, and it's your fishery.

MR. PILAND: The fishermen in North Carolina, especially the northern part, really need the season to be open longer, longer into the year, and not necessarily more days, but just July and August is the bluefin fishery is extremely important to the Oregon Inlet group. The sharks have shown up in force, and we cannot get tunas in, and there's no need for fish for them. The dolphins have mostly -- The bigger schools have moved north, and they're stuck with trying to satisfy families with a catch of tilefish.

As of today, the season is closed when they need it the most. It's not quite as bad in Hatteras, and we've got triggers and snappers that we can -- You know, on a really bad day, that we can catch, but those guys don't have triggers and snappers. The only thing they've got is sea bass, which are already in trouble. They would actually have to drive over the tilefish to get to the sea bass, in July and August, and those guys really need the season to be open later in the year. They're not asking for a longer season, and, I mean, everybody would like that, but they're asking for the season to be open later, so that they can keep their business flowing.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Andy. Noted, and that's very interesting to me, going over the tilefish to get sea bass. I have word that Jack Cox has joined us online, and he wishes to speak and address us on this issue, and so, Jack, as you're available, you're recognized to speak. Go ahead, Jack.

MR. COX: Thank you, Chair. Sorry that I haven't been with you guys, and I've been out of the country, traveling, but, on this topic here, I would just like to say that I think it's very important, when we talk about aligning the seasons on these deepwater species, especially when we have snowies that are in such dire straits, that the bluefin tile, the snowy, and the golden tile should -- The seasons should all be aligned. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Jack. Noted. All right. Any comment? Any further comment? All right, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I guess it sounds like, from the comments, there is, you know, a desire for alignment of these seasons, and is there a recommendation on timing of that alignment? We've heard, from Andy, that folks in North Carolina are interested in bluefin tilefish and having access in that July and August wave. With, you know, noting just the accountability measure that it's in place now for bluefin tilefish, the time that you can, you know, make sure that you have access is the earliest to your starting point, because you know that's the starting date, and that's your guaranteed time, but, depending on, you know, the projections, the catch rates from the previous year, or, in the case of species that have an ACL that will close in-season, that end date can vary a little bit.

If you're looking to kind of lock-in your predictable time, your most predictable time, it makes sense to have that at the beginning of your season, whatever your aligned start date is, and so I guess are there any comments on what you would recommend as -- If you're going to align, you know, this entire suite, or, in this suite, if you're going to align species in this group together, what should that start date be?

DR. LORENZ: Mike, are you asking that -- Because so much of this, to me, as a simple observation, is actually aligned, and it's like the whole year, with the exception of the NOAA

Fisheries closing it, if the fishing is getting too hot, and so there's a limited number of species to align.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right, and I guess the detail shown in the table is probably -- I guess there's more we could have condensed -- I could have condensed the deepwater complex down, and not had it spelled out by species, but, really, what we're talking about here is our major species groups are going to be -- I can highlight these, just so that they're a little bit more broad, and so we've got our snowy grouper, from the rec standpoint, and we seem to have fisheries that are pretty reliant on blueline tilefish, and there's at least growing interest, if not already established interest, in golden tilefish, from a recreational standpoint, and then we have kind of this other group of deepwater species, along with wreckfish.

A lot of the talk has been concerning golden tilefish, making sure that lines up with snowy grouper, but we also have this other deepwater complex, and do you all want that to be aligned with others? I'm not sure that it's necessarily facing early closures, but, yes, I guess, if you all are picking, you know, a time period that you really want access to this deepwater fishery, what is that time period, because we've also heard the comments that maybe May 1 -- If the desire is to have access to blueline tilefish later in the summer, then maybe the May 1 start date -- That might not be the most reliable option for that access, and, you know, that might be a topic of discussion, and so I guess that's why I'm kind of asking alignment, yes or no, and, if so, when are you thinking?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Okay. Gettys had his hand up, and I was going to recognize you, because you haven't spoken, and so we're pretty much sitting here with our contributions so far have been from our two Andy's, Andy Fish and Andy Piland, and Jack Cox, and so I will look to you three gentlemen to add a little color here. Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: With the creel limit reduction that we have, if my math is right, we did have a -- Last year, we had the potential of catching twenty-four fish on a charter boat, because we could use captain and mate, and so you had eight limits, potentially, and now we only have a six-man potential, with two fish, and so we went from twenty-four to twelve maximum potential, and that's a 50 percent reduction. That would cover the overage in itself, just the creel limit that we had last year, and is that right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, yes, and that was the intent. That was part of the intent of why the council passed those two measures alongside of each other, is, yes, they were going to the setting of the season, but they also recognized the need to do something to keep the season open longer, to keep that daily catch rate projection so that the season could remain open, and so that's something that, especially this first year, while these regulations are getting implemented, would need to be taken into account, is the fact that, like you said, that no captain and crew retention and going down from three fish to two fish per person.

MR. PILAND: Right, but, if the season -- If the creel limit was two, a maximum of twelve, and it was open May through August, we would be pretty darned close to our ACL, and is that mathematically correct? It's a 50 percent reduction, and we were just under 200 percent, and so that gets us back to 100 percent.

AP MEMBER: The time would double, the time it took to get there.

MR. PILAND: Last year, we fished from May through August.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, from what I'm seeing on the NMFS catch monitoring website, it went through the end of the season, and it went through the end of August, for blueline, but, as far as trying to predict based on the reduction -- I can see how that would work, and I can't necessarily speak on annual catch rates, just because I don't have that information in front of me right now, but I can see that, yes, it would make sense to, you know, reduce the bag limit in that fashion and to project a longer season.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. I want to recognize our vice chairman, James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Kind of moving forward with ideas on alignment and start dates, because our region is fairly broad, in not only distance, but weather, and really where the people are, would it be feasible to have a two-start-date calendar, a January 1 and a June 1, for instance, or July 1, or however --

Split the year up in half, and then have either half of the ACL for half of the designated time start at each jump-off point, giving both regions -- You know, both -- You know, in Florida, in the south, and the people are in south Florida, and so a January opportunity at the deepwater fish is probably very doable, you know, and the people are there for the winter, the warmer weather, and you still have good-weather windows. Then, you know, South Carolina and North Carolina, the dead of summer is the best time, and so, I mean, two possible start dates, splitting up either the time or the ACL, and is that something worth discussing?

MR. LORENZ: Any comment from the other AP members? Robert Freeman.

MR. FREEMAN: From my experience as a charter boat, the season runs from the time the kids get out of school until the kids go back to school, is the large majority, but another point is we should be very careful in having seasons that don't allow keeping the beeliners, silvers, tilefish, and snowy grouper. They're all in the same area, and they need to have the same timeframe for being caught, and that would be my suggestion, to keep from having a bunch of dead discards.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Robert. Yes, the dead discards are an important point, and part of this discussion, also. Anyone else? It looks like we're kind of there, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so are folks kind of onboard with at least exploring this idea, and this would be kind of a -- I kind of view what James proposed as akin to what we've done for several of our commercial fisheries, having split seasons, where say 50 percent of the ACL is allocated to the first half of the year, and, if they hit, you know, their ACL, their half ACL, then it closes until the second-half opens, and then the rest of it is put into the second half of the year, until that ACL is hit, and is that something that you all would like to explore, from a recreational standpoint, for these deepwater species?

I do -- I guess, before a final decision from you all is made, I do want to point out that we are still working with MRIP recreational data, and one of the characteristics of the recreational data, versus the commercial data, is that there is a different timing of reporting, and that there is a different level of uncertainty that's associated with those estimates, and so that high variability that we were talking about for golden tilefish -- That's something that is kind of tied more directly to the

recreational data, and so that's something that could have an impact, as well as the timing that we get this catch monitoring information.

The timing that we normally have our recreational data is about -- It's roughly about two months after that wave is completed, and so catches from the beginning of the year, through the end of February, that data would be available, like late into April, and that's about the timing that we would have that information available to evaluate what happened at that time, and so I'm just making sure that the data capabilities are put out there, so that you all are aware of them.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Conklin, a comment?

MR. CONKLIN: I feel like I've heard this discussion before, and some of the rationale was that there just aren't enough fish, and one region had access to them before another one hit their prime time, and, if they blew through the ACL, then, obviously, there couldn't be a second season, and so it's just more to use the cruddy data in your favor to just have a summer kind of recreational derby. That way, you didn't have a winner and a loser, but that was just kind of what to Mike was alluding to.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Chris. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I mean, I guess, to put it in perspective, I think golden tilefish closed on March 1, recreational, and I can't imagine, in Cape Hatteras, or anywhere north of South Carolina, that they had too many days to go fishing sixty miles offshore for a golden tilefish, and it seems either something regional, or a split season, and, I mean, it definitely doesn't seem fair.

MR. LORENZ: Andy brings up a point, because, from time to time in the snapper grouper fishery, we have talked of regional variations, and is that covered there, Mike? I'm trying to look at that, and my eyes are getting a little blurry here. We talk about the timing, but -- Okay. Yes, the start dates, but also the exploration of regional differences for start dates and stop dates. We can always keep that out there. As Andy noted, March was probably one of the most horrible months for offshore here, just about ever. Okay.

MR. MILITELLO: Mike, aren't these dates -- Weren't they originally put in there for a reason, and was it spawning, or what -- Like all the May dates.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to go back to look, specifically for each of these, and I know that there may have been some spawning considerations, although blueline tilefish -- I only know that one, just because that was one that I worked on, and blueline tilefish spawn well beyond that May through August period, but I also may have been just management oriented. When catch levels needed to come down, annual catch limits needed to come down, they may have -- The council may have noticed that this is kind of the prime time that people wanted to be able to have access to this fishery, and so they set the season with that timeframe, to kind of close off the ends, so that there aren't potentially those extraneous data points throwing off the estimation, things of that nature, and those are the times of year when people largely -- You know, for blueline tilefish, thinking of like the North Carolina area, folks aren't going fishing heavily for blueline in that winter time period.

MR. MILITELLO: All right, and so nothing specific about why they were there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not that I can think of, but I would have to look at them on a more individual basis, and I kind of high-view gathered this piece of information, but I can look and see what some of those motivations were, but my impression, my first impression, is it was probably more management oriented than it was biologically driven.

MR. MILITELLO: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chris. Anyone else here? I know our charge, from Mike, was mainly the recommendations of the timing of these seasons, and we have some up there. Any more recommendations? It's a pretty simple assignment today, and I think we made a few statements here. Mike, it looks like we're kind of winding-down here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Yes, and this is -- If this is the point that you all are content with, then, yes, we will bring this to the council with your recommendations in June.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you. That concludes Agenda Item 8 for today, and the only thing remaining is the election of the chair and the vice chair, and I guess, if we have a little time, we could always move up a little something from tomorrow to today, and I don't know, and we could talk to Chip, and I know the SEDAR was really a solicitation of volunteers, and I don't know whether we want to do that or not, but, if we have a couple of minutes today, at the end of the day, it might behoove us to just do that and get the extra fifteen minutes or something tomorrow.

Essentially, as your chair, this is my last meeting, and I am -- I term-out in June, and it will my intention now, unless I'm told not to, or asked not to, to report on this meeting to the council at the June meeting, and I guess that's down towards Daytona, and so we have the election of the chairman, and we'll proceed with the election of the chair first, a nomination, and then election of the chair, and then we need a nomination, and an election, for the vice chair, understanding that, with time, it's usual for the vice chair to then move into the -- To be the chair, and, if somebody has some reservations about that, I guess we could have a temporary stopgap in between, but I will leave it at that. So, for the chairman, do I have a recommendation for the chairman? As procedure has it, it would be James stepping into that spot. Andy.

MR. PILAND: **I will recommend James.**

MR. NELSON: Second.

MR. LORENZ: Recommend James, and a second. I guess we can do a vote on that. We had the motion, and the motion was made by Andy Piland, and it was seconded by Paul Nelson. All right, and a vote. **All in favor. It's unanimous.** Okay. **It's unanimous that James is your new chair, starting in June. The motion is approved.** All right. Now the vice chair. Do I have any motions for the vice chair? Vincent Bonura.

MR. BONURA: **A recommendation, and I would like to put in Chris Kimrey as our vice chair, as a nomination.**

MR. CONSTANT: I second it.

MR. LORENZ: All right. We have a motion to elect Chris Kimrey as vice chair of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, and that was by Vincent Bonura, and that was seconded by Tony Constant. Chris, do you accept the nomination?

MR. KIMREY: I do.

MR. LORENZ: Chris accepts the nomination. We'll take a vote. **All those in favor of Chris as vice chair. It's again unanimous, and we're done.** Thank you. Congratulations, Chris and James, and thank you very much to the AP, and I think you're going to get some good folks next year. All right. Let's be productive for the next few minutes, and are you okay with that, Chip? Let's do the SEDAR, since that's kind of straightforward, what you want to do.

DR. COLLIER: All right. So I will go through this fairly quickly, and just a reminder of what SEDAR is, and SEDAR stands for Southeast Data Assessment and Review, and it's our process of how we go through stock assessments, making sure that all the information in stock assessments is based on information that is the best available, and, you know, sometimes it's -- It can be challenging, but I think it's an extremely valuable process for the fishermen to be involved in. Quite often, they have insights that help to inform the stock assessment, and the process, and making for a better product in the end.

Sorry that I did not have an attachment for this, and there was a meeting on Monday, where they were talking about -- There is a group called the SEDAR Steering Committee, and the SEDAR Steering Committee helps to direct which projects are going on. The committee includes people from the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, Highly Migratory Species, focusing on the Atlantic, Gulf States, Atlantic States, as well as FWC, and there's a variety of people in this, because there's all kinds of folks that our Southeast Fisheries Science Center helps to provide assessments for, and so everybody works together in order to best utilize their time.

We've had -- They just had their most recent meeting, talking about what will happen for the 2026 and 2027 stock assessments, and also changes coming through the SEDAR process, and so I'm going to go into the projects that are occurring in 2023 and 2024, and then, finally, I will get to some of the projects for 2025 and request for some participants for those projects in 2025.

The first item I'm going to talk about is we had requested a red grouper stock assessment for the South Atlantic, and this was going to be an operational assessment, and, based on some information that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center pulled together, it indicated there is potentially two different stocks within the South Atlantic region, and so mainly a south Florida stock and then a Carolina stock, and, based on that information, the Science Center had recommended going forward with a two-stock model for that, and the council kind of balked at the idea of doing this through an operational assessment.

Operational assessments don't necessarily have the level of review of a benchmark assessment, and so the council requested that this go through kind of a benchmark process, in order to develop estimates of sustainable harvest for the northern and the southern region, and so SEDAR 86 for red grouper was cancelled, and it has been put back on the schedule in 2026, as a more complete stock assessment. If you have any questions, as I'm talking about these, please go ahead and raise your hand.

The next species that I will talk about is mutton snapper, and this is going to be SEDAR 79, and it is going to be a benchmark assessment. It was originally slated to be completed in 2023. However, there was a request to look at Florida's new Reef Fish Survey, the State Reef Fish Survey, and use that to estimate recreational catch estimates for mutton snapper, and so they're working on calibrating data going back in time, through Florida's estimates of recreational catch, and, in order to do that, that's going to delay the stock assessment a little bit, and so it's going to be delayed until -- It was delayed until September, or it's going to be delayed until September of 2024, and that will allow them to do the calibration back in time and consider whether the State Reef Fish Survey is going to be the best approach in order to estimate recreational landings in the State of Florida.

Two weeks ago, we had our SEDAR 82, gray triggerfish, research track assessment, and that was a review that occurred, and the stock assessment will be completed by May of 2024. That will mean the stock assessment will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, likely in October, or potentially over a summer webinar this year.

Two ongoing stock assessments that we have, and one is SEDAR 89, and this is going to be South Atlantic tilefish. It's an operational assessment, and there were several pieces of life history information that were questioned, and so they have a topical working group focused in on addressing some of these life history questions, including the maturity, whether or not these are hermaphroditic species, as some papers have indicated, and so they're working -- They've worked through the life history information, and are developing working papers for that, and we're hoping that the final assessment report will be available by July of 2024.

SEDAR 92 is an operational assessment for blueline tilefish. This too had a topical working group, and the reason for this is it includes landings up in Virginia and northward, and the landings in that area were highly uncertain, and, actually, there weren't really any landings reported through MRIP, even though world records were being reported off of Virginia, and so, in order to estimate landings of recreational catch up there, they had to go through an estimation, or a landing stream, topical working group, and that topical working group is going to start meeting April through July of 2024, and we're hoping that we have a completed assessment in November of 2024.

I will say, for both of these stock assessments, the Science Center has said that we probably need to put a halt on these and wait for the deepwater longline survey to be available, in order to provide more information to estimate the sustainability of the stock.

Skipping down, I know some people will be interested in this, and we do have a benchmark assessment going on for Atlantic migratory cobia, and that's SEDAR 95, and that's being done for the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. It used to be managed by the South Atlantic Council, but, due to the large portion of the catch occurring in state waters, it was moved over to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, and so they're hoping to have a completed project in November of 2025.

The next one is SEDAR 96, the Florida yellowtail snapper operational assessment, and we have been talking about yellowtail quite a bit, and it's been getting several operational assessments, in order to incorporate some of the new recreational data as they come in, and so what's happened with this most recent one is the estimate, or the potential bias, that was reported for some of the

MRIP estimates, and up to 40 percent came up, and this species has that State Reef Fish Survey data, where the heart of the fishery occurs, and so this operational assessment is going to be looking at the feasibility of incorporating the Florida State Reef Fish Survey recreational estimates into the stock assessment and then calibrate it backwards, and this one is to be completed in late 2024.

Upcoming projects, the first one is SEDAR 90, and this is going to be a benchmark assessment for Atlantic red snapper, and we are currently -- There is a group called the planning team for this, and everything has been put together, and we have developed terms of reference for this species, and also developed a project schedule, and the assessment is scheduled to begin in November of 2024, and this is going to start with a data scoping, with an in-person meeting shortly there afterwards, and it was April of 2025 is when the in-person meeting is going to occur, and that is where we would like to have some volunteers from this group potentially be involved in the stock assessment for red snapper.

This is going to be a big project. We have a variety of data sources coming into this one, where we could use some input from fishermen. One of the projects that's going to be considered for this, or two of the projects, are projects that Julia and the Citizen Science Program are leading up. One is the FISHstory program, looking at estimates of lengths of red snapper from the historic time period, as well as potentially developing catch per unit effort from that time series, and another project that Julia is working on is the Release program, and what that does is it's trying to estimate the size of released red snapper in the current timeframe, and so she's working on the history and the current stuff for red snapper.

Then the other project that's going on is the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program, and it's got a funky acronym for it, and I don't want to say that to you all, but so that's going to be integrated into the stock assessment as well, and so we're looking at a lot of different data streams, a lot of valuable information, and we could use some insight from fishermen into this project.

AP MEMBER: Is there going to be anything with industry involved like before, and I don't remember how many years ago, ten years ago or whatever, and we had a longline survey done, and there hasn't been one done, I don't think, since, or whatnot, and is that going to be done on this particular thing, because I think there was a lot of data from that, from the longline, because hook-and-line couldn't do as much in the deep, from what I understand, or something to that effect.

DR. COLLIER: So there is -- There is a longline project that's going on, and it started in 2020. However, it was recommended that that first year of data not necessarily be used, because the sample size was so small, and so 2021 would be the first year, and then, thinking that this stock assessment is going to be starting in 2025, that would only give us data through 2024, and they really wanted five years of data, in order to develop an index of abundance for it.

However, that's not going to prevent them from using some of the biological data that they're catching -- From the red snapper that they're catching in this project. It is -- Of the assessed species that they're observing in the longline project, red snapper is ranking sixth among them, and so they are -- Even though we think of them more in the shallower waters, they are out to greater than 240 feet.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else have any questions for Chip, or volunteers, and, I guess, did you want to go through specifically where you may want to volunteer, and where the study will be, or where they should be -- You know, where it would be?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and we would love people -- We would love members of this group to volunteer to be part of the data workshop, as well as the assessment workshop, and so the data workshop, like I said, is going to occur here in Charleston, in April of 2025, and then the assessment workshops -- Those will occur over a webinar, a series of webinars, and we're not exactly certain on the timeframe of that, because, when they're trying to incorporate some of the South Atlantic research project data into the stock assessment, it is going to be a very new process, and it's never been done on any assessment in the U.S., and so it's going to be a novel process, and it might take them a little bit longer, and they're thinking it will take them a little bit longer, and so we're not certain when the assessment webinars will start, but it's likely that they will occur in 2026, and so if anyone wants to volunteer.

MR. LORENZ: Paul is volunteering. Are you volunteering for the data or the assessment or both?

MR. NELSON: I will do both.

MR. LORENZ: Okay.

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

DR. COLLIER: No, and this would be volunteer for the data workshops, in order to sit in the meetings and provide a fisherman's perspective on some of the data, and maybe some of the findings of the data, and not necessarily doing more research on the water.

MR. PILAND: (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. COLLIER: Sounds good.

MR. LORENZ: So you're volunteering to come to Charleston? Okay. Thank you, Andy. Anyone else for the data workshop, the assessment workshop, or both? All right, Chip. That's it, and I guess we can always call later and volunteer. Thank you. Chip, go ahead.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and the last project going on, that's related to species that occur over here in the South Atlantic, or species that we manage over here, is going to be a hogfish benchmark assessment, and this is going to be conducted by the State of Florida. They're going to be looking at the two stocks that occur in Florida, and it's going to be the West Florida Shelf, as well as the Florida Keys/East Florida stock.

This assessment was originally scheduled to occur in 2024. However, to accommodate that recreational data inputs in yellowtail snapper, they decided to delay this stock assessment until 2025, and so we will be requesting -- Or we are requesting participants for this hogfish stock assessment. I don't have a schedule for you for this quite yet, but it's going to be occurring in 2025. The data workshop is likely to occur in St. Petersburg, Florida, and, once again, it's going to be focused just on Florida hogfish, and so any volunteers for that would be greatly appreciated.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Volunteers for the hogfish benchmark assessment, and it seems like, at this point, you're getting your name on the list to be contacted, in the future, and kept apprised of when this is going to kick-off and happen, and so does anybody want to have their name on Chip's list for now?

AP MEMBER: Where is it at?

MR. LORENZ: St. Petersburg, Florida. Chip, you didn't elaborate on when.

DR. COLLIER: It's going to be 2025, and I don't have a specific time of when it's going to occur.

MR. FISH: (Mr. Fish's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. LORENZ: Okay, and so, Andrew Fish, you're on the mailing list then, right? Okay.

DR. COLLIER: The individuals don't necessarily have to be on an AP right now, and what we would have to do is get them to apply to be part of the SEDAR Pool, and, once they apply for the SEDAR Pool, then we can get them put on these data workshops and assessment workshops.

MR. LORENZ: All right, and so Vincent is going to help us get some names, and a little bit of publicity there, and pass them on to Chip, if need be. Correct?

MR. BONURA: Yes, you got it, and I will call a couple of my friends and buddies, fishermen I know, and get some more information on it for you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Vincent.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Chip has concluded. Any last-minute statement from anybody, before I adjourn? Tomorrow we will be into Amendment 56 for black sea bass. Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: A quick question about the past. Last October, the MSE was here, the company that's doing it, and we all, as a group, gave a handful of ideas about the red snapper progression, and he was going to come back with something, and has anybody heard anything from the MSE program?

MR. LORENZ: It was Chip that covered it today, but go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's what I covered today, and I was just trying to gather some information to better inform the model, and develop the model, but they are going to be coming back to you all in October, and they're going to be trying to incorporate a lot of the information that we went over today during that --

MR. CONSTANT: Well, I mean, I know we did it today, but we did it last October, and I haven't heard any results from that, and is --

DR. COLLIER: Yes, they've incorporated some of that, but we wanted a little bit more details, and that's why we asked all those questions today, and, yes, the devil is in the details, and that's what we were trying to get out, is to get the devil out of those.

MR. CONSTANT: I didn't realize they fed on each other.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Tony. It's 5:03, and we're adjourned until tomorrow at 8:30 in the morning. Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 27, 2024.)

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MARCH 28, 2024

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Town and Country Inn, Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, March 28, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: Good morning. It's our third day on the Snapper Grouper AP, March 28. Welcome to everybody, and thank you for showing up bright and early here in the morning. We have a few items left to go. The first item that we are going to have is Amendment 56, which is the black sea bass stock assessment response. I think maybe what we'll do is go through that.

I'm thinking, if we get to around 10:00, we'll take a ten or fifteen-minute break, just for everybody that, you know, wants to get their stuff, that sort of thing, bring it in, check out, whatever, and then we'll finish up, but, you know, we'll play it by ear, if we're rolling along pretty good, and we may not necessarily, you know, need that break, if we're going to probably adjourn before 11:00, and we'll see how this goes. All right, and so, to start -- I guess, to kick us off, Mike, you'll be giving us the overview of the black sea bass assessment response.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. I'm going to switch presenters, really quick, so that we can run the overview app offline. Okay, and so, within the agenda overview, as well as the document that's posted online, the attachment for black sea bass, there's a link going to the fishery overview, and I'll hit on that first, just because that gives some information on the stock assessment, and that can kind of set the frame for what we're talking about here, as far as the response that the council has to take for this action.

First, looking at the assessment outputs, we have our reference point metrics for first fishing mortality, and you see how fishing mortality has progressed for black sea bass over time, and the model estimated that fishing mortality has been on an increasing trend and is above the FMSY line, and that's the reference point there, and so that would indicate that overfishing is occurring for this stock, according to that. Then we have our spawning stock biomass metric here, and we

see the spawning stock biomass is below its metric, although I wonder -- Chip, is that line correct for SSB MSY? It's up here at the top, running all the way back.

DR. COLLIER: (Dr. Collier's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Gotcha. Okay, and so it's well below its spawning stock biomass at MSY, indicative of the -- Okay, and so would it be better for me to pull the SEDAR 76 report?

DR. COLLIER: (Dr. Collier's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so there's been an update to the report, in terms of how the relative spawning stock biomass -- The end result is that the stock is overfished. It's below the biomass line, but we can get you the updated information, as far as where it sits within that frame, and so, with that, I'm going to skip over the Kobe plot, just because we have kind of the older information regarding the spawning stock biomass, versus the overfishing portion, and so that may need to be updated as well.

What do see, in this stock, and it's kind of driving the status of it, is this severe decline in recruitment, and this is showing the age-zero recruits of black sea bass, and there's been a big decline really since this peak in 2009. Following that, there's been declines all the way into the present. This uptick that is at the end, that's not a real uptick, and that is these years we didn't have data, but we needed data inputs to project the model forward, and so these are averages of the recent years around there, and so those would have been the averages probably over the last five or so years, but that's not an observed uptick in recruitment at the end, and so don't get excited about that, and we can see the spawning stock biomass relative to the age-zero recruitment here, and you can kind of see where that lines up on a year-by-year basis, and then our indices of abundance for black sea bass.

There were a few historical indices, but the one that's used really into the present is the trap and video index, and that's what has carried us forward, and the index, the fishery-independent index, is showing that trend that is observed for the biomass and for the recruitment of declines, really sharp declines, going into the present day, and so that's kind of a summary of the assessment results, and then we'll move over to the projections coming out of this, and this is a tough spot to be in. There's not really much sugarcoating it.

With that big drop in recruitment, what we're seeing now is recruitment at an all-time low level for black sea bass, and so the long-term recruitment, the long-term average, hasn't really been showing up in those recent years, and so you kind of end up having to make a decision of what is more likely, what you've seen over the last ten years, or, you know, is there a possibility that recruitment comes back up, for black sea bass, to its long-term average.

One of the things you notice, throughout the time series for black sea bass, looking back in time, is that you see kind of these sporadic -- I would have to go to the recruitment, to show this. I'm coming back to this figure, but you see, kind of mixed in throughout this, and it's always, you know, really a gradual increase, and you may have a few periods of gradual increase, but a lot of times you see a spike, followed by a couple of down years, and then a spike, followed a few down years, and so a lot of this population persistence does have some dependency on strong year classes, and that's something that's really difficult to predict when one of those strong year classes

may happen, and it's probably environmentally driven. It's probably strongly environmentally driven.

Looking at these projections, what we have is, in this figure, these are the ABC projections, and the ABC projections are based on the recent recruitment, because these are meant to be short-term projections that are used to develop catch levels for the next few years, and we'll talk about that a little bit more when we get into the amendment, because it does kind of present a hurdle when we get to management, the fact that -- The timeframe that these are for.

The use of that short-term recruitment, this is kind of what we would be looking at. This red line here would be the projected ABC. The projected overfishing limit, that would come out of that same type of recruitment, is this blue line, shown here, and the yellow lines are the interim years, where they had to use averages to kind of fill in data going from the last year of the assessment into the present year, where we're trying to set management for the future.

Now, looking at this figure, this shows kind of the scenario if black sea bass were to recover to their long-term recruitment, and so, if they were to go back to their long-term average recruitment, then there would be a pretty quick response to that population increasing, with that projected overfishing limit up to a much higher level than what you were seeing if the low recruitment is assumed, and so it's a question about the assumption of what's the more likely scenario, as far as that recruitment, and the policy that the Scientific and Statistical Committee, that they've --

The approach that they've decided on, for these scenarios, is that the short-term recruitment is most appropriate to be used in setting the ABC, the acceptable biological catch, because that's what has been happening recently, and that's kind of a short-term projection scenario, but the overfishing limit projection -- It's more appropriate there to use the long-term average, because that's looking at a long-term recovery for that population, and so that's what they've decided in that regard, and that's kind of what is in the amendment document at this point, or the document that you will talk about today at this point.

In terms of removals in these projections, this is kind of what was projected for removals, and one of the big issues that you see here is that a good chunk of that is happening in the form of discards. Now, black sea bass present a particular difficulty, because there's a good portion of catch in state waters of black sea bass, and there are small black sea bass that go into state waters, and those are discarded fish. They're in the discard estimates, but they, you know, may not necessarily have the same contribution to the snapper grouper federal fishery in the same way, and there is only a certain amount of control that can be exerted on that, because those are state waters.

That's state-water jurisdiction, and so there will be different regulations, like some of the circle hooks and descending devices may not be requirements in state waters, where black sea bass are being caught, but those two areas are going to affect each other, in terms of this population as a whole, and so that's something that the council is going to need to work through, as we develop a plan forward for this, but this is kind of the scenario of the projections as they were modeled, and then we'll go through some of the landings information from what we've seen recently, and so just looking at percent of the ACL that's been harvested by year, and by sector, for black sea bass, we have the gray for commercial.

Commercial has been, for the last few years, below 50 percent, but, kind of on a longer-term basis, hovering around 50 percent, slightly below 50 percent, of their ACL, and the recreational -- The recreational has been below their ACL as well, going back to 2014. They've been below 50 percent since 2014, and so neither sector is catching their ACL, and it's not necessarily -- While the status is overfishing, the status is overfishing and overfished at this point, and it's one of these situations where the recruitment has declined so much that it may not necessarily be fishing itself that is the driver, that is causing the decline, and so that's the way that the model outputs it, but the status may not be caused by the fishing itself, and it's this severe decline in recruitment that the stock is experiencing, and we've seen it for other stocks in the area, other of some of the grouper stocks.

You can see the landings scenario, how those have played out over the last several years. Recent landings have been cumulatively around, or below, 500,000 pounds. The seasonal landings, kind of how those have played over time, and you see the different waves in the commercial and recreational fisheries shown there, and then regional landings, and we see, in the past, there were much more proportional landings in the Florida and Georgia region. Those have declined quite a bit and so now, in the more recent years, it's more heavily focused in the Carolinas. Chip, just the North Carolina shown here is only south of Hatteras, correct? It's filtered based on county, and it's south of Cape Hatteras, because there is a separate Mid-Atlantic population of black sea bass from Cape Hatteras north, and that's managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council. I'm just double-checking, in case people had that question.

Looking into some of the commercial sector information, we can see landings versus releases in this figure. There's declining trends in landings. Releases have never really been all that high, but declining, and kind of flattening out, on the releases end.

For the seasonal landings, the commercial fishery operates a bit more prominently in the -- More recently in the winter months, in the colder months. For regional landings in the commercial fishery, we see kind of that trend of Florida declining, Florida and Georgia declining there, and it's mostly the Carolinas now. Here, we're seeing the length distribution of the commercial fish, and you can see how that has kind of changed over time. Here we have pounds landed per trip, and you can see the frequency of black sea bass per trip, and then the number of trips landing black sea bass, by pounds, for the commercial fishery.

DR. COLLIER: One of the things that I want to point out with this is, you know, what you're seeing in the commercial fishery kind of indicates what the stock assessment is showing. If you look at that 2002 plot on the top-left over there, you're seeing a lot of trips, or a lot of pounds being landed, in that greater than a thousand pounds on a trip, and then, if you look in the most recent time period, 2022, you're not seeing any trips, and very few pounds, catching over 500 pounds, and so it is concerning, what's going on with this.

The fishery is showing considerable decreases in the pounds landed per trip, and, overall, trips catching, you know, significant pounds of black sea bass, and it could be due to regulations. You know, there's a lot of regulations that are eliminating areas where the black sea bass pot fishery operated, and that's the group that caught a lot of those pounds, and then there's also been changes in size limits that could be reducing all of this.

MR. LORENZ: All right John, go ahead. As far as taking notes, go ahead and take your question.

MR. POLSTON: Actually, I just wanted to make a bit of a statement here, and I don't believe it's a coincidence that Florida and Georgia are showing declines in black sea bass. Like I've been saying for a while, the fish depredation, and you've got Florida and Georgia, which are probably the heaviest-loaded red snapper areas that there are, and they're declining in black sea bass, but yet still we've got ungodly amounts of red snapper there, and I believe that's where the fish are going. I believe the snapper are eating a lot of the black sea bass. It's a fact that we know that they do, and so I'm just saying that, the more snapper, the less black sea bass in the areas, and that's not a coincidence that it's declining in the states that has the most red snapper, in my opinion.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, John. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Kind of to speak to that, you know, in some of these species, where we're not catching barely 50 percent of the ACL, kind of across both sectors, and we have that classification of overfishing/overfished, and I know that, Mike, you kind of alluded to the fact that it's likely not overfished, or overfishing, the practice, and is there any timeframe where we could enter another category of environmental, you know, where the panel, and the council, basically are in agreement that, hey, this isn't something that our past management has created, but maybe an outside factor is contributing to this. Make it known, higher up in the government, that we have problems that don't stem from fishing, and overfishing, to make an official footnote on that we think is going on, instead of just classifying it the way we always have. Thanks.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We have started using, and apologies for not inserting this earlier, but we have started using the term "depleted", and that has made its way, I believe, into the stock status, the official stock status, realm, where that's kind of the category. Instead of being overfished, it's depleted, if fishing is kind of noted to be not the driving factor that has caused this type of issue. Overfishing is a little bit different, just because that's a status relative to a percentage of the current population, and it's kind of where you sit right now, and so overfishing is -- There is a portion of the population that could be sustainably taken out, and, if fishing is taking out above that sustained portion, then that's categorized as overfishing, and that amount can vary if the population is in a lower state, because it's a percentage of the population. That one is a little bit harder to characterize in a different way, but "depleted" is used as a replacement for "overfished" in that scenario.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I can absolutely appreciate that word being used, and, in species, you know, where we're hitting 115, or 120, percent of the ACL, and we have -- You know, we have paybacks, and we have other scenarios, and, you know, I could see where that species could lead to being called overfished, and I totally understand that, but depleted doesn't really capture the environmental aspect of the depletion, you know, and it could suggest that we made mistakes along the way in management, and we overproduced for a long period of time, and we missed the overfishing and overfished category ten years ago.

What it doesn't encapsulate is the environmental aspect, whether it be predation from red snapper, shark depredation, coastal development, all of which are environmental, environmental depletion, and not just depletion as a general statement.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. This is a good conversation, and so go ahead, Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: Do you guys work in accordance with the Mid-Atlantic on the stock assessments, and are they seeing similar declines, because, from what I've heard, and I have buddies in Nantucket, and they said the sea bass fishing was phenomenal, the best they've ever seen, and, obviously, everybody talks about the warming trend, and the shifting, and I was just wondering if you guys work in accordance with the Mid-Atlantic.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the stock assessment is not done in a joint manner with the Mid-Atlantic, because they're two separate populations, but we are aware of what's going on in the Mid-Atlantic, and like I sit on some of the committees that set their landings in the Mid-Atlantic, and not in a, you know, strongly contributory role, but just kind of being aware of what's happening in that region, but, yes, they're seeing great increases in their black sea bass, and they're seeing expansions northward in their black sea bass, into areas where, previously, they haven't been catching them, but now they're catching them in substantial numbers, and so there is very likely some type of climate change shift effect going on for black sea bass, and that really could be a contributing factor here.

MR. LORENZ: I think it would be great, and it's good to see fisheries management get a little more involved, and we do have to think of this swag that's coming in from the environment, coastal development, and even the natural history of some of these species. I've been around long enough that, for me, this will now be my third sea bass decline, and it's among my favorite species, and it's the third sea bass, and then the fourth one, the fourth bluefish, decline, or collapse, and the first one started when I was about eleven years old, and both of those species, with me, in my lifetime, all of a sudden miraculously came back, at some point, because I've been asked about the bluefish, and I said, well, I've seen these things disappear, and then, bang, here they come.

Then another favorite species, the striped bass, and a lot of what James talks about, with, you know, the center of abundance in the Chesapeake Bay, and even up into the Delaware Bay, and it's affecting them, but, yes, it is fishing, and there were some bad practices of going after those big females and things, out off of Virginia and off the Bay Bridge Tunnel, but I will be glad to see a little more of the focus of that, and, as we learn more with natural history and all, because it isn't just fishing, and I don't know, and I have personally seen it, and so thank you. John.

MR. POLSTON: It's funny that you brought up about the bluefish, and I just have been telling people -- Like said, for forty years, I've been buying fish there, and I've had more bluefish come in our place, in the last six months, than I have ever bought probably in my entire life there in Volusia County. They're big bluefish that I'm talking about, like sizes I've never seen, one here and one there, and I'm talking about thousands of pounds, and it's got to be some sort of migration, or something, from the north to the south.

I know they did a study where they definitely go from north to south to drop their eggs and stuff, and then they go back north, but we still have them in Florida right now, which is not normal, and we've never had them in those amounts before either, which that will show, you know, in the trip tickets coming up, but I'm just saying that it's happening now, in real time.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, John, and sorry for getting off-point there, Mike. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So we saw the dramatic drop in commercial fishing, and, you know, we've got records on what the charter and headboat, and has any of that been looked at, to see if there's

been the same dramatic drop, because I really haven't seen it. We had a phenomenal sea bass year last year.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So that may be in the recreational sector data, and it may not -- If it was last year that you're referring to, this would have ended in -- What was the terminal year? 2020, and so this wouldn't have gone through that point, and it may not have captured that, but I can get into the recreational sector data. If you all will just bear with me for one second, and let me finish out what's here, and, that way, I can also bring up the discussion document, so I can start documenting some of your comments.

We'll just finish up quickly here with kind of the introductory data, and, again, this is a link that you all can access, so you can kind of search through and click in, and, if you have questions, and follow-up, we're at the beginning of this amendment process, and so please email me, and ask questions, and I will coordinate with other staff, as needed, and we'll try to get you as many answers as we can, but here we see the recreational landings and releases, and, again, this is a species that is characterized by a high amount of releases. There is a minimum size limit for the recreational fishery, and folks have talked, in the past, about that contributing to the releases that are seen related to that.

We also have a lot of inshore fishing for, and I guess not inshore, but nearshore fishing for black sea bass in state waters, and that's another place where there's some significant contributions, in terms of the releases that occur. Here, we see the seasonal recreational landings for black sea bass, looking over time, kind of when they're caught by the recreational sector, and you can see the declines in numbers, as far as the shifting in the time of year, and the numbers are, you know, almost so low, at this point, that it's hard to really see, on that scale, the trends that are showing up, but it seems to sit mostly in that spring and summer time period, when you would expect more recreational fishing to occur.

Here, we're looking at the regional recreational landings, and examining that over time, and we don't seem to see as strong of a decline on the recreational sector, in terms of the Florida/Georgia decline in landings, as what you saw on the commercial side, but you kind of see how that pattern sits, moving forward. Here, we're showing the length distribution, and noting that there have been changes to that recreational minimum size limit over time, and so that's a factor that is kind of noted, and considered, in the management history.

Then, taking a look at the per-angler landings, and what we see over time there, and it's kind of similar to what Chip pointed out, and there have been changes in the bag limit over time for black sea bass, but kind of what Chip pointed out is there are fewer and fewer places where you're seeing kind of the large per-angler landings, as you look through this time series. As you get into the more recent years, there are a few of those high amounts where people are really hitting their -- Are proportionally getting close to the bag limit.

Then, sliding into life history data, and this will be the last portion, and this is how black sea bass are modeled to grow, length-at-age, and, similar to what you saw for hogfish in the app earlier, the points right here are the ages, and so reference those as you kind of look in some of the lower portions. Here, we see the length-at-weight, and, again, the dots are the ages, and so the ages and where they sit at a given typical length and the weight associated with that.

Here, we see black sea bass female maturity, and black sea bass are about 50 percent mature -- This would be -- That would be age-ones, age-ones right here, and, by age-three, they are pretty close to 100 percent mature. Black sea bass are protogynous hermaphrodites, and so females changing to males later on in their lifespan, and you can see that, here, with the proportion female, it's starting off very high, close to 100 percent, and then it's declining over time, as more and more of them transition to males, and you see the length that they're typically transitioning. About 50 percent are transitioned between about eleven-and-a-half inches, and that would be about the size, and that's what we have for the life history information.

I will pause here, and I guess initially see if there are any questions on data that's been presented here, and then we can transition over into the amendment document and start getting some of the comments, and the discussion, for the management responses.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Mike, I guess, while you were talking, there's something within your council staff, a Mr. Curtis, Judd, and, Mr. Curtis, I guess did you want to ask your question, or make your comment here, to our group?

DR. CURTIS: Thanks, Chair. All awesome questions on the data that Mike has presented, and I was going to talk a little bit about the environmental change, but I will let some questions, and answers, on the data go first.

MR. LORENZ: I did not quite understand, and I don't know, and, Mike, did you pick that up better?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think he's saying see if there are questions about the data from the advisory panel first, and then he can come back to some of the environmental discussion that happened earlier.

MR. LORENZ: Excellent. Okay. Anybody here have any questions on the data that was presented, the graphs and the data, and I guess it's landings and discards, et cetera. Cameron Sebastian.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So pretty much you're saying that, by eleven-and-a-half inches, all the sea bass have turned to male, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That's when about half of the females have turned to male.

MR. LORENZ: Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: I was just curious, and it looks like a little bit of a glitch in the way that the inshore -- For some reason, the inshore state data is gathered in a discard manner, but then not applied to -- It is applied to federal waters, and then, in turn, it's not included when it does well, and did I gather that right? I don't think that's a big number, but I just wonder why the state waters, or inshore waters, data was included on the discards.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and the state-water data would be included like in general, for landings and discards, and it would be included throughout the whole process, and state waters wouldn't necessarily be -- Yes, it's included in the assessment, throughout the entire process.

MR. CONSTANT: I don't disagree with the findings, but I just wondered why the state waters would be included into that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Because it's the same population. It's similar to the way that for say Spanish mackerel -- Spanish mackerel has a significant in-state-water component for its landings, and its discards, and that's one population, and so, when they assess that population, when they determine the stock status, they're taking all the information, the state and federal, all together.

MR. LORENZ: Mike, the commercial fishing industry, the pot industry, they don't -- Would they necessarily have a very large dead discount rate, and, I mean, it seems like it wouldn't have to be, compared to like recreational fishing, and, I mean, these fish do -- They're notorious for sucking in everything, even the circle hooks, but I was wondering how big of a problem is that with commercial, because I would think they could release a lot alive.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to take a look back at the report, but I know that the vast majority of dead discards, for this species, would be in the recreational sector, and there's much less in the commercial sector.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: What was that proportion of discards for the recreational that the assumption is dead?

DR. COLLIER: So, for the private recreational and charter boats, it was estimated at 13.7, and, for headboats, it was estimated at 15 percent, and some of the reason for that is because of some of the inshore landings, or inshore catches of black sea bass, where barotrauma is not really an impact.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Chip. Matt Matthews, did you have a question?

MR. MATTHEWS: Yes, and so are we looking at this as one stock, and so basically the fish are moving inshore and offshore, and those inshore fish that we're catching in state waters are also the same group of fish as we're catching in deeper water, and then, also, looking north to south, and, you know, I know we look at hogfish as a couple of different stocks, and are there different stocks within the South Atlantic region?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so the break between the Mid-Atlantic stock and the South Atlantic stock falls within the South Atlantic region, and so this is only looking at Cape Hatteras south. North Carolina sits in the Mid-Atlantic region, on their management council as well, and the reason for that, in relation to black sea bass, is because there's a portion, in that piece of North Carolina, between Cape Hatteras and the Virginia-North Carolina border, where that portion of the population is with the Mid-Atlantic stock, and so Cape Hatteras has been determined as like that's the breaking point between these two different populations.

MR. LORENZ: Anybody else? Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I would just, for clarification, and there's probably so many more discards on the recreational because it's eleven inches. I'm sorry. It's thirteen inches, where commercial is eleven inches, so we're just apples-to-apples.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So that's 15 percent for charter and headboat, and we catch 500 fish, and we release the majority of them, and that means, by my calculations, we would have seventy-five floating, and so, I mean, I think your calculations are somewhere off there, because we would have just sea bass just floating all around the boats, during the whole day, and that just doesn't happen.

MR. LORENZ: Tony Constant.

MR. CONSTANT: Thank you, Bob. I would like to clarify, a little bit, the reason that I asked earlier about the inshore, just the discards, and the sea bass, the smaller sea bass in particular, have literally swarmed the rivers inshore, and so, in my estimate, 100 percent of the recreational catch inshore is discarded, whether the mortality rate is or not, and so that's going to really inflate the discard numbers, because they're not keeping anything, versus offshore, where the sea bass have typically been caught, are pretty much nonexistent.

Recreational anglers, offshore in deeper water, are not catching sea bass. They're not catching them. They're not there. They're catching them in inshore waters, in nearshore waters, but they're really not targeted anymore, and so, in my opinion, the recreational inshore data of releases have really got the numbers inflated, and I don't disagree with them. I think 100 percent of the inshore, from three miles in, are being discarded.

MR. LORENZ: To reduce dead discards, and it almost seems like a conservation measure inshore with those sea bass, and, as I said, they're notorious hook-suckers. I mean, with j-hooks, it was awful. You know, circle hooks are better, but still, and it looks like, the larger you can put out there, the better. I mean, it takes a 10/0 hook, and a sea bass has no trouble, and it's almost like, if you want to fish for sea bass, please use a gigantic circle hook.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, I'm not necessarily saying they're even fishing for sea bass, and they're just like gnats sometimes, and you can't get away from them.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. Tony, to kind of address that, would you have some sort of a disagreement with the recruitment data that we're showing, because the recruitment is on the floor.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, what hit me in the face, when we started the data, immediately is it was flawed, accidentally or not, and we're looking at a wrong standard number on the first graph, and we've got an undesirable uptick, towards the end, on one of the charts, and so I'm thinking we, as the AP, are looking at data that, as soon as we opened our eyes, it needs to be adjusted.

That didn't set well, personally, and now, that said, I don't disagree with anything. I think sea bass are nonexistent, and I think they have been totally eaten, and they're gone. I think that recreational fishermen, offshore in particular, that used to go target sea bass -- They just don't

target them, and they're not catching them anymore. I think it's depredation, and not overfishing by fishermen, and so we're, and we're going to regulate fishermen, and it's not going to change the end result until we address the problem, but, just the reason that I'm looking at the inshore, I feel that the sea bass, out of survival, have flooded our deeper rivers, and any of the reefs, wrecks, or debris that are inshore are carrying eight to ten-inch sea bass.

At a thirteen-inch minimum, 100 percent of them are getting discarded, and there's your numbers, and those numbers are depicted on phone calls, and at the ramps, at the landings, because those guys are in eighteen-foot boats, and they're out there trying to catch redfish, or something, and they're catching fifty sea bass, and fifty sea bass get discarded, and that's what they tell the lady at the ramp, but the guys that are offshore, looking for a three-to-five-pound fish, a charter captain and so forth, we're not catching them.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead Mike, and then Chris.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just addressing the point that Tony raised, as far as, you know, kind of questioning the data relative to the note that I made concerning the recruitment points, this isn't collected data, and I think it might be mischaracterizing it to call it even flawed data, and this is something that is necessary in order to run a model that projects forward, because, if you leave your recruitment data at 2019, and you just put no numbers in there, then you have no fish in your model to say this is how they're going to grow from age-zero to age-one to age-two and project that model forward.

That's where that information just ended, because that was where the assessment started, and that's the information that they had at the time, and it takes time. It takes a couple of years to do an assessment, and so, in the time from when they said 2019 is -- That's when we're cutting off, you know, the data that we have, that we're going to put into this assessment. To the time that we, as the management group, and you know, staff advisors and all that, to the time that we're seeing it, there needs to be an accounting of what happened in between the end of the data and the beginning of the management, and that's where they have to use averages.

They have to say -- We're going to have to make an assumption of what happened in this time period, because we don't have, you know, real-time data, where it's just feeding in automatically. You have to cut it off at a certain point, and you need to start management at a certain point, and so that's what I was noting here, with this two data points, is that these aren't observations, and that's where they had to use some of that averaging, and so I think it might be mischaracterizing it to say that that's flawed, and that's just the information that we have, and given the timing with which things occur, and that's what we need to do, in order to make this process happen and be able to project catches forward.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike. Did you want to comment back on that, before Chris? Go ahead.

MR. CONSTANT: So then, at that point, if that is what is the assumption, then we assume it to be correct. If it's on the board in front of us, and if that's what we have to do, in order to move forward, the way I see it -- You've got to understand that I don't disagree with that line doing this, and I agree with that, but what I'm looking at is data that goes up, and, if that's what we have to do to move forward, then I have to assume that's correct, and not incorrect. If you move to the

one above it, the graph above that, the first one we came to, you had a bar that was -- You pointed out that it was extremely high. That one, the top one.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, I noted that that's been updated since this figure was created, and we can get you the updated figure.

MR. CONSTANT: Well, I just -- You know, we're all businessmen, and we're all here for efforts, and it seems like we all show up for the current data, and that's just where I'm at, and I don't disagree with this thing falling off the table, but you know --

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Chris Kimrey, you've been waiting patiently.

MR. KIMREY: I have a question about the two different stocks north of Hatteras and south of Hatteras. It's my understanding that, back in the day, they determined they were two different stocks, and, right now, it's also my understanding that the stock north of Hatteras is extremely robust, and it's gradually shifting further north, and, you know, I've heard it from meetings, councils, talking to people, whatever. I guess they determined those two stocks were different via genetics, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think that might be -- Actually, that might not be what Judd was going to speak on. If I remember correctly, it would have been the 1980s, a mitochondrial-DNA-based study that determined that those two were separate stocks, but I put an asterisk, and I'm going off of memory and not off of reading through what that reference was.

MR. KIMREY: I was just leading into my question. If it's presumed, in sea bass and other species as well, and, you know, dolphin and all this stuff is moving north, is there any new genetic, or however they determined it for the sea bass study, that correlates with the time they're seeing the fish move north? The reason I ask is, if the South Atlantic sea bass is gradually shifting north, and there's always been a little mingle, is my understanding, through science they determined, between Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras, that those fish were mingling, the two stocks.

If it's shifting north, is there any science, or plans for any science, to reassess the two stocks, to see if there's more intermingling of the two, or if it's the same as it was in 1986, when they did the old study? I mean, I think that's a valid question, because, if the fish are moving forth and mingling, you can't manage something that you don't have in Florida anymore, and you know what I mean?

If our stock is mingling with the northern stock, then there might be a need to change, you know, maybe the line, or the way it's managed, or whatever, and it just seems like, if that's the determining factor, that's something that needs to be followed-up on, and that's my question, is there any plans to do that, or does it happen -- I know that, with some of the studies that I've done on my boat, like with the cobia and the weakfish and all that stuff, and, I mean, we did tons of fin clips. I don't know what happened to them, and, I mean, do they do the same thing on the stock assessment with sea bass?

DR. COLLIER: It's a really good question, and so we are going to be looking into the genetics of black sea bass. Like Mike said, it was back in the 1980s, when the original split occurred, and it was based on mitochondrial. There has been a follow-up study, and I believe it was 2016. One of

the lead authors was Mike McCartney, and what they found was a strong genetic difference between north and south of Cape Hatteras. There were some individuals that appeared to be some of the northern stock that might come down during parts of the year, but it was a pretty minor amount, and we are looking to continue some of that research this year, trying to update some of those genetics to see how that northern population -- If they're still coming down.

MR. KIMREY: So it was prior to 2016, and that would have been -- I mean, I'm just guessing here, and I don't really know, but, I mean, that would have been about the time that we started seeing the bigger shifts, six or eight years ago, and, I mean, everybody in this room has their own opinion, but so the next one may show something different.

MR. LORENZ: That's interesting, and I was with Chris when we filled in Chip's little survey yesterday, and it said, you know, what do you think about the future, and, you know, for me, with sea bass, I was like pretty optimistic, and, you know, I'm the one that out there -- I mean, basin-wide, they're there. I mean, you can just read, in things like *National Fisherman*, and they had a fishery in the Gulf of Fundy this year, and so it's like, hey, like humans -- If the guys in the north side of the city won't date the girls on the south, but, once he runs out of girls up north, he's going to turn down south, and so what the heck? Tony, followed by Chip.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, Bob. Chip, just on the same note of Chris, we were talking about how things migrate up north, and we were just talking about they were having a robust sea bass catch in the last few years, and has -- Are they in an environment that is totally lacking red snapper? Do you know?

DR. COLLIER: I wouldn't say a total lack of red snapper, and there is -- I have seen an image of a red snapper up in Rhode Island, and so they are up there, but they're definitely not at the abundance that is off of northeast Florida.

MR. CONSTANT: That would be something to look at.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Mike, where do you want to go, with Mr. Curtis or anything, and I think you said it was a second part?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, how about we go to Judd right now, and, while he's talking, I will transition the screen over to the discussion document.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Judd Curtis, you're recognized to speak. Thank you.

DR. CURTIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to address comments I think that James made, regarding the environmental change and overfishing, and so this concept of environmental change inducing distribution shifts, and we see things like lower recruitment in South Atlantic sea bass, and some other grouper species as well, and this is not just a pervasive issue in the South Atlantic, but on a national level as well, and so they're seeing these changes related to climate in Alaska, New England, and the Mid-Atlantic, and, to that extent, there's really a hot-topic area of research right now.

There's a climate scenario planning group, along the entire east coast, that's looking at some of these concerns, and then how to effectively management, in the face of this uncertainty, with

shifting stocks and environmental change. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center currently has a low-recruitment workgroup that will be presenting to the SSC in April, to see how that's influencing the stock changes that we've seen over the last decade or so with this low-recruitment signal that we're seeing in a lot of species.

Then, at the national level, the National SSC will be convening in August in Boston, and this is one of the primary subthemes of this meeting, is to look at how to manage in the face of environmental changes, where you see the low recruitment, potential regime shift concepts, and then what are some of the management strategies, in order to combat these changes that are not necessarily due to high overfishing rates, but more so to environmental changes, and so a lot of stuff is kind of in the works right now, behind the scenes, and hopefully, you know, after the National SSC meeting, we'll have some good strategies to bring back to the South Atlantic on how to manage these species that are going through these massive changes due to environmental effects. Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Judd. I guess back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so you have a discussion document, Attachment A9, that's in your briefing book. The council initiated an amendment, in I believe it was -- It's in the timeline here. It was the middle of last year, once they got the first draft, the first round, of the assessment results, and then they kind of asked for some updated projections, and so that's why there's been a little bit of time between then and now, but we have kind of the recommendation, the recommended catch levels from the SSC, at this point, and so the council is beginning work on this amendment to respond to the black sea bass stock assessment.

There is a little bit of introductory information, and we went through the fishery overview, but that's there for your reference. Like I talked about, there is a lot of difference between the long-term average recruitment and the recent recruitment, and the reason why we point that out is because that affects the two different recommendations that come out of the Scientific and Statistical Committee.

One of the notes related to the recommendations here is that ABC -- The SSC's policy is to recommend acceptable biological catch levels for five years from the last year of data included in the assessment, and so from the terminal year of data. The reason why they don't project out further than that is because, the further you project into the future, and kind of think about the weather.

The further you look at the forecast in the future, the more uncertain it is, and so they kind of set their cutoff at five years, and, with this assessment, and kind of the follow-up projections having been such a lengthy process, a difficulty that we have right now is that we only have, effectively, two years of future projections, because we'll be working on this amendment throughout this year, and so nothing would go into place in 2024, but, potentially by 2025, that would be possibly -- That would be super fast-tracked, but that would be the first potential year of a new recommendation going into place, and that's kind of where these catch level recommendations begin.

They go through 2026, and, normally, the approach that gets taken is that the 2026 year is kind of -- The last year of the projections is kind of held at that level, until a new stock assessment, or

analysis, is provided that can update and give projections further into the future, and so that is a difficulty that we are going to need to work through, and the council has already talked about initiating an interim analysis to update the stock assessment for black sea bass, and trying to get that done as quickly as possible, and the hope is that that can be done so that we can have updated catch projections for that 2027 year, where things would be held in place, but they're going through the planning, and the balancing of the schedule, and SEDAR, and the steps that they need to do right now to try to figure out how to make that work.

As we stand right now, these are the recommendations for the overfishing limit and the acceptable biological catch. The big difference between those, as I pointed out, is because they have two different recruitment assumptions. One assumes that the low recruitment will persist, and that's the ABC, and one assumes that the recruitment will get back up to its long-term average, and that's the OFL.

I kind of went through -- I explained that one, and I want to point out this last paragraph here. Our Executive Director, John Carmichael, gave a presentation, at the March meeting, that really laid out the scenario, both from an assessment and history standpoint, kind of talking about changes to both the population of black sea bass, but also the data that have been available, and I know Bob talked about, you know, several different black sea bass collapses through his lifetime, and John kind of hit on those past assessments, and what happened to the population at different points, and some of it, you know, of course, is the fluctuation in the population, and some of it also is changes in data availability.

We have new, different ways of surveying a population now that we did twenty years ago, and John gave some explanation of that, and so, if you have a chance, I do recommend clicking on that link. It's a YouTube video, and you can take some time to hear that explanation. It -- You know, it doesn't provide a silver-bullet that fixes anything, but it lays out that this is the scenario that we're in, and it covers a lot of different aspects of that, and so I do recommend you taking a look at that, and possibly doing that, you know, sometime between now and the next time the AP gets together to talk about this, as we move through this process.

Kind of our objectives for this meeting are, you know, we looked at some of the summary information for the assessment, and I will go through some of the management changes that initially, you know, have been discussed on the table, but we want to kind of get, from you all, what are some management changes that need to be considered in this amendment, in this assessment response.

As far as timing for this amendment, the council will next look at a decision document in June, and they will consider this amendment to go out for scoping, and the ultimate end date, if we go through, you know, kind of the as-planned route right now, would potentially have regulations effective by early 2026. That gets through the public hearing steps, the approval, submittal to the Secretary of Commerce, and the time that the Fisheries Service takes to go through their rulemaking process.

Getting into the actual actions that are going to be covered under this amendment, and so I have these divided out into two categories, and the first is going to look at which actions are required, and these are things that are required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Act, or by the council's own policy, that are going to have to happen in this process. There is just adherence to those laws,

or those policies, and these are must-haves in this amendment, and then there will be a second category of other actions that are not necessarily required, but may be helpful things to accomplish goals of the fishery along the way, and try to set this fishery up so that it can hopefully improve for the future.

The first action that the council is going to need to do is they are going to need to revise the catch levels to be at, or below, that level of ABC that's been recommended by the SSC. That is a Magnuson requirement. When the SSC makes a recommendation on what the acceptable biological catch is, the council sets the acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, optimum yield, at or below that level, and so that's a Magnuson requirement that they will have to work through.

I do want to note that there are -- That this is one of those species where we're going through that first data change, going from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, for the recreational side, to the Fishing Effort Survey, and so the numbers are going to look a bit different, going from one to the other, but this is where we make the transition in the data and the monitoring of the catch.

Because the stock has that overfished status, and I know that, you know, it may even be put into a depleted category, but, per Magnuson, that's the language that's in the law, and so I need to, you know, make sure that I note that, because it's in that status, the council will be required to develop a rebuilding plan, and so they're going to have to establish a rebuilding timeline, and the act requires that, if a stock can be rebuilt within ten years, then the rebuilding timeframe needs to be ten years or less, and so that's a requirement of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the council is going to need to include an action that establishes a rebuilding plan within the required timeline.

Then this is not a Magnuson-Stevens Act requirement, but this is the council's own policy, and they have an allocation review trigger policy, and so, basically, one of the triggers that makes the council review what the sector allocations are is the completion of a new stock assessment, and so, because a stock assessment was completed, the council does need to at least have the conversation of do they want to change allocations for this species.

Given that there was a change to the recreational data, and the telephone survey transitioned to the Fishing Effort Survey, and other species have had changes to the allocation that take into account that transition, and so I don't know what the council will decide, as far as what their final action will be, but they will be required to at least have a conversation, and to make a statement on whether there are changes, and possibly having an action in there that changes the allocation percentages. I guess I will pause there, to see if there are any questions about the have-tos, about what the council has to do, and is required to do, at this point.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Any questions, or statements, about what the council needs to do to comply with the Magnuson-Stevens Act? I don't see any, Mike. You covered it pretty completely, and simply, and so thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then I will move --

MR. LORENZ: James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: I would like to know how the panel feels about reallocation, and how it applies to black sea bass, and how it applies in general, when the reallocation questions get answered, or get asked, and just how does this panel feel about possibly moving allocation from the commercial sector to the recreational sector, simply because that sector has grown in numbers, and usage, and quite possibly because the commercial sector has lost participation, and how do we feel about those types of allocation shifts? Just I'm trying to get an idea of how this panel feels about that.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Does anybody have any comment, and then James, if people want to continue. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: James, I feel your pain, and I understand what you're saying. I think that would be a consideration on a lot of species, but I don't know about this one, because, in my opinion, it's just so -- It is so far gone, and I don't know if anybody needs to reallocate, but, with the commercial sector having less people, I get it.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Yes, and, I mean, it's more of kind of a blanket across all the species, and, you know, I just kind of wanted to take a barometer, you know, and, when the usage shifts, should allocation shift, and, really, are we -- I don't know how to put this, but are we trying to preserve the commercial sector in any way, or are we promoting the rec sector, and that's kind of what I want to know, is how we feel about one sector going away and another one getting stronger.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: You know, as far as the reallocation, I've tried to make sure that, anything that came up with reallocation, we just keep it fair, so it's not an us or them, and I have both. I have commercial, and I have recreational, and I have -- I'm in it in all the ways, but, you know, if there is -- You know, at some point, you look at what is the best for the greater good, especially when we're looking at reductions, and, you know, I want to keep it balanced, and I want to keep the commercial guys where they have a viable income, and they have a viable way to make a living, and then, for recreational, you know, if we get closures, then, I mean, there's just nothing - - Unfortunately, for charter and headboat, there's just nothing else that we can do if we get closures for that.

You know, if it comes down to something like this, and there's thirty-five trap endorsements, I believe, and however many of those guys are actually fishing, then maybe, you know, for the time being, there is a shift to recreational, to keep our season going, if there are not as many participants in that area, and I know it's different for -- You know, you made a general thing that it's different for each one, and, you know, I didn't say anything about reallocating scamps yesterday or anything, because I know that's a very important, you know, commercial fish.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Cameron, and we have a commercial fisherman, and we have Jack Cox, I believe, online listening to us, that would like to address us. Jack, you're recognized to speak.

MR. COX: Yes, sir. Thank you. I've been in the fishery for quite a while, since 1983, and I've got about eight different permits in the fishery, that I've had since then, and different crews fishing, and I just want to say that we have had a transition from the traditional snapper grouper boats, way

before there was very much recreational interest in the snapper grouper fishery in the South Atlantic, and there is a shift in the younger generation getting in it. I've still got these permits, and I've got a business, and I'm teaching this younger generation, in their twenties and thirties, how to do what we did, and don't discount the commercial fishery yet. I just want you guys to understand there's a tremendous amount of young people getting involved in it, and a lot of people out here trying to help them learn it. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Jack. I'll speak for a minute, and I always like to go for fairness. I mean, I've been on the recreational side, and, I don't know, maybe I am commercial, because I did invest in a salmon grow-out farm, and I've lost 80 percent of my money on that so far, and so I'm not too good at it, but, with respect for -- In fairness with the fishing, and that's what I brought it up, but, for the commercial fishermen fishing with pots, there's almost a part of me that, if we're going to go into a time of a little scarcity or something, that it would make sense -- It almost seems fair to keep those people as whole as we possibly can at this point, and then, also, with a carve-out for folks like Cameron, with, you know, the headboats.

Myself, as a private angler, and I know Chip did bring up those discard levels, and dead discards are really the issue, and, at the risk of getting darts at me from other private anglers, you know, sea bass are hook suckers. I mean, you know, we went to the circle hooks and all, and the discards are considerable, and, yes, they go down to the bottom real quickly, but gosh knows what happens to them, and so I know that private recreational angling must be -- With those small fish, there must be a considerable attrition after discards, and I think, if done properly, and considered properly, I think the commercial folks should be able to get around that, so at least, you know, they can spend the time, if they want to, and, you know, it's decent economics to go sort of through and get what fish we could give them, and maybe some of us, on private side, endure a little more pain, just because our method of fishing is a little more harmful, I personally think, to the fish surviving. Thank you. John Polston.

MR. POLSTON: I think I have to kind of side with Jack a little bit, to the fact that -- Obviously, I'm in commercial, but my reasoning is I don't think shifting the allocations, other than who is going to profit the most of it, and I think the outcome is going to be the same, because, once again, I'm a firm believer that I believe that the sea bass are getting ate, and so, until we do something about the red snapper, I don't think the outcome is going to change, no matter where the allocation goes, and so that's the reason I would lean to just status quo of what's going on, as far as the commercial versus recreational, for-hire or private, because, I mean, we can see what happens in the future, but it might be a bit early to start changing over the allocations and stuff, because we've all taken big hits from the decisions that have come down through the government, recreational as well as commercial.

MR. LORENZ: Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: When I pot fished, the closure -- The whale closure has lowered the catch in Florida, as far as, you know, being able to get in the shallow waters, where the fish are, in the wintertime. There is low discards with pot fishing, and most of the fish get out of the trap that are undersized, and I think we should keep the allocations the same, keep it fair for everybody that still wants to be in the fishery, and so, if it ever does come back, at least they will have, you know, something to catch. The history that I've known is that, when they've taken away things, they've

never given them back, over the years, and so changing it now probably wouldn't be a good idea, and let's wait and see what happens.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob, and I guess I used the allocation review trigger policy as a point to get off-topic a little bit, and so, for the sake of moving on with the black sea bass, I think that, you know, discussion on that should kind of end, and we should move forward.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: I firmly agree that any stock that is deemed overfished, and undergoing overfishing, shouldn't even be thought about being reallocated. My other thoughts on reallocation are, you know, the sector that creates a ton of discards, and has no accountability, I don't agree with reallocating anything to them, and I would like to keep my friends, but I'm also -- You know, it's been my entire life, and trying to run a business and raise a family and perpetuate, what I said the other day, what little bit is left of the industry, and we need all we can get.

We follow all the rules, and I'm not saying that the recreational people don't, and it's not their fault, but the government doesn't know how to count their fish, and they don't have a method to do it, but we do, and we do it right, and we don't get violations, and, when you do everything the government wants you to do, and we still get shit on, it sucks, and so I don't agree with reallocating anything until both sectors can be equally accountable.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, and a closure of the discussion of reallocation, and, you know, thank you, James. Those are interesting thoughts going around the table, and it's good for us to share a little bit of the emotional side there, too. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, next, we'll move down into some of the other actions, and these are things that have either come up at the council table, just kind of in their initial, you know, response discussions to getting the assessment information, or some of these are things that I've pulled from the fishery performance report that you all filled out.

You know, there's the section of the fishery performance report where we asked about management measures, how you feel about current measures, what improvements could be made, and so I made sure to reference that when putting this together. This is not a comprehensive list, and, after I kind of walk through what's on the page, the end discussion is going to be what do you all support, and is there stuff to add, because this is the time, ahead of scoping, and into the scoping period -- This is the time of an amendment where whatever you want to have on the table for discussion -- Put it on the table now, and so we're going to get that all down, so that the council can have that information, and then we can start working through, you know, what is viable to be done now, through this amendment process, and get the information moving in that way.

The first big issue, and it's been talked about, you know, in several contexts, is discard-reducing measures. That's a very broad topic, and we would have to narrow that down into what discard-reducing measures would be efficient for black sea bass, in this context, but there definitely is going to be consideration of that, and that's, you know, kind of the big elephant in the room, and

that's the thing that the council talked about in response to this assessment, and so that's one thing that is noted here.

The second item is talking about the recreational size limit. One of the notes that you all had, from your last fishery performance report, was that there was some interest in potentially lowering the minimum size limit. That got brought up at the council table as well. There's a difference right now, and so the recreational size limit is thirteen inches, and the commercial is eleven inches, and there were comments, in the last fishery performance report, of notable amounts of fish being caught that were just under that thirteen amount, by the recreational fishery, and so that would potentially convert some of the fish that would have been discarded, in that scenario, into keeper fish, in that case, and so that's something that's been discussed there.

Another item that has been brought up, with the discussion about on-demand black sea bass pots, has been considering the reopening of nearshore areas, and one of the points that been kind of raised, in that context, is that the nearshore areas -- When they were closed, they weren't closed as a harvest-reducing measure at the time, and they were closed to prevent whale entanglements, and the conversations, with some of the pot endorsement holders, have noted that there is a more efficient use of the gear in those nearshore areas, and so that may allow them to be able to, you know, fish the pots in the nearshore areas and then move on to have -- To some other thing that they're catching, but there's the consideration of that, and so that might be one of the items to consider in this amendment.

Then there was a suggestion, in the last fishery performance report, about allocating the commercial ACL by gear, and having a set allocation, kind of like there is for golden tilefish, where it's allocated to hook-and-line and longline. That commercial ACL is split out, and there was a thought, in the last FPR, about splitting about the commercial ACL into a pot component and a hook-and-line component.

Those four categories -- Again, you could -- These are not have-tos, necessarily, in terms of how they're brought about, and I know it's been noted that there's going to have to be something done in regard to lowering discards, and that's going to be -- But the specific method in which that's done -- There is flexibility in that consideration, but these others -- They could be included, and they, you know, may or may not be, and it's kind of the time to see what you all would be interested in at least exploring initially, and, if there are additional actions that you all would support being kind of explored in this initial time period of setting up this amendment, then we can take those as well, and so I will pause here and start taking notes on the discussion.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Let's open to comments on discussion. That can go the route of the greatest hits, from what Mike presented above, or new ideas that you have in your head, and we'll start it off with Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: Yes, sir. Thank you. Just more of a comment, sitting back and listening to the conversation in the last hour or so, and Mr. Polston and Mr. Constant, and others, have commented on the lack of confidence in the data that we're about to recommend decisions upon, and so I just -- I think that the general consensus, between recreational and commercial here, if I'm hearing it correctly, is we don't really know what we're making decisions on here, and there are other external factors than just overfishing that's being -- That's being set upon on the black bass limit,

and so I just think it should be notated that there's been a lot of discussion on that, throughout the panel, before any decisions are made.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Gettys. Again, we have Jack Cox listening online, and, Jack Cox, you're recognized.

MR. COX: Under the other actions, what do you guys think about -- I always like to see regulations consistent, as much as they can be, to help with law enforcement, because they have so much that they're trying to figure out, but what I mean by that is, if we were to go to a twelve-inch size limit across-the-board on sea bass, for recreational and commercial, it would help reduce some of their discards on the recreational side, and, at the same time, it would increase our commercial limit by an inch, and it might help with rebuilding. I'm just throwing it out there to see what you guys think about something like that.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Jack.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, Jack, and I had another conversation going on, and can you repeat your comment one more time, please? Sorry about that.

MR. COX: I was just saying, where we have an eleven-inch for the recs, and a thirteen-inch for the commercial, and what if we went with a straight twelve-inch across-the-board for both sectors, and so that would help to reduce the problems that the recs are having, and it would help with rebuilding on the commercial side, by going up an inch.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Jack, and I kind of endorse a little bit about what Jack says. I mean, this difference has been just an eternal gripe among recreational fishermen, as far as with respect to why it is different, and I don't think it's ever been well explained, and, if it has, nobody has been listening, and matching them I think is great. There's only one comment that I would like to interject here, and that's certainly I don't think going up in size with the recreational, at this point, would make sense, and that's only from the point of, for spawners, why would we ever -- You know, we've got to get to the bigger -- To allow those bigger fish to live somehow, and so, somehow, we have to figure that out. Thank you. Paul Nelson.

MR. NELSON: The problem with the raising the size limit on the pot fishermen, in my opinion, would be that you're fishing in deeper waters now, and the inshore waters are closed, and so, when you're fishing in deeper water, you're still going to have barotrauma on the fish that you're throwing back, and I would rather have an eleven-inch size limit for both sectors, to keep the discards from going in those sectors, because I work a headboat too, and there's people standing around the boat with ten-inch, eleven-inch, twelve-inch sea bass that are waiting for somebody to come help them take them off, and then they don't get to keep them, and they throw them back, and they're dead discards, also. I would rather see an eleven-inch size limit around the board.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Paul. Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: Everything I've heard echoes what has been screaming to me about aligning the size limits, and, looking at the dead discards on the recreational side, it would mitigate that, and I believe to align the size limit to eleven inches, and I just see headboats, and it's no big deal, but I know that they have the observers on them, and they go out of our town, on a half-day trip, and

they don't make it out deep enough to, you know, catch a lot of keepers, and they're, you know, discarding a crapload of sea bass, and it just can't be good for the stock assessment. It seems like it can only help, and so I recommend aligning the size limit to eleven inches for both sectors.

MR. LORENZ: Very good. Interesting. Cameron and then Tony.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So, if the goal is to reduce the overall catch, and we can keep more of the smaller fish, then, to me, it seems really apparent that the recreational season would get absolutely decimated, at a very, very fast timeframe, and so the reality, for charter headboat, is it's the timeframe that's the critical piece, and, you know, if we're looking at starting something for sea bass here, and everything is on the table, then, you know -- I agree with Chris, what he said about allocation, that the commercial guys follow the rules, and they have paperwork, and so do charter headboats, and so it very well could be time to cut out of a niche for the charter headboats, and then can control our own destiny, with what our sizes are, how many we want to keep, how many we want to throw back, et cetera. The eleven inches, in my opinion, would cripple the charter headboat, within a very short period of time.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron, why is that, again? I just didn't get it, maybe, and I just wanted, for the record, if anybody heard why.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I'm assuming that the -- My point would be that we would be able to retain more fish, and we would hit our limit, whatever that very reduced limit would be, much quicker, and then sea bass would be shut down, recreationally, and then we're going to go tomte fishing.

MR. LORENZ: A closed season, a tighter season. Thank you. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, Bob. I have to -- I'm not a big fan of this, but I do agree with Jack. I think, if you're going to align it, that twelve inches would be the number, and I disagree with taking recreational down to eleven inches, for some of the same reasons as Sebastian. I think the limit would be reached very -- The ACL would be reached very early, but I think it would also devastate the population.

I made the comment that inshore is 100 percent discards, and I agree that -- I think, out of a thousand fish, you would be lucky to catch five that are keepers, inshore, and even out to three miles, in a lot of cases, at least in our neighborhood, and I'm from the low country, and we don't have a big population, but the commercial sector being raised to twelve -- I guess that would help, and I guess we're going to be talking about coming inshore soon, and so I'll leave it at that, but I think, if anything, it should be aligned at twelve.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. James Paskiewicz.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. So I'm a little bit conflicted here with what I'm hearing with sizes, and we've got some problems, and so we've got problems with dead discards, and, Cameron, I mean no disrespect by this, but wouldn't your customers be happy to retain fish that are being let go as dead, you know, instead of releasing dead fish? I mean, I'm not saying that it's a common - - You know, that you're having an overwhelming problem with that, but having customers that pay to come on the trip, and they would be happier with retaining --

You know, possibly retaining some of those fish, and, if the outcome was that the retention met the ACL, instead of the discards shrinking the ACL, which essentially the dead discards are really, from what I'm hearing, causing the problem of the ACL shrinking, along with environmental depletion, and I think we're going to have to start calling it something like that, and I don't know, and I just feel like we're -- Like we're on a yo-yo here.

Yes, you want to keep fishing, but I'm kind of hearing that, yes, you want to keep fishing, and possibly releasing dead discards, in the black sea bass -- You know, in the sea bass situation, and so, I mean, I'm having a hard time with this, just as an observer, and not a participant, in this fishery.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James. John.

MR. POLSTON: As far as the size is concerned, I think I would have concern about dead discards in the recreational part of it, and, as James said, I believe, if you're going to have dead discards, or you're going to have discards at all, with a smaller size limit, you're obviously going to have less discards, and more people are going to actually eat the fish, instead of -- And they're going to be able to, in your industry, be able to take home more fish, but I can see your concern about they catch them too quick, but you guys could police yourselves too, as far as, if you're on a certain bite of sea bass, I'm assuming that you can move to another spot, to chase beeliners, or whatever it is, however you do it, and I'm not trying to, you know, figure all that out, but on the commercial level, since it's declining already, instead of twelve inches, and aligning, I think eleven inches would make more sense, because that should raise the commercial level some, and, if there were any dead discards, those should be even less, if you went to eleven instead of twelve. That's just my thought.

MR. LORENZ: Mike first.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I just want to inject here that, as people are kind of preparing their comments, and figuring out what all you want considered in this, I did forget to point out that there's an appendix to this document, and it summarizes the regulations that are in place, and so it includes the current annual catch limits, accountability measures, size limits, bag limits, and so, if you need a reference from which you can take a look and see what needs to change, this is what is currently in place, and it's just at the end of your document, and so I wanted to point that out.

I just wanted to insert that I'm hearing a lot of comments regarding an eleven-inch or twelve-inch size limit, and that doesn't need to be something that gets decided today, within this process, and, you know, we'll form an -- It sounds like there is interest in changing the size limit, and that's what I'm hearing from you all, and so what we would do is we would create an action, and we would have alternatives of different size limits, and it sounds like the interest is to have the size limit align for both sectors, and then there would be another time, and this won't be the last time you see this, and so there will be a later step in the process, where there can be a deeper conversation on eleven, versus twelve, and the benefits of that, and so you don't have to come to a conclusion today on that topic, but I do hear the remarks here that are stating there is interest in an action to change the size limits, align them, and make them the same for both sectors.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Mike, and I think that would be real important for us, to you know, report that out to the council in June, and particularly, you know, that there is a need for alignment.

We're seeing nobody wanting to go beyond thirteen, and that there is this -- We're seeing a kind of a split here, a little, between eleven or twelve, and then, I think, therefore, needing some good thinking on the logic of which one of those two is better, aligning all the logic on why a final decision would be made, and I will move to Cameron and then Tony.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I wouldn't be totally opposed to going to a twelve and twelve, and the reason I would -- You know, if we're looking at eleven versus twelve -- I mean, someone stated earlier that eleven-and-a-half inches -- That 50 percent of the females start to change to males, and so they're not in the spawning population, and so, if you left them in the population, and took it up to a larger size limit, then it appears that they would -- That you would have more females in the population than if you took them out of the population at eleven inches.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I could see that. Just noting it in theory, I could see that being the case, and I would have to look at what spawning would be a -- If we differentiate spawning as they grow over size, but, yes, I can see kind of where you're coming from with that comment.

MR. LORENZ: That just shows the need for the scientific input for the final decision, let the scientists guide us on that one. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Cameron, it's funny you -- That's exactly what I was going to mention. On the charts earlier, the females started to play out at that twelve-inch range, twelve-and-a-half, and so, if we lower it to eleven, we will take more females out, but one of the things that I wanted to point is, back when we increased the number to thirteen for recreational, there was a lot of moans and groans on the recreational side, but we caught plenty of fish, and that was the point that I wanted to bring out.

Yes, we caught a lot of twelves, twelve-and-a-halves, but we also caught a lot of fifteens and eighteens, and we're not seeing that like we used to, and I just wanted to make that point before we started -- I don't know what year it was, but it doesn't seem like it was that long ago when we raised it to thirteen, and there were plenty of fish around.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and I have a picture that I can show you, from about four or five years ago. All right. Anybody else? I think we've had a pretty good discussion on this eleven or twelve, and it's really nice to see that, from out of this AP, that there is a good statement for alignment of commercial and recreational, because that's kind of been out there and argued for a long time, and so, if we're a sample size of what's out there among recreational and commercial fishermen, then that may be some good progress here in the future. All right, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I will see if there are any other -- You know, kind of considering the list that's here, and you kind of talked through the size limit reduction, and that seems to be something that you all are interested in, and are there any of these, or any other measures, that you want to say, yes, include this, or don't include that, just so that we can, you know, kind of explore all the options here?

MR. LORENZ: All right. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: So I know that one of the things is reopening the shoreline, the twenty-nautical-mile limit, for trapping, and that's one of the big things, and, I mean, to the charter

headboat, it's been a huge deal to be able to have that area that we can fish in, and so, if it is going to open back up, it will be exceedingly detrimental to us, if it opens up fully, and I don't know if there's any possibility of a hybrid, where, hey, it's ten miles or whatever, and the reason is -- As John brought up, hey, you can move to find something else, and, where we're fishing, there's nothing else.

We're fishing the half-day headboats are coastal, to ten miles, and that's really all you -- That's the only amount of time you have to go in that distance. Anything past that, you're talking getting into eight-hour trips, instead of four or four-and-a-half-hour trips, and stuff like that, and so we're really hemmed-in to shoreline to ten miles, and, you know, with the twenty-mile limit, you know, we were able to keep fishing, and, to us, to my customers, as long as they have the possibility of catching a fish, and so, to James, they take more back with them, and most of them could give a crap less, and they're down on vacation, and they're tourists, and they just want to go have fun and do something, you know, that they've never done before, and so it's sort of a different animal, but it will be exceedingly detrimental, with all the other things that are going on, and more detrimental to us if that limit gets taken out, and now we've got trappers right on the beach.

MR. LORENZ: Mike, it's interesting with what Cameron said, and, for some of the rest of us, if we go to ropeless gear, how will we know that there are traps under there? I mean, it will show up on the sonar, that here's a nice little bit of interesting little structure off the bottom, but how will I know there's a trap down there, if I'm bottom bouncing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, that's something that would need to be discussed, as far as communication of that information. I know, for the experimental study, they had a -- They had marking, and they had software, an app, that, you know, they marked their locations of where their traps were set, and so I don't know what the -- I don't know what the interaction of that would potentially be, but that would need to be a consideration that would be talked about a bit more, as far as the pot fishermen, you know, having some type of marking software, and getting that communicated to, you know, the folks that would be fishing in that area. I don't know what that would entail, as far as a requirement type of standpoint, but, at least on a voluntary basis, there is software that exists to do that.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Good, because, like I said, in my area, and Cameron's area, you see a little two or three-foot blip off the bottom, and it gets kind of interesting to see what the heck is there, and so okay. Thank you. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob, and, again, Cameron, with a pretty solid level of seriousness, and, again, no disrespect, but maybe something to look into would be pioneering a charter headboat catch-and-release exemption that allows you access to the entire fishery, up to a certain depth, that that boat is catch-and-release only, and I'm not talking about your whole fleet, but I'm talking about an idea, because what just came out of your mouth was most people don't care if they can retain a fish. That answers some of the access questions, and just seriousness, and no disrespect, and I'm not saying -- Just take it for what it is.

MR. LORENZ: Tony and then Cameron.

MR. CONSTANT: Thanks, Bob. As far as bringing them in, in our area, and I was chartering a lot when the sea bass limits were a lot larger, but there were numerous holes, and we used to call

them humps or whatever, that we were guaranteed sea bass, and most of them held -- This was back in the day when the pots were out, and many of them had pots on them, very productive pots, and there were a square mile here, and a square mile there, that were -- You could catch greenheads, knotheads, catch your limits of sea bass, as well as the commercial sector was catching their pots full.

Since the limits were moved out, which was shortly after the red snapper was closed, and now those areas don't have sea bass anymore, and we're not catching them hook-and-line, and, of course, there's no pots, and there haven't been any pots for years, and we are catching red snapper there, and the red snapper are mostly juveniles, because it's in, and it's probably fifty feet of water, forty feet of water, and this goes back to red snapper depredation, and these areas were, for all of my life -- If you wanted a community fish fry, you went out there and caught your limit of sea bass, but we were comingling, meaning there would be two commercial pots within a mile or so of each other, and they would both be full, and so the point here was there full sea bass in those days, and this was only fifteen or twenty years ago.

If we're talking about bringing them back in, we would be bringing the pots back into a fishery that has been devastated by, I would say, red snapper depredation, but let's call it some hook-and-line as well, and so you would -- To bring it back in, and raise the limit to twelve, that may help a little, but I think we're going to be seeing a discard rate that's still going to be apparent. I don't think we're going to address the nearshore fishery until we address red snapper, and I'm not agreeing with -- I like the idea of the pots, the rope deployment, but I don't believe that bringing them in right now is a good time.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Tony. Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: James, it's interesting that you said that, and that has been an idea that we've been toying around with for the last year-and-a-half, is a total catch-and-release vessel, and, you know, we're going to put it on the books and see what kind of play it gets.

MR. LORENZ: Cool. All right. Anyone else have anything to add? I still keep thinking that now would be a wonderful time inshore for those pots, again, for marketing them, but, as every diver knows, and, I mean, we can't do it in North Carolina right now, but now is a perfect time to get out on the ocean, in thirty to fifty feet of water, and, as Chris probably knows, there is no better way to fish for flounder even, and, I mean, we used to find -- You know, you find a little bit of coquina rock, sticking two feet above, and you just trying to get right aside of it for the flounder, and here we are -- If I don't know there's pots there, I'm thinking maybe it's going to be the same thing, and so I would like to see how we're going to mark them some day. Gettys.

MR. BRANNON: More of a comment, and maybe a question too, and this might be more for Amy than it is for anybody around the table, but, as we look at the data on the sea bass, and we're seeing a lot of it inshore, a lot in state waters, and is our current -- Our current regulations in South Carolina, do they match what the federal regulations are now? Is that something that would be -- A lot of the things that Tony has brought up, and made very good points about, would it be something worth looking into, on the state side?

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

MR. BRANNON: All right. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Chris Conklin.

MR. CONKLIN: The only thing I want to say is, with my way of thinking, if you turn the recreational discards into catch, over time, it may make the assessment look ten-times better next time, and then, you know, we won't have to be in this situation.

MR. BRANNON: I think that's my point. If a lot of the discards are coming in state waters, if we change any of the limit sizes there, would that not help the assessment, or could it?

MR. LORENZ: What do you think, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and can you say the question one more time?

MR. BRANNON: So if a lot of the discards are coming in state waters, and I don't know, and we might be bound to staying on the -- Could the limit size be different in state waters?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, I mean, states can change their limits. The states aren't required to align with federal limits, but that would only be applicable in those state waters.

MR. BRANNON: Absolutely, and so, if we're looking at catch -- The increase of -- I mean, if you go out -- The last time I went inshore fishing, a few weeks ago, I mean, you're catching a ton of these small, little sea bass, and so I think, to Tony's point, I mean, it might take more of a -- More research into it on the state side of things, and maybe there's nothing wrong with it, but, if we change the limit size in the state, would that not then help the accuracy of the data that you are getting?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It would certainly -- It would certainly change the dynamics of that fishery if there was a new limit introduced that didn't previously exist. It's hard for me to say how it would affect, one way or other, without looking into more information, but, yes, if you introduce a size limit in an area where it didn't exist previously, then, yes, that changes the dynamics of how the fishery operates and how we would estimate that population.

MR. BRANNON: I just wonder if it helps us get more accurate data, because it seems like we make a lot of decisions, or we're hearing a lot about this particular fishery, that we're wanting to make formal recommendations on without truly a good sense, on the recreational side of things, of what is happening, and so I just wonder if it's more of a joint effort, from the state and the fisheries council, to figure out how do we get better numbers, for the black sea bass in particular.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Gettys. A comment from James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. To kind of follow along with the hypothesis of the statement, essentially, currently, the federal and state waters are a thirteen-inch size limit on the sea bass, and is that correct? Okay. With my understanding of the potentially dead discards skewing the numbers in state waters on the federal size, if the size limit was moved down from thirteen to twelve, essentially, there would be more retention.

Retention would mean that we would be showing that we would be getting closer, if not meeting, the ACL, and harvesting the MSY, therefore definitely changing how the data affects everything there forward, and it wouldn't be -- It wouldn't be as negative, I think, in anybody's eyes that sit around the table here, as we have a fishery that is mainly on the decline, because of the dead discards, and we would have a fishery that we're meeting, or getting close to, an ACL, based on retention, and, if we do have better reporting, it will show that from the shoreline all the way through federal waters, and I think that may be a very good thing overall for fisheries management. Thanks.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, James, for what I think is a closing statement, Mike. Any more?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I just want to make sure that we cover the bases that can be covered, and so we've had some discussion about, you know, size limit, retention, things like that, and, right now, we have trip limits, bag limits, you know, in place, and is anybody of the thought of looking into changes to those, just because size limits tend to be talked about in concert with whatever is being retained, so that you can have the season that you want to have, and so is there any interest in any of that?

MR. LORENZ: I think, Mike, what we usually find, as we get into it, is we always have, coming from almost everybody, the more we can have a season within a year, and that's almost always a given. Let's have as long of a season as we can, without getting too silly, and then, also, it seems the size and bag limits -- They're kind of integrated, and, you know, usually we see the science comes out with, if it's this, this size, and this bag limit, work, in this amount of time, and so there's some other things that we need to know. We do know they're integrated, and that's a little easier for us to probably think about when we have that matrix shown to us. I see Cameron and then John.

MR. SEBASTIAN: We're looking at, if the size limit comes into play, then the bag limit, in my opinion, would need to be addressed, and probably dropped down, to increase the length of the season, because you're going to have more people reaching their size limits, which is fine, and I'm just saying -- You know, it goes to what Bob said, and what everybody has always said, that, hey, whatever we've got to do to keep the season viable, for as long as possible, and, if I'm not mistaken, was there discussion, at one time, of a possible single-hook deal that would -- To me, as a big headboat operator and stuff, I mean, well, if I reduce -- Every drop up or down, if I reduce it by 50 percent, then, well, it might definitely reduce the amount we catch, and throw back, and have discards and stuff like that as well. Once again, whatever we have to do to extend the season.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you for that, Cameron. For the nine years, I've been a fan of -- If we have to go a single hook, then fine, because that doesn't -- Other than meat fishermen, that doesn't seem to discourage too many people from fishing. I had John Polston next.

MR. POLSTON: On the size limit of eleven and twelve inches, and I think everybody had some decent reasons why they wanted to do that, but my -- I've been thinking about everybody's reasons, and stuff like that, and would it be worth putting something on the board to say eleven-and-a-half, where you just split the difference, and you don't do eleven or twelve, and do eleven-and-a-half? I'm just asking.

MR. LORENZ: John, I will just make one comment on that. Depending on when you're back, and you are -- Well, not from the folks that -- I know, in my state, that do the survey, because they don't get involved in the legal, but, if our marine police see -- We have the issue of the shrinkage, when it's warm, and so a half-inch is really -- You know what I mean? Am I more towards the top, or am I going to shrink under, and so that could get tricky, but it something, you know, to consider on some of the species, is that shrinkage factor, and so I tend to find that might be tricky, but I'm just throwing that out there. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. I guess, overall, what my point is, it's can we -- With a decreased size limit, can we replace some of the question-marks of discards with retention? I don't know if that can be a bullet point, just a little bit more specific, because, I mean, really, that's what we're looking at, is, you know, moving from a variable that's unknown to more accountability, really. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Anyone else with any additional points here? Is there something else that we haven't thought of, or Mike hasn't thought of? It's kind of like -- You know, it's pretty straightforward, for what we've had with many discussions when we get into fish, and, you know, it always gets into that season, bag limit, size matrix and to come out with a final sausage. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just one more note, and thank you for your discussion, and we'll take this to the council. I do want to note, for the timeline for this, and Myra pointed out that I forgot to mention this, and so, because we are in the overfished status for this stock, and it went from not overfished to overfished, that means that we are expecting to receive a letter from the Fisheries Service that puts us on a statutory deadline, and so we will have two years from when that letter is sent to us, and we're expecting -- We haven't gotten it yet, but we're expecting it, given the results of the assessment, and so we're going to be operating this amendment -- We'll have two years to get it done, and whatever actions, and responses, to be in place.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you, Mike. Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: Did you put in the possibility of one hook, versus two hooks, or limiting the hooks?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I can add that in. That was a measure in Reg Amendment 35, but that got pulled back, and so, yes, I will put that in here, so that can be in the consideration.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you for that, Andy. Anyone else? I am looking to take a break here, so we can tidy up and get out, and then we can finish our last two topics, which will be the best fishing practices and the citizen science, and so does anyone want to state anything before we take that break? All right. I'm looking -- We're doing good, and so, if nobody minds, let's do fifteen minutes, to check out and do anything, and I've got 10:33, and so, by 10:50, we've got to start. All right. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MR. LORENZ: All right. Let's reconvene into the final segment of our AP meeting. We're not going to be at a point of more intellectualism, and we can relax a little bit, and learn a little, and, to start us off, with our best fishing practices, we will have it cohosted here by Ashley Oliver from the South Atlantic staff and invitee David Hugo from Sea Grant. Ashley and David, away you go.

MS. OLIVER: Wonderful. Thanks, Bob. I am Ashley Oliver, and I think I've talked to a lot of you guys, but I'm the council's best fishing practice outreach specialist. I am joined here by David Hugo. He is Sea Grant's reef fish fellow, and we both work really closely on the council's best fishing practices campaign, and so we're going to kind of tag team this presentation.

I'm going to start off talking about our Best Fishing Practice Master Volunteer Program, which is something I brought to you guys back in October, and you guys provided some really fantastic feedback on that, and helped me develop that program, and so I'll give you an update there, and then we're both going to talk about some of the outreach that we've completed so far this year, and then we'll wrap-up with a discussion, and just kind of talk about, you know, any feedback you guys might have to better outreach and any events that might be happening in the region that we should check out.

All right, and so we'll start with BFP MVP, and so, again, this is going to be those regional, in-person workshops with key members of the fishing community and port samplers, and, really, the main goal of this program is to extend our reach by having these groups talk about best fishing practices and how to get involved in the council within their communities, and so what really makes this program different is, instead of this kind of one-way discourse, where there's just, you know, presentation after presentation after presentation, we're looking for it to be a little more conversational in nature.

I realize, you know, a lot of folks that are probably going to come to this, they're going to be pretty well-versed in the information that we're presenting, or we're talking about, and so we do hope they learn something, but, really, the idea is for us to emphasize kind of those main points that we want them to take back, and so, within your briefing book, there is kind of a workshop overview, and it really lays everything out in detail. It talks about why we're doing this program, and it gets into the targeted audiences a little bit more, and it lays out all of the goals and objectives, if you want to look into that.

I wanted to just kind of go over our workshop components, now that we've finalized what we're planning to talk about during the workshop, and, of course, we're going to talk about best fishing practices within that section, and we'll talk about our general practices, which are pretty much for all fish, and so, you know, know your regulations, limiting air exposure, handling practices, things like that, and then we'll get into more snapper-grouper-focused practices, and so talking about barotrauma, mitigation strategies, descending devices, what they are, how to use them, how to rig them up, the regulations involved, and we are going to talk about venting.

Our council mentioned it, and I know you guys mentioned it, last time we spoke, that we really need to talk about this, and so we're going to have a slide on, you know, what venting is, what it is now, and even if, you choose to vent, that's fine, and make sure you do it carefully and correctly, but also know that you have to have a descending device onboard in the South Atlantic.

Like I said, we're going to try and keep this conversational, and so we have some activities planned throughout the workshop, and we have some discussions planned, and also kind of a post-it note activity that gets folks out of their seats and interacting with one another.

Then our second section is all about getting involved, and so, of course, that includes our citizen science projects, SAFMC Release, FISHstory, and the citizen science project portal. We'll talk a little bit about the council, the Magnuson-Stevens Act regional fishery management councils, the importance of advisory panels, public comment, all those sorts of things, and we'll also talk about the MREP, or the Marine Resource Education Program, and I don't know -- I'm sure a lot of you guys have probably gone through this.

I went through it a couple of years ago, and David went last year, and it's just a fantastic program, and, you know, it just takes you from the stock assessment, and how managers use the science, and the stock assessments, to make their decisions, and so we really want to promote attending that. Then we'll wrap-up the workshop with our state agencies, and just have them talk about what they've got going on at the state level and how folks can get involved there.

This is our workshop schedule, as of now. We've got about half of it scheduled, and planned, and so we're officially going to kick it off, here in Charleston, on April 25. We'll head up to Myrtle Beach on May 7, down to Port Royal on May 8, and then we'll be in Savannah, Georgia on May 29. We'll be taking kind of a summer break. We've got some events going on in the summer, and we'll pick back up in Florida, kind of in late summer or early fall, and we'll head up to North Carolina in the fall, and so we're really excited to get this thing going.

I will be reaching out to you guys here soon, especially the South Carolina and Georgia folks. I will ping you guys about what's going on, and get you signed up, hopefully. We would love to have you. Like I said, this workshop is for key members of the community, and, obviously, you guys are sitting around this table for a reason. You are those key members of the community, and we would love to have you guys and people that you think would be interested in getting involved. Like I said, the 25<sup>th</sup>, it will be 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and it will be out at Fort Johnson, and so I will reach out to you guys. I won't ping the whole group, you know, every single time, and so I don't want to annoy you by email or anything, but be on the lookout for all those advertisements throughout the year.

That was kind of the quick and dirty on BFP MVP, but please let me know if you have any questions, but that kind of leads us into our outreach portion of the presentation, and just talking about what we've been doing so far this year, and, to say the least, we've been pretty busy, and it's only March, which is still kind of crazy to think about, with everything we've been doing.

While David and I are the two that are going to be presenting this, this is something -- This is an effort from everybody from our entire outreach staff, from us to Meg to Julia to Christina Wiegand, and really just all staff that have helped us out, volunteering their evenings, and their weekends, to make this possible.

We kicked off the year with a weeklong outreach adventure down in the Florida Keys. We really made the most of our time, and we accomplished quite a bit. Down there, there's pretty much really overwhelming support for descending devices and best fishing practices, but just similar to what we've seen in the past when we've done outreach in the Keys.

David and I started the week off doing some tackle shop outreach. We hit about thirteen tackle shops throughout the Keys, and tackle shop visits continue to be a very major and important part of what we do. People really appreciate the face-to-face visits. You know, we do get some tough

questions, and we have some tough conversations, but, ultimately, I think those are just as important to have as those really positive interactions. Additionally, our materials continue to be very well received. We give them a stack of goodies, and you guys have probably seen them floating around, but we were at Cudjoe Sales, and we ended up getting an SAFMC Release signup right after we left.

A customer overheard us talking to the guys at the counter or something, and Meg, you know, texted us that, hey, we just got a signup, and so it's working, and we're always looking for tackle shop suggestions. We have, you know, a big database of places around the region, but there's always new shops coming in, and shops leaving, and you guys know the best places in your communities that we should go to.

Then, while David and I were tackle shop outreaching, Julia was busy FISHstory outreaching. She visited the REEF Key Largo campus, which is the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and they've been a key partner in leading efforts for the SMILE project, and so she was able to meet with REEF staff, tour the facilities, and they're actually building a new Ocean Exploration Center, which is pretty cool, and they are looking to incorporate historic photos into that, and so what better project to do that than FISHstory, and so it looks like they're hopefully going to be incorporating the FISHstory project into one of their displays there.

She also was able to go down to Bud n' Mary's, and she shared information on the project there, and, through David Moss, which I think a lot of you guys probably know David, and he helped her connect with Captain Asbury, who is a headboat captain at Bud n' Mary's, and is working with him to get photos down in the Keys.

MR. HUGO: Ashley mentioned that, you know, tackle shop outreach is a really vital component of what we do, and one of the things that sometimes comes from our outreach is seminar opportunities, and we had a really neat opportunity, down in Marathon, with the Tackle Box, which is a local tackle shop there, and Ashley had actually been there a few years ago, and they expressed interest in collaborating, in some capacity, and we kind of followed the bread-crumbs trail and ended up putting on a seminar with them, kind of at the tail-end of our tackle shop outreach in the Upper Keys.

The seminar had, I would say, probably thirty to forty people there, and it was at Marathon Community Theater, and we did kind of do our typical best fishing practice and citizen science presentation, and I will say we were kind of the main headliner there, and so it was a little bit of a longer presentation, but I think it was really appreciated by folks in attendance.

Kind of a positive trend, with our seminars recently, seems to be there's a lot of really excellent kind of audience engagement, and really great questions, and a lot of the questions have been very project-specific, and not necessarily focused on management, but more focused on, you know, descending devices, how to identify barotrauma, how to properly vent, and then questions about actually how to get involved with some of our citizen science projects.

Sea Grant did include descending device giveaways as well, and those were well-received by folks in attendance. We did kind of a raffle there, and the Tackle Box did follow-up with us afterwards, and kind of expressed their appreciation, and they actually posted some videos from the seminar, and there's a video there of me explaining how to use the Seaqualizer, but, you know, these got a

decent bit of shares. I actually had friends in the Keys reaching out to me, saying they were seeing my video online, which is terrifying, but also cool. This video here, when we took this screenshot, we had over a thousand views, which is awesome, and a bunch of people shared it.

Shortly thereafter, I kind of organized a Sea Grant media headboat trip out of Key West, and this was on the Gulf Stream IV, which is a headboat down there, and, really, the goal with these Sea Grant media trips is to, ideally, bring onboard some sort of external media figure, whether it be a writer or a videographer, and really share with them the story of best practices and citizen science, with the hope that they'll kind of internalize that and synthesize it in some sort of public-facing deliverable, whether it be an article, a column, or a YouTube video, something like that.

That was the goal with this. Unfortunately, we had kind of our media hopeful drop out at the last minute, but we kind of took it upon ourselves to do a DIY media trip anyways, and we got a lot of awesome content out there, as you can see kind of this compilation and we had the first mate onboard with kind of a circle-hook walkthrough, and we did some kind of best practices videos as well, and then I ended up writing up a column for the newspaper down there as well, and I worked with *Keys Weekly*, and that was actually published last week, and so that is now live, and I'll talk a little bit more about that in a second, but this was a really awesome trip. The weather lucked-out for us. I was looking a little windy for a second, but it was a really awesome trip. We got a lot of species, and we showcased a lot of our kind of project takeaways.

MS. OLIVER: Then we finished the weekend out at the Florida Keys Seafood Festival down in Key West. We had a booth talking about best practices and Release, and while -- You know, it was mainly just kind of general education to the public, but there were a few new charter guide companies that came by, and local fishermen that were really interested in what we had to say, and we also had a lot of follow-up with our seminar attendees from the Marathon seminar, which is really great, and, ultimately, it was just a great opportunity to catch up with AP members, supporting their efforts, and also supporting the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association.

MR. HUGO: All right, and so we did not let up. This was the following weekend, and this was back up in Charleston. A bunch of us were involved with the Haddrell's Tackle Fishing Expo. This is a local tackle shop here in Charleston, and it's really well known, and we've had a kind of continuing relationship with them, and that's something I kind of want to harp on, is that we're developing a local presence here in Charleston, which is awesome. We are a return attendee to this event.

This year, we had a fairly large booth space, and we were highlighting our best practices project, our citizen science projects, and then, also, a general council overview as well. A really cool takeaway from this event, for me at least, and I think for some other people, was that we had a lot of younger people approach us, and tell us about barotrauma and descending devices, which I think is a testament to some of the outreach being done, and I think it's starting to kind of -- I think a lot of the younger generations are trying to internalize it, and that's great, looking forward for future generations.

We also put on two seminars with a local captain, Mark Phelps, and he also sits on the Outreach and Communications AP, and these seminars were much like our other seminars, where we have kind of a beginning bottom fishing tips and tactics, and then we transition more into our projects,

and Mark has been super supportive with us, and these seminars were really successful. I would say, between the two, we had probably fifty to sixty people in attendance, and we did do a Q-and-A session at the end as well, both kind of fishing-tactic-specific, and so Mark kind of fielded those, but also more relevant to our projects, and we got a lot of great questions from those in attendance as well.

MS. OLIVER: Then we attended three of the, and I don't even know how many they have, but the Saltwater Sportsman's National Seminar Series that features George Poveromo. I think this an event that you guys had mentioned last year, the last few years, and so we're really excited to be a part of this, and we attended three of the South Atlantic seminars, and so we went to Wilmington, North Carolina; Port St. Lucie, Florida; and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Between the three of them, there were well over 600 people that attended these, and, honestly, I think it's probably closer to 700, or maybe more than that, and so, if you've not been to one of these, basically, people sit in the room, and they listen to the panel talk about whatever the subject is, and then, in between seminars, they will come out to the hallway, and come talk to the five or six booths that are out there.

That made our booth extremely busy, in the best way possible, and people were super interested in what we had on our table, talking about SAFMC Release and descending devices, and we had a swath of descending devices on the table, different types, and it was just kind of cool, because people would come up and, you know, point to the one that they use, and then turn to their buddy behind them and start telling them how to use it, and so it was kind of cool to watch that. We were educating people, but we were also watching people educate others, which is ultimately what we're really trying to get after here. This was a highlight event for us, and we can't thank the Poveromo's enough, and their team, for having us.

MR. HUGO: All right, and so I figured I would take a moment to just kind of step back and highlight some recent outreach in the press, and I know I mentioned that *Keys Weekly* article, but, for those of you who are interested, I also wrote an article for North Carolina Sea Grant. They have a Hook, Line, and Science page, which is really focused on just kind of down-to-earth science communication, just about kind of recent research ongoing, and several of you may know that there was kind of a recent study from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center that is detailing red snapper management simulations, and I was kind of tasked with writing up a summary of that article, and so, if you're interesting in checking that out, that's now available.

That *Keys Weekly* article is now live as well, and so that's on [thekeysweekly.com](http://thekeysweekly.com), and it can be viewed there. That does highlight our best practices, and SAFMC Release as well, and so I guess I will backtrack a little bit, and so, I guess, after the last AP meeting, where you may have seen me last, we had plans for a media trip out of Beaufort, and I wanted to just follow-up on that. This was actually with PBS, which was really cool, and this was with Tom Roller, in the back, too, and he was kind of the host for this, on his boat in Beaufort, which was really awesome.

The trip ended up going off relatively without a hitch. The weather cooperated enough to get offshore, and we had a camera crew onboard, and we kind of documented the whole trip, and we even did pre-trip dockside interviews about best practices, citizen science, the whole nine yards, and so the ultimate goal here was to film actually an episode that will be on TV, and so that is still kind of being edited in the studio.

We've been told there will be a spring release date, and so that could be in the next couple of weeks, or it could be in the next month, and we will see there, and I'm still waiting to hear back from them. Then there's also a YouTube short that they actually just released, and so that's now live on YouTube, and I think there are over 4,000 views now, and so that's awesome to see.

I do want to just briefly mention, and I actually wanted to give a shoutout to Tom. We really appreciate the support from council members in things like this, with our outreach, and Tom was super awesome with this trip, and I forgot to mention, even with the Haddrell's Fishing Expo earlier, Gary Borland, who sits on the council as well, he was there, and he was fielding questions, which is just really awesome, and, like I said, we just really appreciate all the support from AP members, from council members, and that means a lot, and it helps a lot, to have kind of a respected member of the community in these outreach events.

All right, and so this is another thing we have going on this spring. This is kind of one that I spearheaded, but this was a three-part Sea Grant reef fish webinar series, and this was really focused at educating the public on some the really large-scale ongoing research in the South Atlantic, and, like I said, it was three parts, and the first was focused on reef fish surveying, and it was kind of hosted -- The way these seminars, or webinars, worked is we would have a guest presentation that was, you know, thirty to forty minutes, kind of more high-level, more general for the lay audience, and then we would go into a Q-and-A session that was open to everyone.

The first one was on reef fish surveying, and Dr. Wally Buble, with South Carolina DNR, was the main presenter, and the second was on the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program, and we had Dr. Will Patterson, with the University of Florida and Sea Grant, on as well, and then our last one was February 27, and so not too long ago, and it was focused on the greater amberjack count, and we brought on Sean Powers and Mark Albins, with South Alabama.

All of these seminars were really, really successful, and I really learned a lot, and I think the audience, the general audience, did too. We had 130 unique attendees across all three, and a lot of repeats, and I feel like we've had some pretty comprehensive, yet digestible, presentations, from really some of the lead researchers on these projects, and the Q-and-A sessions I thought were really, really awesome as well. There was a lot of engagement from the audience, a lot of really well-thought-out questions.

We had representation from a number of different areas, and so there were people associated with NGOs, and there were recreational anglers, commercial anglers, retired commercial anglers, researchers, all of the above, and eight different states were represented, and we actually had three different countries represented, which was kind of cool, and we did -- Sea Grant did do an evaluation poll at the end, just to kind of gauge people's kind of takeaways from these webinars, and everyone said that the webinars either met or exceeded their expectations, which is great, and they also had some ideas for future webinars down the road.

One last thing is these webinars -- We did record them, and so, if you didn't get a chance to tune-in, for whatever reason, and you're interested in checking them out, they are now available on Florida Sea Grant's YouTube channel, and they're available on South Carolina Sea Grant's YouTube channel as well. They've made a little playlist there, and it seems like they're already racking up some good views, and so feel free to check those out. Like I said, they're super informative, and really helpful, and I learned a lot.

MS. OLIVER: We recently posted it on the council's social media, if you're interested in looking at it that way, too.

MR. HUGO: All right. What is next? Okay, and so this is kind of -- I will talk a little bit about it, but I know that citizen science is going to talk a little bit more later, but so Sea Grant, and the council, are collaborating this year on SAFMC Release, and so Sea Grant is kind of playing the role of helping to incentivize participation in this program, in this citizen science project, and is doing it through giveaways that are related to best fishing practices, and so this relates to kind of number of submissions, and so people who submit a certain number of Release entries will receive certain kind of prize packages through Sea Grant.

Then there's also kind of a photo award category as well this year, which is kind of fun, and it will give people kind of some incentive to take really cool photos, and I think we've got like a best photo of the -- A photo of the year award, things like that, but all of this is kind of outlined, and it kind of has been detailed recently, in I think Release newsletters as well, and so there will be more information forthcoming there, but I'm really excited about kind of rolling this out this year, and hopefully kind of spurring some more involvement with the project.

Continued tackle shop outreach, and so tackle shop outreach is always ongoing, and Meg and I were actually involved with some outreach back a few weeks ago, down near Jekyll, with the March council meeting, and we're going to kind of continue to do this, as opportunities arise, whether it be through seminars or council meetings.

MS. OLIVER: Last year, I think I had mentioned this, but we worked with Pitman Creek, who is a distribution company, a tackle distribution company, out of Kentucky, but they've been kind of spreading into the saltwater world, and so, last year, we took twenty-eight of their southeastern tackle shops and sent materials through their mailings, four times, and so that's something we're working on this year too, and partnering with them again, and this is important to mention, just because it's a way for us to get materials out to tackle shops without having to go. There's a very small crew of us that do this tackle shop outreach, but, if we can do something like this, we can spread it out even further.

Something that came out of the Wilmington George Poveromo seminar was a connection with the Raleigh Saltwater Sportfishing Club, and so they asked us to come and visit them, and so David and Meg are heading up there, in a couple of weeks, to talk about best practices and Release. We'll be at ICAST again, with a booth in Conservation Corner, and that's in July, down in Orlando, and then, again, just another plug for BFP MVP, and I'll be reaching out to you guys, and I would love to have you, and just be on the lookout for advertisements and sign-up forms.

MR. HUGO: Okay. We'll go ahead and move into kind of a discussion, and hopefully this is more conversational than anything else, but, before I do that, I just wanted to do some general takeaways. I feel like Ashley and I have hopefully provided some insight into what we've been up to, but also provided some insight into kind of trends in our outreach, and one of the big trends, for me, that I'm seeing, is I feel like we just got a lot of momentum.

There's a lot of outreach events that are piling up, which is just a product of kind of our networking at these events, like the Poveromo seminar, things like that, and there's some really awesome

engagement that we're having with folks, whether it be through Q-and-A sessions at the end of a seminar, or just talking with them at a table, and we've really got a lot going on, and I think it's a lot of positive things.

I will just frame it in that context, and then I've outlined -- We've got kind of outlined some questions here, that are very general, but just -- Probably you all have seen these before, but whether or not you all have suggestions for ways we can improve our outreach, things we should focus on for the upcoming kind of outreach for 2024 and 2025 year, any upcoming events of interest that you all think would be applicable for us, and then additional feedback on maybe things that are on the horizon, or things we've done in the past.

We'll kind of open it up here in a second, and I will also say -- So I'm Sea Grant's reef fish fellow, and, as of today, I'm actually stepping away from this role shortly, and so this will be my last AP meeting, but there will be a new fellow, who will be onboarding shortly, and so some of the Sea Grant -- We work in tandem here, with the council and Sea Grant, but some of this I will relay to the new fellow, and so I will go ahead and open it up for discussion, and we would appreciate really any feedback you all have. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: All right. The floor is open for feedback, and that could be questions, comments, suggestions, requests, compliments, and what's all up under the outreach discussion. Anyone? All right. Ashley and David, I will just say something. You know, I've enjoyed watching this develop, probably over the past, I guess, seven or eight years, when it initially was seeded with about fifty, or more, of us that came for an initial discussion of the feasibility of citizen science, and we came from all over the coast, and, from that initial spawn, we've led to things like what you have today, which I think is excellent.

I think it's excellent to see, and I know this group -- I mean, I know, socially, we were talking about, yesterday, how so many of us do serve as even kind of ambassadors to the other fishermen, and we explain that, you know, hey, here's what's going on, and this is really good stuff. We continue to see this go forward, and I could state, actually to anybody here on the AP, that, you know, this is all part of a federal system, and federal allocations, and, if you like something -- Everything requires money, in the background, and I have learned, in trying to get things that I want from this AP meeting on, if you have anybody that you know that's a Senate or a House rep, or anything like that, and anything you like that goes on here, that you think should have some funding, and that could include Sea Grant or the SAFMC, but it's soon time to get things in there, because the federal government, by about July, has a lot of stuff outlined.

By October, if you have some neat idea or something that you're passionate about being funded, it isn't going to happen until the following budget cycle, and so that's something to keep in mind, that, also, in the background of this, is always funding, and that's where we, as citizens, can push a little, to get, you know, a little more into things like this that seem to serve us on such a concrete basis, and, you know, education and just out of interest, and so thank you. Anyone? Chris Militello.

MR. MILITELLO: They came out to the West Palm Beach Fishing Club and did a little thing there, and it was pretty good, and there were probably eighty people there, at least, and it went over well. There were tons of questions, and it was good.

MR. LORENZ: Quiet customers are happy customers, Ashley. Andy Piland.

MR. PILAND: Ashley, have you considered contacting the IGFA?

MS. OLIVER: No, and that's not something that we've done in the past.

MR. PILAND: Their Facebook page says they're promoting ethical fishing practices and whatnot, and it would align, and they're pretty big.

MS. OLIVER: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Chris.

MR. MILITELLO: I don't know about Gray Taxidermy, but, you know, they make their living off of released fishes as well.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: As far as tackle shops in the Keys, maybe Captain Hook's Marina, and I don't know if you've been there, and there's one in Marathon and Big Pine.

MR. HUGO: We actually made an effort to stop by the one in Marathon, and I think we had a pretty good conversation there with one of the associates, and so yes.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else? Robert.

MR. FREEMAN: Maybe a presence at the North Carolina Seafood Festival, that is the first weekend in October, and I think they have an attendance of like 20,000 people through there, from Friday through Sunday.

MR. LORENZ: Yes, and that's a great suggestion, Robert, and it's right near the boats, all those boats at the harbor.

MR. HUGO: That's in Morehead City, and is that correct? Okay.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else? Of course, Ashley is always available by email or a phone call. All right. Thank you very much. All right. We've saved one of the best for last, and here we go. Poor Julia. Julia, but you've got time. We're not rushing you today. I tried to put Julia a little forward from in a previous meeting or two, but she always does a good job here closing us up.

MS. BYRD: All right. Good morning, everyone. We know we're the last thing on the agenda, and so we're just going to follow-up a little bit on what Ashley and David did. They did a great job kind of sharing information on all the outreach that's been going on, and Meg and I are going to talk a little bit more about some of the things that have happened in the Citizen Science Program since you all met last fall.

First off, we'll give a couple of more general program activities, and then we'll get into our individual projects, and give you some updates there, and, first of all, I just wanted to give you all

a heads-up that, in December, at the December council meeting, the council adopted new, updated citizen science research priorities, and so what these are are basically a list of topics that kind of guide the types of projects our Citizen Science Program kind of develops and supports, and so what it really does is it takes kind of -- It helps us narrow the focus from all the different data needs we have to tangible ideas that are important to our fishermen and scientists and managers.

We have advisory groups that help contribute to these research priorities, and we listen to your conversations at AP meetings, and at council meetings, to come up with new ideas, and so one of the things this does is not only help us figure out what projects we want to do, kind of internally, but, a lot of times, we get approached by different organizations that say we want to collaborate with your Citizen Science Program, and so one of the first things we do is we show them this list of research priorities and say are you interested in any of these, and these are the data gaps that we're really trying to fill, and it helps us figure out kind of different projects that we can collaborate on with different groups.

This is just a heads-up, and I know it's a little bit hard to see, and this is a list of citizen science priorities that were adopted by the council in December. Right now, we have three projects that are addressing some of these priorities. Our SAFMC Release project is helping us gather more information on released snapper and grouper species. Our FISHstory project is helping us learn more about kind of historic fisheries, by using some of these historic fishing photos, and we have our SMILE project, that works with recreational divers, that is helping us collect more length information for some of our data-limited species, and then I also just wanted to mention too that we had conversations with The Nature Conservancy, a little while ago, probably a year ago, and they were interested in collaborating with the council on something.

They ended up -- They're doing a project, right now, collecting information on spawning special management zones, and kind of that idea kind of helped come to fruition because we shared this list of research priorities, where observations in managed areas -- We were showing them that that's one of the priorities the council has, and so these research priorities not only help drive what we do, but it can help fill data gaps for the council in a variety of ways.

The next thing that I wanted to mention is -- This is live as of yesterday, and we have, on our website, what we're calling a citizen science project idea portal, and so the idea is -- It's an online form, and, if you have a citizen science project idea that pops in your head, and it's an online form for you to fill out and share that project idea with us. The form is really simple, and it will take you less than ten minutes to kind of fill it out, and what we're hoping to use the ideas generated through this form is to help us update our citizen science research priorities. Someone may have a really awesome idea that we haven't thought about, and so we might need to update our research priorities.

The other way we're trying to help use this information is to help us connect fishermen, and scientists, that may have similar research interests, and so, if you go to the citizen science main page on the council's website, you'll be able to kind of scroll down under our goals, and there's a button that says "Citizen Science Project Idea Portal", and so, if you guys, in the middle of the night, come up with an idea for a citizen science project, there's a way for you to share it with us, and we'll review the information kind of submitted through this online form, twice a year, in May and October.

Then now we're going to move into some project updates, and so first is our SMILE project, and this project is being led by a group called REEF, and this is the project where we're partnering with recreational divers to collect length information on some of our data-limited species, and so the REEF crew, working with a variety of different groups, have developed kind of a laser-mounted underwater Olympus camera, and so you can kind of see them, in the picture here, and right here, and it has one laser on the top, and so, when a diver goes down, they'll use the camera, and they'll point it at the fish, and you can see the laser on the fish here, and then take a burst of photos.

They did their first field testing, in the Florida Keys, last fall, with REEF staff and with recreational diver volunteers, and it went pretty well. The divers, after they had used the camera once, they were really comfortable with the SMILE methodology, and kind of the camera technology, and so they are analyzing the data now, from that first field season, and they actually started their second field season just a week ago, down in the Keys, and so we're really excited that it looks like this is going to be able to provide some additional length information that will be helpful to management in the future. Now I'm going to hand things off to Meg.

MS. WITHERS: All right, and so, for anyone that I haven't had the opportunity to meet yet, my name is Meg Withers, and I'm the CitSci Project Coordinator, and I work primarily on the SAFMC Release project, and I'm going to be providing a few updates. Participants are continuing to record information about their released shallow-water grouper and red snapper, and so the species shown on the slide, using the free mobile app SciFish, and we ourselves are continuing to perform a lot of outreach, as you just saw with the BFP presentation, and we're doing a lot of collaboration with BFP, which has been really fruitful, and beneficial, to recruiting new participants, and just sharing the word about the project, and so that's been a really great partnership.

I'm going to provide a little bit of information about our 2023 annual data summary, which we're really excited about, and then briefly share some information about our 2024 participant recognition program, or PRP, milestones.

As you all probably already know, every year, we look at the data that's been submitted through the Release project, and we create a data summary, and this is the 2023 data summary. Initially, that information is only available to project participants, and so they have an opportunity to peruse it, and ask questions, and just kind of enjoy the fruits of their labor, and then, after a certain period of time, it's made publicly available, and so the data summary is now available on our website, at the link at the bottom of the slide, but, overall, the summary from last year includes information on release submissions by state and fishing sector, species submitted, length compositions, release treatment by depth, shark depredation, hook type and hook location, as well as some highlights for our participants that met some PRP milestones last year.

I'm just going to dive into some of the data, and, first, let's look at where Release submissions came from last year, and the majority of our submissions came from Florida, at just over 50 percent, followed by North Carolina and then South Carolina. Again, the majority of our submissions came from the recreational sector, but we did have representation from the charter and commercial sectors.

The majority of our submissions were red snapper, which accounted for over 70 percent of the releases recorded in the app in 2023, and that was followed by gag, at about 10 percent, and then

scamp, at almost 8 percent. For some of the species that we get the most submissions on, we will make length composition plots, and so I'm just going to show one today, and I'm going to show the red snapper length composition plot. The measurements were taken in total length, and the average red snapper length submitted in the app was about 21.5 inches.

We also gather data on hook type use, and, in 2023, we saw that a vast majority of folks were catching and releasing fish using non-offset circle hooks, and so about 84 percent of the fish that were released in the app were caught using non-offset circle hooks, which is really fantastic to see, given that these hooks are less likely to catch a fish in a sensitive or lethal area, and, also, as I'm going through all this, if you have any questions, and like please feel free to stop me, and I'm happy to go over anything at any point.

My final plot is a release treatment by depth plot, and so this looks at the percent of Release submissions that were vented, received no treatment, were descended, or received both treatments, and so were both vented and descended, and so as -- This is also in accordance to the depth at which the fish was caught, and so we can see that, for fish that were caught in very shallow water, we're not seeing those fish receiving any kind of treatment, which makes a lot of sense, but, as the depth caught increases, so does the percent of those releases that are getting some kind of treatment.

Then, as we go into 121-plus feet of water, we're seeing that the vast majority of those releases are receiving treatment, well over 90 percent, which is fantastic to see, because we know that, as depth increases, so does the chance of severe barotrauma. This overall trend, and so the increase in treatment with depth, is something that we also saw in the 2022 data summary, and so, overall, those trends are similar.

In the 2023 data summary, we got to do something a little new, which was to highlight some awesome participants for meeting some milestones that we set in our recognition program, and so, for this milestone, we highlighted folks who were submitting the smallest and the largest of certain species within the project, and so you'll see some familiar names here. We've got Chris Kimrey, and we've got Tony Constant, plus some other really awesome participants, and so this was great, to be able to thank you all for all of the contributions that you make, and it was great to just highlight the submissions that you were able to make for these species, and so we just really thank you for all of your submissions and contributions.

On that note, the 2023 recognition program was a success, and, by success, I mean we saw a lot of great engagement last year, with participants, and so we want to keep up that momentum, and we're going to build upon the milestones that we had in 2023, and so, if you remember our 2023 PRP, we highlighted folks who were submitting a certain number of releases, and so we're going to keep that up, and we're just modifying the numbers, because folks exceeded our expectations, and so we have to make some more room for some of those heavy hitters.

As you just saw, we are highlighting folks who are submitting the smallest and largest of each species, and so we're going to continue that as well, but we're also kind of expanding into new territory, and an example of that is our Around the Reef milestone, which actually Julia came up with this one, and so this is her great idea. We're going to start tracking folks across years for this milestone, because, in order to reach this milestone, they're going to submit all the species in the

project, and that might take some time, and so we're going to give them more than a year, as much time as they need, and we're just going to track their contributions.

Then, finally, as David noted, Sea Grant has kind of adopted some milestones, particularly for photos submitted, and so folks that meet the photo guidelines, with photos that they include in their submissions, if selected by Sea Grant, will earn some best fishing practices gear from Sea Grant, which is really exciting for us, and we hope also for our participants, and so, with that, I just want to say thank you, and I will pause, if there are any questions. Otherwise, I will hand it back to Julia.

MR. LORENZ: Great things, and thank you, you guys that are good fishermen, for your participation. Any questions, or comments, for Meg? All right. That shows a good job. Go ahead, Julia.

MS. BYRD: All right. The next thing we wanted to update you all on was the FISHstory project, and so, for folks who aren't familiar, this is a project where we're using historic fishing photos to help us learn more about kind of the historic fishery here in the South Atlantic, from the 1940s through the 1980s, and so the project kind of has three components, and one is kind of digitizing and archiving photos, and the second is kind of analyzing those photos, using kind of a crowdsourcing technique, and the third component is estimating the size of the fish in the photos, and so, as you guys know, last fall, we were really pushing to try to gather new photos for the project.

We did the FISHstory pilot project, and all of the photos were from Daytona Beach, and so we wanted to gather photos from a larger geographic area, and then we didn't have any photos that ran through the 1980s, and so we were trying to get some more recent photos from the 1980s into our collection, and so, last year, we held six scanning events, that were in collaboration with either AP meetings or council meetings, and we did one at the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting last year, and we had folks kind of share digital photos, bring in hardcopy photos that we scanned.

Another thing that this really did, and I think many of you around the table -- Many of you guys helped connect us to other people in your community who have photos, and so that was super fruitful, and then the last thing that kind of happened is we were kind of publicizing these scanning events, and that we were looking to gather more photos for the FISHstory project, and we shared information in the council's newsletter, and on our social media, and we had members of the public just reach out to us and send us photos that they went fishing with their grandfather, or different scenarios like that, and so it was really cool.

We originally just had photos from the Daytona Beach, Florida area, and now we have photos from the Outer Banks all the way through the Florida Keys, thanks to the help of our many kind of partners, and collaborators, and, through kind of the fall of last year, thanks to many of you guys, council members, partners, libraries, restaurants, historical organizations, we were able to digitize over 600 new photos, and archive them as part of the FISHstory project.

Just to give a few shoutouts here, this picture up here, on the top-left, was one that Paul Nelson provided to us, and Paul actually sent more photos to me this week, and then he also is working with a daughter of someone who was a captain, who is no longer with us, but she's compiling a ton of photos on a Google drive to share with the project.

Last fall, Ritchie Gomez worked with Bill Wickers, and he sent me a lot of photos from the Florida Keys. This one on the top-right is from them, and Chris Kimrey connected me to the owner of the Sanitary Restaurant in Morehead City, and so this picture on the bottom-left corner is from the Sanitary. The owner let me come in and take pictures down off the walls, and take pictures of things, in December of last year, and so that was a way to get a ton of wonderful photos.

Then I may have mentioned this before, but Bobby Freeman, when we did this project, he, on his way from North Carolina down to Florida, met me in the parking lot of the Town and Country, to hand off a bunch of his hardcopy photos, and so thanks to Rusty Hudson, and he helped scan in all of Bobby's photos, and so now those are all part of our archive too, and so, I mean, I just can't thank all of you enough for helping kind of grow this project. The more photos we have, and the larger geographic spread of photos we have, the more representative the data will be for the region as a whole, and this is so awesome, but we also need more photos.

I know I sound like a broken record to all of you guys, but we particularly -- Now we're looking for photos from the 1980s, and then we have a ton of photos, and we have a lot of Florida photos, and we have a lot of Outer Banks photos, but like Morehead south, through South Carolina, we have fewer photos than we do for most other areas, and so, if you guys have any other ideas, please feel free to let us know.

Just a reminder, and I know you guys have seen this a lot, but here's what we're looking for in photos. They need to be taken at the end of trips, where kind of the catch is displayed with the anglers who caught it, and we need to have a year, and a ballpark year is okay, and we need to have at least the state, as far as the location goes. What makes pictures even better is if the fish are hanging on a leaderboard, and then we can get a size. If we have more specific date information, that can let us do seasonal analyses, and then we're interested in more specific kind of location information, or, if there's information on the vessel name, or the captain's name, that's really great to include as well, as we're archiving these photos.

Then, now that we've gathered all these new photos, we need to get them analyzed, and so that's the second component of the project, where we kind of have built a project online, in a platform called Zooniverse, and that allows us to train volunteers from all over the world to help us identify and count the fish and the people who are in the photos, and so we did a pilot project, and we had volunteers make really valuable contributions, but I think we learned a lot too, and so we're kind of refining the online project to help kind of simplify the data collection, and we think that's going to improve our data quality.

One of the things we do have is that we have some volunteers who know their fish ID, and some others who are newer to fish ID, and so we have multiple volunteers looking at each photo, and so, when there's volunteer disagreement, and so we're kind of not sure what is in the photo, we have what we call our validation team that helps us confirm what species are in the photo. I will say a little bit about this in a few more minutes, but, for the pilot project, for the validation team, we had a group of fishermen and scientists kind of participate in that group.

I know a lot of the fishermen who participated in that group were critical to kind of us putting together our species ID guides that we share with other people, and some of these photos are really hard to identify fish, for me, and you all helped me recognize certain things, to identify particular

different grouper species and things like that, and so I'll talk a little bit more about the validation team in a few minutes, but I know all of you know your South Atlantic fish, and so we'll be looking for validation team members kind of in the upcoming months. We're hoping to relaunch our project in Zooniverse later this spring. We just sent it to the Zooniverse people for review last week.

Then the last thing I just wanted to mention too is so the third component of the project was really estimating the size of the fish in the photos, using the lumber on the leaderboard as a scale, and so this graph on the left is kind of the data we collected from our pilot project. We developed this method, and we tested it on king mackerel, and this graph just shows kind of the mean, or modal, length of king mackerel over time.

We can do individual length compositions as well, and so I just wanted to let you all know that we're now doing length measurements for red snapper, and so we started those a couple of months ago. I think we have a great group of about seven length analysts that we've gone through about 500, or 600, photos now, where we're getting red snapper lengths, and so the idea is that we'll be able to produce length compositions from red snapper in these photos as well.

With that, I just had a few questions, or I'm happy to answer any questions that you all might have, and I know some of these I've asked you multiple times, and so just, again, we're looking for more photos, and I know you guys have helped bring in photos, and you've helped connect me to other people in your community with photos, but, if you have any other ideas, please let me know, or, if you think about someone, kind of when you're back at home, please let me know. We're really, in particular, trying to get photos from the 1980s and in the Carolinas, and so, if you have any other ideas there, please let me know.

We'll also be relaunching the project in Zooniverse, hopefully in the next month, and so, if you have suggestions on where we might be able to share information to recruit people to participate in that project, and, in the past, we worked a lot with libraries, kind of educators, or classrooms, within the Zooniverse community, and so, if you guys have any other ideas of people who might want to help us analyze photos online, that would be great, and then the last thing, that I mentioned a few minutes ago, is this validation team.

We really need kind of identification experts to help us validate what's in a photo, if there's a lot of volunteer disagreement, and it's not a huge lift of time, and you may be asked to do kind of -- To identify fish in fifteen to twenty photos over a month-long period, and so, if you're interested in learning more, or joining that team, I would love to know. We do a training session, and it's about an hour, and it's online, that kind of shows you what you need to do, and then we would send emails, or texts, whichever way you want to be connected, to kind of let you know when there is ten photos that we would love to have your help with, and so I will leave it at that, and I would love any feedback.

MR. LORENZ: All right. I was making some notes here on an idea that I had for somebody at UNC-W. Go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: If somebody is, you know, like just going around, and we happen to be in some restaurant, or somewhere that we see some pictures that could be useful to you, could we take a picture of them and submit them to you, and then would that be helpful? You know, they don't

have to be our personal pictures, and is that what I understand, and then, also, my other question was how young can the photos be?

MS. BYRD: So, for the first question, yes, and so I guess one of the things that's critical, for us to be able to include the photos in an analysis, is we need a ballpark year, and so some of the -- I know some historic photos, and like in the Sanitary, they're all labeled. I mean, it's incredible, the history and how they've documented everything, and so all I did was take pictures of those pictures for our collection, and so that is totally -- That would be wonderful for you to do, but I will say that we -- To use that photos for analysis, we have to have kind of at least a ballpark year, and then a general location as well, but, yes, you can submit those directly by emailing me, texting me with that information, and then I will put them into our photo archive.

Then the second question was how young, and so like how recent, and so, right now, we're really focusing on the 1940s through the 1980s, or maybe early 1990s, and the reason we're focusing on those years first is we're hoping to be able to develop kind of a catch per unit effort, like an index of abundance, from these old historic -- A lot of our photos are for-hire photos.

The reason we want it to overlap through the 1980s is because that's when the headboat survey started, and, in a lot of our assessments, that headboat logbook survey is the first index that's developed, and so we want there to be an overlapping time period between the photos and the headboat index, so we can see how they relate to one another and if you can calibrate one to another. I've had other folks ask if you want more recent photos, and eventually maybe yes, but, right now, that's kind of the time period that we're looking for, and that's due to the kind of analysis that we're trying to do right now for some of the assessments that are coming up.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: This goes back to the app, and this may be a question for Meg, or both of you, and we ran into a situation where we caught a bunch of shark that had shark depredation, that got eaten on the way up, and I didn't see a place to put that. Is there a button for that?

MS. WITHERS: There is, actually, and so, at the very bottom of the entry, you should be able to click a box that says that there was shark depredation, and I would be happy to like pull it up on my phone, and just show you, just so you know where it is for the future.

MR. CONSTANT: Perfect.

MS. WITHERS: Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Good question, Tony. Anyone else have questions or comments or suggestions or compliments?

MS. BYRD: I may be sending another email out, when we get the validation team started, just to see if there any takers that might be willing to help join that team. I think it's great to have scientists on that team, but it's really helpful to have fishermen on that team too, and you guys -- I mean, it's incredible. You can look at a photo that I think is very hard and be like, oh yeah, that's a warsaw grouper, like that, and so I might be reaching back out to some of you, to see if you may be willing to kind of help us out on that team.

MR. LORENZ: Okay, Julia. We'll think of that. Cameron, did you want to say something?

MR. SEBASTIAN: I just think you guys are doing a great job, and hopefully it will continue. I will try to get some guys in the Carolina region to work with you guys some.

MR. LORENZ: You're completed, Julia and Meg?

MS. BYRD: Yes.

MR. LORENZ: All right. Thank you very much, ladies, and great job. Good job. That's fun stuff, and it's interesting. All right. We're in our homestretch here. We'll move to Other Business, and I know we have the potential for public comment. I don't know if there's anybody in the public for comment yet, or if they're waiting out there in the queue, but we'll revisit that again. With respect to Other Business, I have a request by Chip Collier. He would like to speak to us.

DR. COLLIER: One thing that we've been hearing, from a lot of fishermen, is the impact of weather, and not being able to get out as much as they have in the past, and we're not hearing it just from fishermen, and we're also hearing it from scientists, where they're having to take shorter trips, and there is fewer windows for them to get out sampling, and so one of my harebrained ideas is to start looking at some of the buoys, to figure out, all right, how have things changed over time, and trying to gather this information, and then provide it back to you all, to make sure that what I'm putting together makes sense.

Some of my ideas, or one of my ideas, to this is to utilize the buoys that you all would look at to make a determination on whether or not you're going to go out fishing, and also to figure out the time when you look at that buoy, and is it the night before, or is the day of, when you're making that decision, and, also, what criteria you're using to make it, whether it is wind direction, wave height, period between waves, and it's likely all three, but I would like to hear your perspective, so that, as I'm gathering this information, I'm doing it the way that fishermen would do it, to make a decision on whether or not they go out.

I know everybody has a different sized boat, and their criteria is a little bit different, but I'm just trying to get a rough idea of, you know, where I should start, and then we can refine this as things come along, and so, with that, and I would also like to get it by state, I guess, or general regions, because I know it does differ, and, obviously, the Florida Keys are going to be impacted differently than maybe the North Carolina area, and it's going to be a different wind that's impacting them, and so please fire away.

MR. LORENZ: Right now? Okay. James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: So, Chip, you're looking for basically a general number of fishable days available now, and then you could go backwards and look at what was available in the past, based on similar criteria?

DR. COLLIER: So it's not necessarily looking for the number of days. Let me know what buoy you would use to inform whether or not you're going to go out and then what weather conditions would also inform whether or not you're going to go out, such as wind direction and wind speed.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: But, with that data, you would be looking to see how many actual fishable days there are, based on our criteria, and what it is that we like to see, or don't like to see?

DR. COLLIER: That's correct.

MR. LORENZ: Chip, that will be great, and I will give you some of my past experiences. Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: Chip, you want the buoy number? Edisto 41004 is my go-to. It's forty-one miles offshore, and, of course, wind direction, wave height, seconds between waves, and the Windy app, and I don't know if you're familiar with that, but it seems to be very accurate, except when it's not. The same thing there, with seconds between, and it does have a wave height on it as well.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you. Andy Piland and then Andy Fish.

MR. PILAND: Chip, up our way, it's 41025, and, if it's gusting more than twenty-seven, I ain't going.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I base my decision usually the night before, and, if it's an iffy situation, and like if I'm talking to the guy that I'm going fishing with, it's a call me in the morning if it's going to be bad, that kind of decision, and I base my decision on how far I'm going. In North Carolina, I'm going, you know, usually forty-five miles. At home in Cape Canaveral, I'm going twenty miles, and I factor it based on the price, how easy the fishing most likely is, or isn't, and the Canaveral buoy number is 41009, I believe, and Frying Pan Tower, and I don't know the number, and those also have visuals, the videos on those, on the Frying Pan Tower, as well.

MR. LORENZ: James.

MR. PASKIEWICZ: Thanks, Bob. I use Sombrero Reef Lighthouse, and anything from east all the way to north, and it can be twenty-two knots sustained, and I will go, and, anything south of east, it would be around eighteen knots, and the only other factor I look for is lightning.

MR. LORENZ: Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I will use Sunset Nearshore, in Wilmington Harbor, Frying Pan Tower, the Windy app, and buoy weather. There is so many variables for when we go, because we fish nearshore, and so you would have to just give me a buzz, and I could walk you through the -- Generally, over five or six-foot offshore, we're not going to push offshore, but that doesn't mean that we won't go inshore.

MR. LORENZ: Andy Fish.

MR. FISH: I also use the rip charts, which is the satellite imagery of the actual water color, and it's like a satellite shot, and like, after a big blow out of the northeast, it will actually change our

water, in Canaveral, from pretty green to pretty mud, and that's a big determining factor of whether I'm going to go or not as well.

MR. LORENZ: Go ahead, Tony.

MR. CONSTANT: I forgot one, but, when trolling around, and Rutgers University has real a good sea surface temp map, and that's more where to go, because it's going to tell you where the fish are, but it's accurate, and it's real-time.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else? Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So will that influence your bottom fishing trip, the sea surface temp?

MR. CONSTANT: (Mr. Constant's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. COLLIER: Okay.

MR. LORENZ: Anyone else? Andy.

MR. FISH: I would also think that fewer fishermen, or more fishermen, are complaining about the weather, because they're in a lot smaller boats, and the technology is there to tell them exactly what the conditions are usually going to be, and I would say that the pioneers, like Paul's generation and before, Mr. Freeman's, I think those class of men were a little -- They were probably tougher than some of the men out there now.

MR. LORENZ: Definitely. Go ahead, Cameron.

MR. SEBASTIAN: I will agree with you there. Some of the kids that I talk to say it's three or four, and I'm like, tough shit, and get your ass out there and go fishing.

MR. LORENZ: I have the luck with the shallow-water inlet, in Carolina Beach, often going out with a small boat, of that one inlet, and I was able to come back through the bigger one that the Coast Guard uses up at Masonboro, and I don't know if you've ever used that, Andy, but that's a trick, and I will get that information to Chip, and I forget all the details there with the numbers. All right. Anyone else? Of course, we can get back to you, Chip, via email and all, thinking of things, and maybe some historical information, if we've kept logs on that. All right. Thank you, Chip, and thank you, everybody, for helping Chip out.

Okay. Anyone else with other business, and I guess, at this point, only things we can do quickly, but things you might want to see on a future agenda, so James can hear it, and Mike can hear it, that you may want pushed up sometimes. I mean, a lot of what -- Most of the agenda that we have ends up from the council meeting, and then what they want to hear from us, but there is an opportunity for us to state things that are really important to us, and start getting that eventually on the council's agenda, and so now is the time to speak of any ideas that anybody has here now. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so, on the next agenda, I say we mix the presentations throughout the meeting, because nobody really gave great feedback, because we're all ready to go home, and

that's one thing that I would like to see done, and, second, I would like to thank you for your selfless service, and I wish you the best of luck, and you've done a fantastic job, Bob, over the years, and I look forward to seeing you still around, and so thank you. (*Applause*)

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, everybody, and thank you, Chris. I know I was asked on a few things that I may be doing, and one of the things that I do is I'm involved with the University of North Carolina Wilmington, sort of as a mentor in the business school, and we have a thing up that way, and North Carolina is trying to start something called the blue economy, and we're looking for things that how some of us, that are in business, and are dedicated to developing new businesses, and what things we can do that leverage the fact that we have a coast, and we have this water, and make some of our towns the more premier cities.

Having been on this, and hearing all that you're saying, one thing that I will be doing, and will be contacting you all, because I have your information, was I will be calling you, via email, or I'll text, or I'll even mail you something with a return, but we've all -- Everybody has been talking about this sharks, all right, and it doesn't matter, and it's not just this AP, but other APs, and I know Ira Laks -- We were fishing for albacore, and we all have our pictures, and our videos, of this, and I personally think there's a business opportunity that's being missed with sharks. I think it's been overdone, and it started with the large sharks, due to the finning operations, but I think these medium and small -- I think there's definitely something that can be done to make them more economic value added, and so that's one of the things that I'm going to do, and try to put, you know, something together, that I will bring up to Andy Strelcheck, but this is also an issue on other parts of the coast.

I am intending to even go up into Commerce, and so we have some good people right now, and I want to tell you that Gina Raimondo -- If you want to get up that way, I mean, she is business oriented, and she is open, and she listens to fish, because she appointed Janet Coit, and Janet Coit is very interested in fish, and you'll see pictures of her with fishermen, and this did not even previously exist, in the other administration, where we had Wilbur Ross, who would fall asleep and was one asked about what's the biggest thing he noted, being the Secretary of Commerce, and he said, I can't believe all the darned time that I have to spend on fish.

Now, Wilbur made his money buying bankrupt steel companies and things, and he was a money mover. Right now, we've got Gina up there, who is about people, and she's from Rhode Island, and so I think there is a window there, and I talked about it shortly, you know, previously, about the federal government, and so I have some ideas on maybe how to use the sharks, and we all talked about it, but just about every part is salable, and how can we loosen it up, and maybe there should be some money funded, to try to see what we can do with these things, and that's what I'm going to do, and so, when I contact you, what I'm going to ask is where you fish, what kind of fish mess up your type of fishing operation, and what it's done, and I'm going to want to carry this on, starting with Andy, and you've got my word to move it up further, if I can get in the office of the Secretary of Commerce, I will do it, and I will need some help, from some of you, when we get there.

I think there's just going to be -- There's just something that -- I think we can do it, to solve our problem and make some people a whole bunch of money, and we know our friend -- Even down when we get with Jimmy Hull, and Jimmy Hull thinks there's a way to make shark meat more palatable, and we need to get some chefs onboard, that sort of thing, and so that's the vision, and

I'm going to put it together over the next few months, and, at some point, we'll share it with you all, and so thank you, and I appreciate your support going forward on that, and it's just something that I would like to do in the business area. John, you had a comment?

MR. POLSTON: Yes, sir. I am probably one of the oldest shark buyers there is in the industry, and we started back in the 1990s, and we started catching the sandbars and so forth, and we were approached by the government to do it, and, anyway, we did it very successfully for many years, and now Guy DuBeck -- He called me, because I was one of the oldest buyers, and he said, John, what can we do to get the market back, and I said, well, you guys destroyed it. The government destroyed it, because they let us fish, and then they stopped us from fishing, and marketing is all about consistency.

That's why you see salmon out there so much right now, because there's probably thirty different countries that bring it into the United States, and it's available twenty-four-seven, you know, at any importer, but sharks is available now, and Jimmy Hull -- He fishes basically for me, and himself, and he sells me the rest of it, and I'm hard-pressed now to sell 5,000 pounds of shark a week. I used to sell a trailer-load, to a trailer-and-a-half, a week, no problem, because it was so -- It was readily available, and we caught a lot of it, and we had it consistently, and we had it out on the market.

Okay, and the only way that's ever coming back, and I told Guy the same thing, is the government has to get behind the fishermen and get some sort of certification of some sort, because there is so much propaganda out there. You go to these aquariums and stuff -- Anyhow, the government has to get out there, and they have to get behind it and certify this shark as sustainably caught by American fishermen, and humanly killed, and the whole nine yards, because, if we do not get shark meat back in the grocery stores, there will never be a market anymore. We had it in the grocery stores at one time. Every grocery store sold shark, and it's a really cheap source of protein for the plate, and so, in my opinion, that's -- The government has to get behind it, and I think you're on the right track, but I think it needs to be certified.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, John. I will leave it at that, and thank you all for listening, and I will appreciate your help, and you will hear from me, as I need to articulate this thing on paper and start bringing -- Bring it out, and it will be available by June, from me, at least the initial business idea, or the ideas, and some of you have stated businesses you think could run, and that's where we all want to go. Thank you. Michele, do we have public comment? No? Mike, or anybody else, do you want to say something? Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just thanks for all your feedback, and we'll give it to the council, and we'll keep moving. I will be contacting you, in probably the coming month or two, with a save-the-date for October, but kind of plan for the middle of October for our next meeting, and I will get your travel information and all that, but the next council meeting is in June, and I will try to send updates in between.

MR. LORENZ: All right, and, you know, thank you for all the great meetings, and thank you particularly for all the friendship. Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 28, 2024.)

Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
May 6, 2024

3/26/2024

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**STAFF LEAD:** Mike Schmidtke

3/28/2024

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2024 COUNCIL MEMBERS

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SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
**2024 COUNCIL MEMBERS continued**

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Representative  
TBD

3/28/2024

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
COUNCIL STAFF

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✓ **BFP Outreach Specialist**

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✓ **Admin. Secretary/Travel Coordinator**

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✓ **Fishery Scientist II**

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✓ **Communication and Digital Media Specialist** (online)

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✓ **Staff Accountant** (online)

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**Habitat and Ecosystem Scientist**

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✓ **Fishery Scientist I**

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✓ **Citizen Science Project Manager**

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**SEDAR**

**SEDAR Program Manager**

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**SEDAR Coordinator**

TBD  
843-225-8424

2023/01

Other Attendees



David Hugo

## Attendee Report: March 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

Report Generated:

03/28/2024 02:12 PM EDT

### Webinar ID

389-371-603

### Actual Start Date/Time

03/26/2024 12:24 PM EDT

### Duration

4 hours 38 minutes

### # Registered

61

### # Attended

48

## Staff Details

### Attended

Yes

### Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

### Last Name

Council

### First Name

South Atlantic

### Email Address

administrator@safmc.net

## Attendee Details

### Attended

| Attended | Interest Rating | Last Name   | First Name | Email Address                  |
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| Yes      | 37              | Aines       | Alex       | aaines@oceana.org              |
| Yes      | 61              | Barrows     | Katline    | katline.barrows@noaa.gov       |
| Yes      | 62              | Brouwer     | Myra       | myra.brouwer@safmc.net         |
| Yes      | 43              | Bunting     | Matthew    | matthew.bunting@myfwc.com      |
| Yes      | 41              | Byrd        | Julia      | julia.byrd@safmc.net           |
| Yes      | 34              | Clawson     | Jessica    | Jessica.Clawson@myFWC.com      |
| Yes      | 82              | Conklin     | Chris      | conklincc@gmail.com            |
| Yes      | 85              | Cox         | Jack       | DAYBOAT1965@gmail.com          |
| Yes      | 37              | Cross       | Tiffanie   | tiffanie.cross@myfwc.com       |
| Yes      | 43              | Crosson     | Scott      | scott.crosson@noaa.gov         |
| Yes      | 52              | Dukes       | Amy        | Dukesa@dnr.sc.gov              |
| Yes      | 43              | Finch       | Margaret   | walkermf@dnr.sc.gov            |
| Yes      | 40              | Floyd       | Brad       | floyd@dnr.sc.gov               |
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| Yes      | 93              | Garber      | Chip       | aecwpb@comcast.net             |
| Yes      | 94              | Griner      | Tim        | timgrinersafmc@gmail.com       |
| Yes      | 57              | Hadley      | John       | john.hadley@safmc.net          |
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| Yes      | 40              | Kellison    | Todd       | todd.kellison@noaa.gov         |
| Yes      | 95              | Lee         | Max        | maxlee@mote.org                |
| Yes      | 73              | Marhefka    | 00Kerry    | kerryomarhefka@gmail.com       |
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| Yes      | 90              | McGrew      | Grace      | mcgrewg@g.cofc.edu             |
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| Yes      | 98              | Murphey     | 00Trish    | trish.murphey@deq.nc.gov       |
| Yes      | 44              | Neidig      | Carole     | cneidig@mote.org               |
| Yes      | 98              | Newman      | Thomas     | thomasnewman@ncfish.org        |
| Yes      | 83              | Oliver      | Ashley     | ashley.oliver@safmc.net        |
| Yes      | 36              | Ramsay      | Chloe      | chloe.ramsay@myfwc.com         |
| Yes      | 100             | Ritter      | Michele    | michele.ritter@safmc.net       |
| Yes      | 54              | Roller      | 00Tom      | tomrollersafmc@gmail.com       |
| Yes      | 33              | Schuiteboer | Mary       | mary.schuiteboer@myfwc.com     |
| Yes      | 36              | Scott       | Rebecca    | rebecca.scott@myfwc.com        |
| Yes      | 66              | Seward      | McLean     | mclean.seward@deq.nc.gov       |
| Yes      | 39              | Smart       | Tracey     | smartt@dnr.sc.gov              |
| Yes      | 52              | Smillie     | Nicholas   | nick.smillie@safmc.net         |
| Yes      | 35              | Stemle      | Adam       | adam.stemle@noaa.gov           |
| Yes      | 92              | Stephens    | Haley      | haleywstephens@gmail.com       |
| Yes      | 52              | Sweetman    | CJ         | Christopher.Sweetman@MyFWC.com |
| Yes      | 41              | Travis      | Michael    | mike.travis@noaa.gov           |
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| Yes      | 44              | Wolfe       | Wes        | wesleyswolfe@gmail.com         |
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| Yes      | 96              | laks        | ira        | captainira@att.com             |
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## Attendee Report: March 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

Report Generated:

03/28/2024 02:14 PM EDT

### Webinar ID

192-795-875

### Actual Start Date/Time

03/27/2024 07:56 AM EDT

### Duration

9 hours 8 minutes

### # Registered

62

### # Attended

56

## Staff Details

### Attended

Yes Interest Rating Not applicable for staff Last Name Council First Name South Atlantic Email Address administrator@safmc.net

## Attendee Details

### Attended

| Attended | Interest Rating | Last Name  | First Name | Email Address                  |
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| Yes      | 89              | Aines      | Alex       | aaaines@oceana.org             |
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| Yes      | 40              | Bianchi    | Alan       | Alan.Bianchi@deq.nc.gov        |
| Yes      | 58              | Brannon    | Gettys     | gbrannon@scbfa.com             |
| Yes      | 98              | Brouwer    | Myra       | myra.brouwer@safmc.net         |
| Yes      | 32              | Bubley     | Walter     | bubleyw@dnr.sc.gov             |
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| Yes      | 39              | Byrd       | Julia      | julia.byrd@safmc.net           |
| Yes      | 56              | Conklin    | Chris      | conklincc@gmail.com            |
| Yes      | 48              | Curtis     | Judd       | judd.curtis@safmc.net          |
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| Yes      | 37              | Finch      | Margaret   | walkermf@dnr.sc.gov            |
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| Yes      | 58              | Ramsay     | Chloe      | chloe.ramsay@myfwc.com         |
| Yes      | 100             | Ritter     | Michele    | michele.ritter@safmc.net       |
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| Yes      | 96              | Seward     | McLean     | mclean.seward@deq.nc.gov       |
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| Yes      | 90              | Stephens   | Haley      | haleywstephens@gmail.com       |
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| Yes      | 39              | Travis     | Michael    | mike.travis@noaa.gov           |
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| Yes | 80  | griner  | 00Tim   | timgrinersafmc@gmail.com     |
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| Yes | 92  | oden    | Jeff    | slshcrkwtrwks@aol.com        |
| Yes | 74  | zales   | robert  | bobzales2@gmail.com          |
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## Attendee Report: March 2024 Snapper Grouper AP Meeting

Report Generated:

03/28/2024 02:16 PM EDT

### Webinar ID

988-902-643

### Actual Start Date/Time

03/28/2024 07:53 AM EDT

### Duration

4 hours 18 minutes

### # Registered

51

### # Attended

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## Staff Details

### Attended

Yes

### Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

### Last Name

Council

### First Name

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## Attendee Details

### Attended

| Attended | Interest Rating | Last Name  | First Name | Email Address                  |
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| Yes      | 39              | Bianchi    | Alan       | Alan.Bianchi@deq.nc.gov        |
| Yes      | 60              | Brouwer    | Myra       | myra.brouwer@safmc.net         |
| Yes      | 52              | Bunting    | Matthew    | matthew.bunting@myfwc.com      |
| Yes      | 43              | Byrd       | Julia      | julia.byrd@safmc.net           |
| Yes      | 63              | Carmichael | John       | john.carmichael@safmc.net      |
| Yes      | 78              | Cox        | Jack       | DAYBOAT1965@gmail.com          |
| Yes      | 46              | Curtis     | Judd       | judd.curtis@safmc.net          |
| Yes      | 53              | Dukes      | Amy        | Dukesa@dnr.sc.gov              |
| Yes      | 39              | Finch      | Margaret   | walkermf@dnr.sc.gov            |
| Yes      | 61              | Floyd      | Brad       | floyd@dnr.sc.gov               |
| Yes      | 57              | Foss       | Kristin    | kristin.foss@myfwc.com         |
| Yes      | 48              | Hadley     | John       | john.hadley@safmc.net          |
| Yes      | 50              | Helmey     | Judy       | fishjudy2@aol.com              |
| Yes      | 90              | Hemilright | Dewey      | fvartababy@embarqmail.com      |
| Yes      | 52              | Hugo       | David      | david.hugo@safmc.net           |
| Yes      | 75              | Iverson    | Kim        | Kim.Iverson@safmc.net          |
| Yes      | 100             | KLASNICK   | 01Kelly    | kelly.klasnick@safmc.net       |
| Yes      | 47              | Kellison   | Todd       | todd.kellison@noaa.gov         |
| Yes      | 34              | Keppler    | Blaik      | kepplerb@dnr.sc.gov            |
| Yes      | 33              | Lazo       | Sarah      | sarah.lazo@noaa.gov            |
| Yes      | 39              | Lee        | Jennifer   | Jennifer.Lee@noaa.gov          |
| Yes      | 93              | Mallory    | Ryan       | BuccaneerFisheries@yahoo.com   |
| Yes      | 78              | Marhefka   | 00Kerry    | kerryomarhefka@gmail.com       |
| Yes      | 35              | McClair    | Genine     | genine.mcclair@myfwc.com       |
| Yes      | 52              | Mehta      | Nikhil     | nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov          |
| Yes      | 54              | Murphey    | 00Trish    | trish.murphey@deq.nc.gov       |
| Yes      | 38              | Neidig     | Carole     | cneidig@mote.org               |
| Yes      | 98              | Newman     | Thomas     | thomasnewman@ncfish.org        |
| Yes      | 66              | Oliver     | Ashley     | ashley.oliver@safmc.net        |
| Yes      | 33              | Ramsay     | Chloe      | chloe.ramsay@myfwc.com         |
| Yes      | 100             | Ritter     | Michele    | michele.ritter@safmc.net       |
| Yes      | 62              | Roller     | 00Tom      | tomrollersafmc@gmail.com       |
| Yes      | 95              | Schmidtke  | 01Michael  | Mike.Schmidtke@safmc.net       |
| Yes      | 75              | Seward     | McLean     | mclean.seward@deq.nc.gov       |
| Yes      | 94              | Shervanick | Kara       | kara.shervanick@noaa.gov       |
| Yes      | 59              | Smillie    | Nick       | nick.smillie@safmc.net         |
| Yes      | 36              | Sweetman   | CJ         | Christopher.Sweetman@MyFWC.com |
| Yes      | 55              | Wiegand    | Christina  | christina.wiegand@safmc.net    |
| Yes      | 46              | Withers    | Meg        | meg.withers@safmc.net          |
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