

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**Key West Marriott Beachside
Key West, Florida**

June 14-16, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

Committee Members

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Chester Brewer
LT Robert Copeland
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Attendees and Invited Participants

Dr. Jeff Buckel
Shep Grimes
Bob Lorenz
LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy
Dr. Clay Porch

Rick DeVictor
Jamal Ingram
Dr. Jack McGovern
Ashley Oliver
Monica Smith-Brunello

Additional attendees and invited participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Key West Marriott Beachside, Key West, Florida, on Tuesday, June 14, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going here. All right. We're on day-two of the South Atlantic Council meeting here in Key West, and we're going to move into the Snapper Grouper Committee. The committee members are pretty much the whole council is on the Snapper Grouper Committee.

The first order of business is Approval of the Snapper Grouper Committee Agenda. Any changes or modifications to the agenda? Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. Seeing none, the agenda is approved. The next order of business is Approval of the March 2022 transcript, or minutes. Any changes to the minutes? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Apologies. Give me just one second. Page 165, my first statement on the page, in the last line, the word "better" should be "buffer", and that's it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Any more changes to the transcript? All right. Any objections to approval of the transcript, or the minutes? All right. Seeing none, that stands approved. Next up, we have the Status of Amendments Under Formal Review, and I'm going to pass it over here to my left.

MR. DEVICTOR: Good morning. There is one amendment, and this is Amendment 50, and so you finished this up at your last meeting and voted to send it to the Secretary of Commerce, and so that was submitted to us on May 3, and, of course, this is the amendment that responds to the red porgy stock assessment and puts in a new rebuilding plan and lowers the ACL and ABC and changes the allocations and AMs and all of that. We're working on the proposed rule right now, and, since that's a plan amendment, there's also a comment period on the notice of availability, and so there will be two comments periods there, and we'll hopefully get that started this summer. Look for the Fishery Bulletin on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions for Rick? All right. The next order of business is the Release Mortality Reduction and Red Snapper Catch Levels, and this is Reg Amendment 35, and, first up, we're going to hear from the Snapper Grouper AP Chair, Bob Lorenz.

MR. LORENZ: Good morning. I'm Bob Lorenz, and I will be now chairing the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel. I live in Wilmington, North Carolina, and I've been up there for twenty-one years. I was in Florida before that, and I'm basically going to provide you some of the report, or add color, on what we discussed on I believe April 18 and 19, at the Snapper Grouper Advisory Committee meeting.

I guess we'll start, or are starting, with Amendment 35, the release mortality reduction for the red snapper, and probably what was most important -- Having been on the AP for about seven years, it's starting to get a little frustrating, because, a lot of times, when we're starting to get into a zone like this, it pretty much turns into a complaint session, or we can't do quite as much as we think we can do, and so the AP went through with this in very good faith.

Basically, we discussed where we were finding the red snapper, what time of year, what we consider deep water, shallow water, and how we might reduce the catches, often with how we manipulate gear, but the seasons are getting so small. I mean, the recreational season being about two days, I guess it is this year, that a comment we came up with, and this is truly just to say that I will tell you how the stakeholders feel with this red snapper, because I know it's really tricky, and, as I said, I've been following it now for ten years, and you do have a point where I think your stakeholders no longer believe, and it's getting hard.

They think the red snapper is interfering with everything, and particularly when you get over with the commercial side, and particularly when you get into Florida, and we had situations where, initially, when I heard it, and it was even a year or two ago, where we're not getting a tremendous amount of these fish in our area that are getting in the way, but now people are speaking about that, and so probably one of the most -- The interesting things we came up with, and they wanted to just go on record for this one time, and so we did a lot of thinking, a bunch of us, and put down what I would call a consensus statement that's on the summary meeting report.

That is that we will continue to go, in the best faith, to try to reduce -- To give suggestions on how to reduce red snapper, but the closures and the shut seasons are beginning to look almost punitive, to almost every AP member, and, basically, the whole AP almost overwhelmingly feels that the red snapper is, you know, probably not overfished, and overfishing occurring, just by what anecdotally they're seeing out on the water.

There are so many of them that some folks are having difficulty fishing for other species, and now it's actually impacting to where there has been discussions of how to fish for other species and not impact the red snapper, and so it's a tough road ahead, and I just wanted to kind of make that statement on the AP's behalf, because they truly feel that way, and they meet, and a lot of discussions end up -- You know, there's a lot of complaining and venting, which I'm going to try to, in the future, turn around, and I hope this council would, to maybe find --

We have to deal with this better than we've been, and it's just not a cutback, and we have to stop this situation, where essentially the catch the recreational group is allowed, like that, is all considered bycatch and dead releases, and something should be done, and I would like us in the AP to put our thinking caps on more and give you some suggestions on what might be done, other than the road we seem to be going on, which is always reduction of effort and that sort of thing, and so I took a little time on that, but that's the mindset behind everybody, and now we can get into the meats and the potatoes.

Since we went over our recommendation, we discussed the snapper grouper fishery seasonality and depths, and a lot of the discussion went around where people fish and what they consider deeper water, and probably most folks were talking -- They will consider, the guys that are fishing, 120 to 160 feet as being the shallower water, and that's where the deeper water will begin, except in Florida, where there's kind of been a statement of about 180 feet, or better, and we discussed the various targeted species when red snapper are encountered, and, of course, that will differ from the southern region to the northern region.

In the northern region, we got into a lot of the discussions on things like the sea bass and the triggerfish that are caught in other times of the year, mainly when it's cooler, and, basically, there red snapper are found with these other species, and particularly -- I think it was anybody that

operates the headboats particularly is looking for some kind of species to be available all year, and we had a good discussion on the various species that we go for.

Times of the year depended on everything. I mean, the folks in Florida said that the shallow water is actually pretty important in the wintertime, because that's when you get a lot of fishing here, and tourism, and that would mainly come also from people that are guides and charter boat operators. They were very interested in that.

The critical depths, the AP basically doesn't really -- They don't support -- Nobody is really wild about closures of a certain area, but I got into a little bit of that, where we discussed what is deeper and shallower water, and there was some thought that, on the deepwater species, that maybe the - - I think there was the year that we made the 250-foot zone, and I think closed it, or repressed fishing in it for a little while, that maybe that's kind of something that is very doable on that.

Effort, I'm a little blank there, and so one of the -- It was kind of interesting, and we had some discussions with respect to red snapper and the season, and, right now, it is in July, and that's a season where there is going to be a lot of people fishing for them and that sort of thing, and might it be better to move it to, you know, another part of the year, mainly as a way of possibly reducing the fact that everybody can be out there and having a hook-and-line in the water, and, in a time like July, there may be a little less than other times of the year, when the fish could be targeted, and maybe that might be a way of possibly reducing the recreational discard problem that we have.

One statement that also comes up, and it comes up a lot, from all the commercial fishing representatives on the AP, is they are the ones that continually bring up the fact that there is no real accountability for the private recreational fishing group, and there isn't a license or a permit, and, therefore, it's difficult to count, yet it seems like everybody is affected by the fishing that goes with a tremendous amount of dead discards, and so a lot of folks tend to be upset, and that's always discussed, and I don't even know if we're going to make the recommendations anymore, because that's almost a constant recommendation, to bring that about, and I know there is effort in the council to bring about a recreational fishing license, or permit, and some kind of mandatory reporting system.

Then, again, some of the discussions on what can we do for the reductions was, you know, we're getting down to the bottom of the barrel on some of the things. I mean, we aren't fishing that much, but to reduce these dead discards, and we did talk a lot about things like just simple things that can be used. Yes, you could make it mandatory for a single hook. Anything that can reduce swallowing, I guess, is going to be a good thing, and so we discussed things like the single-hook rigs, and that's kind of simple.

You could go to where you call recreational fishing for red snapper kind of a sport fishery, and so you can probably justify it with things like jigs and that sort of thing, metal, no use of natural bait, and maybe that can help, and so the larger fish can get off, with things like the weak hooks, the large hooks, again anything that reduces swallowing, having one hook versus two, and that also puts priority on the angler feeling the initial hook-up, and the second one, that you can't feel, and there won't be as much going on, and maybe we reduce some dead discards.

Then the thing considered the best would be, once we really know, maybe through an assessment, where there are hotspots for red snappers, maybe -- That will come up with a lot of argument,

depending on what other fish are there, but it would be the possibility of a seasonal or an area closure when the fish are known to be quite abundant and known to be quite aggressive, and do that, along with the actual gear restrictions that we may put into place, in addition to the enhanced fishing techniques we have now, like the things to take fish down to the depth and to reduce barotrauma and that sort of thing.

Probably the strongest point there is on the bottom, that why have discard-reducing measures put upon the commercial fishery, and they are documented, and they catch so much, and then they have to stop, and so you have everything in place, and so why should you have a dead discard, and the fish should be able to be sold and be fine, be landed and be done, and you have excellent accountability, and then that also has led to, you know, if -- This is coming about the recreational for-hire component, and, you know, they're getting into logbooks and that sort of a thing, and so they're feeling that we're more documented now, and so possibly release us from some of these restrictions and spatial closures, and, again, the argument always goes back to the fact that, and we've seen it with the COVID thing, is there's been an explosion of recreational angling and effort that everybody feels is out there.

The private recreational anglers are kind of not known, but everybody is -- It's affecting everybody's pot, and so, therefore, come the various thoughts, with the commercial group always wanting the recreational folks to have a fishing license, and you're starting to get discussion, and it may likely occur, that, due to the increased documentation of for-hire and charter groups doing that, maybe they should be their own sector, and then you're going to get into what I feel would be splitting off of ACLs, and now you'll probably end up with three sectors, versus the two we have now, but expect that to come as we keep increasing the requirements on certain stakeholders of the fishery.

The other ones are more voluntary, and the ones that have the more mandatory requirements are wanting to separate from the rest of us, fairly strongly, and it's becoming a pretty common plea that you're going to see going forward, and so thank you for that, and so that kind of includes my report and the color on our Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. Any questions for Bob about what happened at the recent AP meeting? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I listened entirely, for two days, and I thought you had a very good group of folks and coverage of some knowledge and experience, but it's interesting how that reality plays into management, or will be, but it was interesting listening to everybody's comments, and you had a very diverse group. Thank you.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Dewey. That is a very enrolled group. If you would start to see some of the credentials of some of the folks that are in that group, on the fishing they've done and the commercial folks, and some of them are actually vertically integrated through the entire industry, and it's pretty amazing, and so I've certainly learned a lot over the years. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for your report, Bob, and I really appreciate you taking over as Chair of the Snapper Grouper AP. In this discussion about doing things to reduce discards for red

snapper, how do you think the AP feels about taking some of these things, like the overarching grouper snapper fishery, as opposed to just for red snapper? Has there been much discussion on that?

MR. LORENZ: I'm looking for some clarity there. Are you talking with respect to the -- Like the measures for reduction in barotrauma and all that sort of a thing?

MR. ROLLER: Well, in a lot of the discussions that I've had, people are more resistant to the idea of doing this just for red snapper, but, when you start looking at it for the whole complex of species, it becomes more palatable. Does that make sense? I mean, we, obviously, haven't had discussion here, and I was just curious if you could weigh-in on that a little bit.

MR. LORENZ: That has been brought up with respect to do you, just for a period of time, stop all fishing, and I think that may be within respect to I believe one of the slides where we made it about the changing of the gears, along with the finding of the hotspots and that sort of thing, and so I think it came in with that kind of mindset, but you get in a -- At least on our AP, it seems to be kind of a dying form of business, though it does affect so much of the public, the public that really doesn't show up here, just a time or two a year, and you're going to get a lot of input like from the headboat operators, and so what few are left, and that seems to a soft spot with that type of an operation.

It needs to go all year, and it gets people from the outside, and it needs to go after fish, and so that's tough, particularly when you get into closures, and so I guess it would depend on what those overarching mechanisms are to reduce fishing, or I presume dead discards, and a big theme with the group is, and I would like to see if we can lead it there, is how can we turn these dead discards into something usable, and why have an entire fishery's accountability, to the best we know, be totally based on what is estimated, or calculated, to be thrown away, and isn't there some way to keep that, that bycatch, a bycatch allowance, and I don't know how you deal with the moral hazard and all that, but there's a lot of thought in that respect, of why can't we just turn these discards into something that we keep, somehow, some way. I know we have that in the commercial sector, and maybe we can do that for the recreational sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions or comments for Bob? Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you for the report. The problem is not discards, and it's discard mortality, and so I was wondering if the AP had any discussions with regard to deep-drop equipment and whether that should be restricted, whether that could be one way of decreasing discard mortality, and it's something that we were talking about, and Jessica brought it up, and we were talking about it at lunch yesterday, that that might be something that could be done, and probably you might restrict it to the recreational sector, but it kind of goes hand-in-hand with the discussions about turning it into a sport fishery.

Deep-drop equipment is not sportfishing, and the stuff that you bring up on a deep-drop rig -- They're probably going to die, and so I'm just -- I was just wondering if that played any role in you all's discussions or whether that might be something that you would want to discuss in the future.

MR. LORENZ: I think it's something worthwhile discussing more in the future, Chester, and we do touch on it from time-to-time, and mainly the way it's been touched was by folks discussing the explosion in recreational effort, and now we always get the stories, which we didn't even have two years ago, and every one of us now sees the, whatever, the thirty-two or thirty-six-foot boat with four 300s, or 400s, out there, and I used to say, not even two years ago, that we do have, due to distance, sort of a restriction on fishing effort up in my area, in southeastern North Carolina, where, to interact with a lot of these species that are under snapper grouper, we're going out forty miles, to maybe fifty miles.

There is just a lot of things that come in with that, the size of the boat you need, the weather, this and that, that these larger boats -- Now we have people in my area that can get out to the fishing grounds in an hour, and so they've discussed that, and it's becoming ever-increasingly popular, and we see all the sportsmen's shows and the magazine shows on all these deepwater species that are gone, and, yes, there seems to be -- There seems to be interest in the AP on that, and then, again, it often gets back as documenting who is doing that, because, other than the southern half of Florida, that deep-water dropping becomes, in the recreational sector, a sport for the more well-heeled anglers.

Basically, the average working person isn't going to be able to afford the equipment and go out there and do that, and so you're getting into that other group, and, again, it always comes back to the accountability, and it was mentioned, with the recreational fishing license, or permit, of why wouldn't we permit that right away with mandatory reporting of certain species, like some of these groupers, and so that has been discussed, and I think they would like to, and I think it would be rather easily accepted.

To my knowledge, we don't have anybody yet -- I know, in my area, there are some folks in the extreme southern end of North Carolina that are very good at that deepwater dropping, and they do go fifty to seventy miles out, and you can see what they catch all over the place, and none of them have ever made it to the AP, but it would be interesting to get some of those people in with the rest of us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. Any more questions? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Bob, we're going to keep you at arm's length for this committee, and so stand by, because we're going to be calling on you a lot, and we're going to take full advantage of everything you guys talked about, and I just really appreciate your willingness to step up and serve as the Chair. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else? All right. Let's turn it over to Jeff, the new SSC Chair, who is going to give us the SSC input on this topic.

DR. BUCKEL: Thanks, Jessica. All right, and so we met in late April, and we discussed the Amendment 35, and Mike Schmidtke presented it to us, and, first off, I have several slides of just overall comments. The SSC applauds the council for pursuing regulatory action to reduce dead discards in the snapper grouper fishery, but, to significantly reduce these dead discards, we're going to have to reduce encounters and effort. The SSC emphasized that the F to rebuild the biomass, and I'm being specific about rebuilding biomass, because, as you know, the numbers are

rebuilt, but those are small fish, and so the F to rebuild the biomass is much lower than the current F, and so we need dramatic reductions in overall fishing effort to reduce these dead discards.

The bottom line is small changes that allow only a slight reduction in effort, or a slight reduction in discard mortality rates, will not be sufficient to address the challenges facing the fishery and successful rebuilding of that red snapper biomass. To reconsider catch levels, a robust analysis of how efficient each proposed regulation would be needs to be conducted within the short timeframe of this amendment, and so this is a tall task, given the short amendment timeframe and limited data availability, and the SSC is going to have a higher degree of uncertainty surrounding the potential impact of these strategies as something that's likely to occur, and how they affect discard reductions may need to be accepted by the SSC to make initial progress. The bottom line is substantial data analyses and review would be required on a very short timeframe for meaningful changes in the red snapper ABC to occur.

In the short-term, for this regulatory amendment, the SSC recommends pursuing temporal or spatial reductions, and those could possibly be wave-based, and so what I'm talking about there are the MRIP waves, and, as Bob mentioned, this is a private recreational boat issue, and so looking at where you can get the biggest bang for your buck, based on the number of live releases in those MRIP waves. Seasonal differences among regions within the South Atlantic should be considered, if possible, and the bulk of recreational discards for red snapper are occurring off the east coast of Florida. Thus, spatial closures may be most effective in this area.

Spatial reductions by depth may be less effective in the South Atlantic, as compared to the west coast for example, where barotrauma complications account for the majority of discard mortality, and so, on the east coast of Florida, Bev Sauls' group at FWRI has had observers and documenting the depths where a lot of the live releases are occurring, and a lot of those are less than 120 feet, and so that's where you're not going to get as much bang for your buck with reducing the barotrauma issues, when you have a lot of fish in those shallower areas.

Effectiveness of gear restrictions, changes to reduce dead discards will be difficult to quantify within the short timeframe of this amendment, and so the examples that Bob mentioned, like the weak links or one-hook rigs, they should only be considered in a suite of longer-term solutions. Similarly, the option to develop a federal recreational permit to quantify effort, and potentially limit the number of anglers, would be useful, but it's going to require a much longer timeframe for implementation, probably too long for this amendment.

There were two questions that were posed to the SSC by the council. Discuss uncertainty of proposed mechanisms for reducing discards, and what data, or analyses, could improve efforts to quantify the impact of regulations directed at reducing releases and discard losses? We hit on, already in our overall comments, some data, or analyses, that could improve efforts, and I'm going to hit on some of the uncertainty issues in the next two slides.

Angler/fisher behavioral response to new regulations is highly uncertainty, and it may result in unintended consequences that may be counterproductive, and so an example would be, if you have a spatial closure, and you have 100 units of effort over an area, and you're moving -- The idea is that the spatial reduction is going to reduce that effort, but that effort could just move outside of that closure, and you would still have the same amount of effort, and so that's an unintended consequence.

There's a lot of literature out there on these issues, and so the SSC recommends that literature from other regions be examined to potentially inform how changes in management might result in changes in fisher behavior.

Another thing that could be done in these analyses is assuming the same catch per trip, and so the same number of live releases per trip as you move forward with management regulations, but, if they're effective, right, and you're not killing off as many fish, there is going to be compensatory effects, and so more fish out there, and the catch per trip might be higher, and so a higher encounter rate, a higher catch rate, should be considered in these analyses of the management regulations.

Another big area of uncertainty, not only for this amendment, but for the assessment, is the SSC is concerned that discard information for both the commercial and recreational sectors is largely unvalidated and may not be accurate for the snapper grouper complex, and we list three key issues of concern. The majority of commercial discard information, and all recreational discard information is self-reported, and so, again, we don't -- There is no validation of that information on live releases. Commercial logbooks only represent around 15 percent of trips, and logbook reports of zero discards have increased from 30 percent to between 60 to 70 percent, more recently in the commercial sector, which may indicate substantial underreporting of discards.

Then the last question that the council asked the SSC to address, and that Bob hit on, is would reducing the number of red snapper that are discarded dead provide an opportunity for increased harvest, and the SSC's take on this is that, in the short term, this is highly unlikely.

The F needed to rebuild the biomass is substantially lower than the current F, and, thus, dramatic reductions in overall fishing effort and total discards will be required, and so, if you don't remember from the assessment, the F rebuild is around 0.2, and the current F is around 0.4, and so we're talking about cutting that fishing mortality rate in half. Options that go beyond the absolute minimum, to stop overfishing from discards, could allow more directed fishing and should be considered in the list of alternative management actions, and that's the end of my report. I would be happy to answer any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good. Questions? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you go back, and your slides weren't numbered, and so I guess go back to Slide Number 2, I think it might have been.

DR. BUCKEL: That's the first one.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay. Yes, this is it. On your second bullet point there, reducing encounters and effort is paramount, and so, even though you all put the reducing encounters in your effort, what does the SSC -- There ain't but a few ways to do that, and so what ways is there to do that?

DR. BUCKEL: So on I think it's the next slide, or maybe it's Slide 3, and so, Dewey, this gets at your question there, and so pursuing temporal or spatial reductions in bottom fishing, and so it's getting hooks off the bottom, right, and so, right now, I think the dead discards, the current dead discards, is around 400,000 annually, and you need to get it down to 200,000, right, and so that's

-- I don't know else to do that, other than getting hooks off the bottom, and so that's either through a temporal closure or a spatial closure, or some combination.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Another thing is you said, in one of the slides, the commercial logbooks represent 15 percent of trips.

DR. BUCKEL: I think that was a -- When I was reading that, I thought that I think that's the observer coverage, but, Judd and Chip, you could weigh-in on that, and I think that may have --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The only reason why I ask is because everybody -- I was under the assumption that has got a commercial logbook that has got a permit.

DR. BUCKEL: Right. 100 percent for logbooks, yes, and so I think that's a mistake that I made, and it should have been the observer coverage, and so that's giving you validation, right, and you know that this is the number of live releases that occur when there's an observer on the boat, and so, for the commercial sector, you've got that 15 percent coverage, whereas, in the recreational sector, there is no observer coverage, but that 15 percent is still fairly low, but it does give some indication of how the live releases look on those observed trips versus the number of live releases reported just on the logbook without an observer, and so it's super helpful.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right. I appreciate it. Thanks.

DR. BUCKEL: Thanks, Dewey, for catching that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I struggle with this validation, these validation issues, and we're always going to be self-reported. I mean, everything we do, to a certain extent, is always going to be self-reported, and, when you really start looking at, well, that causes problems for you guys using the data, because of this lack of validation, I think that goes around -- That goes to everything we do, and that goes to everything we're trying to do, and so, you know, whether we are trying to get more accountability in the recreational fishery, it's all -- You're always going to have this validation problem, and so we're asking guys to do stuff, but none of it can ever be validated, and so where do we really -- Where do we go from there? If nothing we can do can ever be validated, other than have an observer on every single boat, every recreational boat, where do you ever go, and how do you ever get there?

DR. BUCKEL: That's a good question for the management council. I don't have an answer. There are some approaches that can be used, and it doesn't have to be 100 percent observer coverage, and we've learned a lot from just if you have 10 or 15 percent observer coverage in that commercial sector and seeing how that compares to the logbooks when there is no observer, and so a limited amount of observer coverage, or maybe some other model techniques, to try to watch what's being caught and released and then intercept that angler and see what they report and how close it is to reality, and so I think there's some ways that -- Some other approaches that could be used, in addition to observers, that we just have to put into place.

MR. GRINER: As a follow-up, I guess what I'm really asking is, from the SSC's standpoint, what does validate data, and so I guess what I'm hearing is descending devices are all -- None of that is

validated, and so that's not really used, and hooks aren't really an issue, because they're not validated, and we don't really know if you're using them correctly or not using them, and so what in the -- What does validate the data, I guess is what I'm asking, and, other than observer coverage, is anything ever validated?

DR. BUCKEL: I think the descender devices and venting, those reductions in mortality, are included, and those are validated, and scientific studies are done, and those have been included in the stock assessment, and so that's been the reductions with going from j-hooks to circle hooks, and there is a known benefit, a known reduction in mortality, because you're going to have less deep-hooking with the circle hooks, and so those have been validated in scientific studies, and so what we don't have for this region, in terms of the validation, are the live releases, right, within MRIP, and so coming up with some ways to validate if people are reporting correctly the number of live releases.

There might be a positive bias, and somebody gets interviewed, and they want to say they're released a lot more than they actually did, or maybe there's a negative bias, because they -- So that would -- Some studies to do that would be helpful, with respect to this, and are we in the right ballpark, and I'm just pointing out that that's an uncertainty in these analyses, and so we don't have those validations to-date, but that's a research recommendation, but, for a short-term amendment like this, we need to take that uncertainty into account.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

DR. BUCKEL: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. A couple of points. In terms of validation, or monitoring discards, it is doable with an observer program, but it just takes the funding to do it, and I think, as Jeff said, that, if we could get up at 10 or 15 percent, we would probably have defensible estimates. I mean, at the current rate, we have fifty or a hundred days at-sea, and of course not, and even the Program SCUT I think is only -- I don't remember for sure, and I think it's like 2 percent coverage, and that's probably not quite what we need, but, if we could get that coverage up, we could monitor commercial discards fairly well.

Recreational discards, of course, that's self-reported, and would likely stay self-reported, because you can't put observers on all the recreational boats, or even a representative fraction, for safety issues and all sorts of things, but, having said all that, one thing I heard from both the AP and the SSC is an agreement that effective effort has gone through the roof, both in terms of recreationally say the number of boats, but both commercial and recreational have benefitted considerably from technology, right, and, I mean,, it's just crazy the technology that's put to bear now.

We've come a long way from sailboats and twine lines that we had before the 1950s, and so clearly you need to reduce the effective effort, and that's not necessarily the number of participants, and it could be, or the number of days they go out, and it could be, but you could do it with some variations on time/area closures, and this is where I heard from the AP that they weren't -- I think I heard that they weren't too keen on that, and the SSC is suggesting that may be the best way to

go, I think, and so I just wonder if it's worth having a little more conversation about what that could look like, and I will throw this out there.

It is conceivable that you could have some areas that are open year-round, and it might be small areas, and maybe particular designated artificial reefs or something, and you might allow people to even retain fish that they otherwise would discard, and so have a smaller size limit or something, but, if you actually just say you can fish year-round in this one particular area, and we have to figure out how big that area could be, and then, the rest of the time, you leave other areas relatively unfished, or you have some restricted entry, and I just wonder if anybody has talked about things like that, that would allow the fishery, in principle, to occur year-round, but, by restricting it to some smaller areas, their catch rates, of course, are going to go down, as they fish that area down, but it would also allow the other areas to have fewer discards and actually increase in biomass.

DR. BUCKEL: The SSC did not discuss those particular options, and I think that would be really helpful to have input from the Snapper Grouper AP, on where those areas might be and where you could have an opening, but not lead to large numbers of live releases of red snapper, and so it would be helpful to have the input from the AP for that approach. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Jeff. Thank you for the report. I want to kind of follow-up on this discussion about the discards, and, you know, I've had concerns about the lack of validation, like everybody has, but what I am particularly interested in, and would like some perspective on, is if we are seeing people increasing their zero-discard reports, because I'm afraid that's what is going to happen, particularly in the recreational sector, is --

I think, for many years, they reported large numbers, trying to reinforce the fact that the population was increasing and expanding, and now they're sort of seeing that that has backfired on them, and so they're going to turn around and just say, well, I didn't discard any, and so what will that mean, going forward, in terms of our ability to truly understand the effect of discards, because, as I understand it, and I have seen it written, I believe, that about 90 percent of this gap between F current and F rebuild is attributable to the discard mortality, and so, obviously, it's driving this process, and so what will happen if we do see this shift and we've got lots of just zero discard reports, and how is that going to affect things, going forward?

DR. BUCKEL: It's a great question, Spud, but you're absolutely right that this is all -- That the F that needs to be reduced is, as you mentioned, the dead discards, and so, if that bias occurred into the future, right, where, all of a sudden, there's a lot less live releases, and that's going to be a lot fewer dead discards, and so the assessment is going to erroneously say that F has dropped, right, and that would be incorrect, under your scenario, and so that would be -- The stock assessment would get F wrong, and it would be biased low, because of the underreporting of the live releases, and so that's -- We don't want to go in that direction, and so that's more reason to reduce that uncertainty in the recreational live releases, is to try and come up with ways to prevent that from happening and have some percentage of those trips somehow validate the -- Get the true number of live releases right, so that we could correct for that, for the remainder that we don't have the validation. I hope that -- Does that get at your --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and thank you, and I think that's sort of what I thought the answer would be, and I think -- Not to get too deep into it right now, but I think it goes back to the fundamental issue facing us, and that is the trust and the confidence and the cooperation that we ask people to do and how that has been adversely affected and how can we address the problem at-hand, but also rebuild trust, and perhaps give the fishing community something back for what we've asked them to do, and, I mean, it's a conundrum, and it really is, of how to do it, but I think that's going to be fundamental to how do we move out of this almost impasse that we're stuck in right here, and so, with that, I will stop.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Sometimes -- Well, I will probably put the cart before the horse, but our surveys that is being done, with the deepwater survey and other previous surveys that have been done, are observed, and it shows you what fish are being caught there, and so, if you take the areas where the fish are being caught and observed, through your different surveys, you're going to have to put the assumption in of, well, how can everybody else fish here and not catch them fish, meaning that these areas where the surveys are being done at are showing you what's there, clearly showing you what's there, and not anecdotal, and so, therefore, we've got to look into the management part of it, and it's like, hey, in this area here, this is what is being caught, and we've got all these people fishing here, and how is it that they're not catching none of this stuff, and they're using a piece of squid on a baited hook, and it's almost like we need to section off the ocean a little bit better, in different areas where these surveys are being done at, and focus on the groups of folks fishing in that area, to look at whether we believe the anecdotal logbooks or whatever you call it, different things like that, and here's reality.

It just seems like we keep going a little bit further in different ways, or out, but it's like building a house or repairing an engine. You've got to start on some of the innerworkings and work your way out, and it just seems like sometimes we get off on going in a different direction, or something, but our surveys are observed, and they're in areas that people are fishing, and so why not look at that area, to see where everybody else is fishing at, and go from there, but I almost think you need to make smaller blocks in our reporting, like five-mile blocks or something.

You know, everybody is worried about their secret fishing spot, and, well, heck, there ain't no more secret fishing spots, and, to Clay's point about the commercial and the upgrade on equipment, the difference there is I might have upgraded something in the last five years, a chart plotter, or a chart thing, but the difference is you have unlimited recreational access, and you have limited access commercial, and so, as far as I see on the commercial end, I don't know about the technology, that that's been updated to where it gives one advantage over the other, so to speak, because it's just amazing the amount of folks out there fishing recreationally, and, until we get something started with a permit, and that should be like the number-one thing, and that should be on a fast-track, permitting and reporting, and we can see where that is going to fall out -- Until that happens and starts, then the rest of this is kind of futile, from my point, in my thoughts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Any more questions? All right. I don't see any more hands. All right. Mike is going to pull up the document and kind of walk us through the setup of that document, and then I have a Chair's statement to read, but I'm going to turn it to Mike first.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm not going to go through in the detail right now, and I think we're going to come back around to this a little bit later, but I did want to point out, before you get into the discussion, after the statement from the Chair, and so, in the last meeting, you all gave us a nice little laundry list of data to gather, and staff have worked on that since then, and I just wanted to point out, within this decision document, you have several tables and figures and summaries within this, descriptions of landings, descriptions of assessment information, some breakdowns of MRIP information by wave, by area, and we have some fishery-independent information.

Especially make sure you get down to the appendices, because that's where a lot of this data is stored, and we tried to put kind of the council business up towards the front, but put the bulk of the information down in the appendices, so it's there for your consideration, but landings, dead releases, some of the -- Here is the fishery-independent data from the MARMAP chevron trap survey, and we have information about dead releases, or releases and release mortality by depth, along with some of the previous discussions that came up in older snapper grouper amendments regarding discard-reducing analyses, some of the economic and social discussions surrounding those as well.

There's a literature review of spawning information for the snapper grouper fishery and then some of the information that you've already seen, with kind of the rough summary of gear modifications and the discard mortality rates for different fisheries. There is a lot of information in there, and so please be sure to take a look at that and reference it as you go about your discussion, and we'll talk a bit more about the business end of this decision document a little bit later in the discussion today, but that's all I had.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. All right. I think John Carmichael sent around a Chair's statement that I am going to read, kind of to try to summarize where the council has been, where the committee has been, talk a little bit about the summary from the AP and the SSC, and so I'm just going to read that into the record.

The council recognizes that the red snapper stock is at record abundance, driven largely by strong recruitment over the last decade. High recruitment has supported considerable stock rebuilding and age structure expansion, despite the assessment indicating that overfishing has continued. The council recognizes that dead discards are the greatest source of mortality of the red snapper stock and that actions need to be taken to reduce interactions and discard mortalities.

At the June and September 2021 meetings, we committed to addressing discards in the regulatory amendment and broader snapper grouper issues in a subsequent FMP amendment. The reports we received from the SSC and AP are in response to this immediate effort to complete the regulatory amendment and revise the ABC, and that is the topic of discussion that we're going to get into this morning.

The AP, similar to most of the fishermen we have heard from, strongly opposes actions that will limit access to the snapper grouper fishery, like seasons or closed areas, particularly given the obvious abundance of red snapper, and then the SSC reiterated the need to reduce encounters with, and discards of, red snapper and indicated that revising the ABC is not possible without dramatic reductions in overall fishery effort and a thorough analysis of regulations that would target effort reductions. The SSC also pointed out that some of the actions of the reg amendment cannot likely

be evaluated over the short time planned for development, and the discard information remains highly uncertain.

Faced with these challenges, can the council identify specific actions to consider in the Regulatory Amendment to address discards? The SSC recommended pursuing time or area closures, and, in March, we agreed that such measures were the most quantifiable. However, as noted, the fishermen and the AP strongly oppose actions that reduce access to the fishery, such as seasons and area closures, and past experience has shown that area closures are highly controversial and, thus, time-consuming to implement. As the State of Florida representative, large area closures, or single-wave closed fishing seasons, are not options that will work for us here.

This pretty much leaves the council with considering actions that can reduce interactions with red snapper on a given trip and attempting to change angler behavior. Multiple approaches will be required to solve this challenge.

Quantitatively analyzing some of these actions will be difficult, if not impossible, as noted in the reg amendment and discussed by the SSC, and so the council will need to apply some judgement to develop a rationale. It is also important to note that evaluating these actions based on existing data will be difficult, if they actually achieve the intended outcome of changing angler behavior.

While these options will not completely solve the discard issue, we know that some modifications can likely help reduce interactions, and so, just to kind of get the discussion started here, I want to highlight, from the FWC, some ideas that were proposed in the decision document that we think could reduce interactions, and so we've talked about, around the table, expanding current education and outreach. Since the goal is changing fishing behavior, education and outreach are critical, and we can consider expanding the current best practices campaign, and we may also need to address what a rebuilt red snapper stock looks like and what it can provide, in terms of fishery yield, given that the AP seemed to feel that declaring the stock rebuilt could solve some of the current challenges.

Also, gear changes, and I know we've gone back and forth on that, but a number of gear modification options are discussed in the decision document, and Mike showed you that table that's in the appendix, and so quantitative analysis is difficult, as discussed in March, largely because very little is known about current fishing practices, and the overall goal is to make effort less effective, and so we're thinking about things like limiting rigs to single hooks, regulating leader length, and prohibiting electric reels, and making that more of a commercial gear, as opposed to a recreational gear, in order to reduce the effectiveness of effort, and, thus, reduce red snapper interactions.

Also, another one of our thoughts is maybe looking at an aggregate possession limit, since time and area closures are strongly opposed. Reducing effort within a trip is one of the few options that we feel is left to consider here, and the decision document mentions a weight limit for the recreational fishery, and we think a limit in numbers is possibly a better approach. The details would need to be worked out, such as preserving existing bag limits and potentially including a vessel limit, along with a per-person limit, and we would need to consider a range of options to evaluate perhaps ten or fifteen snapper grouper per person.

We recognize that there may be concerns with compliance, and even highgrading. However, since our underlying goal is to change the behavior in the fishery, we need to start making decisions that will compel change and accept that it will take time for such changes to become widely accepted and applied, and so, thinking about the next steps, as we go beyond this meeting, and so we have an assessment that is expected to be completed in 2026, and we have an MSE analysis coming in the future, and so making some changes now could provide an opportunity to evaluate impacts in the assessment and provide further guidance on regulations that we want to evaluate in the MSE, and so, at this point, Chip, do you mind coming up here and talking a little bit about the MSE?

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. We've been talking about this kind of nebulous idea for a while, but it is coming to fruition. We recently signed a contract with the people that are going to be developing the MSE for us, and it's Blue Matter, and they are kind of in the forefront of developing MSEs and several data-limited projects that they've worked on in the past, and you have likely heard of some of their projects. They developed a data-limited approaches, and it's Tom Carruthers, and he presented to the SSC, years ago, on these approaches, and so we're working with them in order to develop a multispecies MSE, and we're going to focus on the recreational fishery.

They are going to be providing, at the October Snapper Grouper AP meeting, a little look into what an MSE could look like, and they're going to work on two different species, red snapper and gag grouper, and red snapper, obviously, for the reasons that we're talking about, but, for gag grouper, it's a species going in the opposite direction, and we need to rebuild that one, and so it's going to be interesting looking at how the MSE starts, and it's going to be communicated to the Snapper Grouper AP.

As this project is being developed, what we hope to have is an IPT-style workgroup, and they're going to help guide the development of the model, and then we're also going to have the workgroup with some members of the Snapper Grouper AP, and this workgroup is going to guide some of the decisions that are needed for developing the fishery in the recreational sense, and so how do you evaluate a fishery for the recreational fishermen, and we're going to have the fishermen kind of guiding that, saying this is what is most important to us, this is what you need to consider, this should be the goal.

It's not necessarily going to be driven by the scientists saying this is what you need to achieve, and it's going to be the fishermen saying this is what we want to optimize, and, therefore, we're going to look at how that can be done, and we're going to be giving updates at the council meetings to you guys, and also to the SSC, and there's going to be an opportunity for them to be engaged in it, and we have a liaison with Jie Cao, and he's been working on MSEs for a while as well, and so we're trying to hit all fronts, trying to keep everybody informed. When we're having meetings with the snapper grouper -- With that select group of Snapper Grouper AP members, that is going to be publicly noticed, and so those are all opportunities for the public to get involved and hear what is going on with the MSE.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Any questions on the MSE? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm involved, a little bit, in looking at the MSE for bluefin tuna, but this MSE, or management strategy evaluation, and you're looking at what the recreational community wants to -- Where they want to get to, and how does it work when you're given a piece of the pie,

a piece of a quota, and is it their determination of how they want to use that piece of the pie, or I'm trying to understand that strategy, because it sounds like you're talking about angler behavior a little bit, or where they want to go, but yet there is only a piece of a pie, and there's only so much of a pie, and so is that determining on how they're going to use that piece of the pie?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so we're not going to be talking about allocations in this MSE. What we're going to be focusing on is how the recreational fishery, under the current conditions, for some of these, and so whether it's ABC, whether it's allocation, and some of those things will be held static, and, that way, you can evaluate the strategies.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chip. I don't see any more hands. All right. Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica. I just wanted to say that I think you did a great job of summarizing where we are, the challenges that we're facing, and what we're going to have to do, in terms of moving forward. I think it's important to note that, and I do appreciate the perspective from Florida, and I think that's extremely important, because, you know, if we've identified that the problem -- The big problem we're dealing with is discards, and a big portion of the discards, recreational discards -- If you look on page 5 of the decision document, Table 5, you will note that Florida represents, on average a year, 92 percent of the recreational discards, and so Florida is obviously a big player.

Florida fishermen are a big player in this fishery, and, in terms of being able to make positive, you know, progress towards dealing with the problem, buy-in and understanding from Florida fishermen is going to be critical to this, and so Florida has a big role, obviously, and I think, also, this ties into the MSE and what Chip was talking about of it being kind of fishermen guided. Well, again, if the bulk of your fishermen that are associated with the potential solution, and that is reduction of those discards, are Florida fishermen, again, the ability to move forward in a way that they feel is, you know, credible, and there's some trust, and that is really essential.

I think your comment about education and outreach is spot-on, because this is a behavioral change sort of thing, and so I just wanted to point that out. I think -- I appreciate you setting this up and explaining the FWC position and all, and I fully understand that, but I just wanted to say that we need to make sure that, in any kind of solution that we're achieving, that we focus on the best bang for our buck, in terms of where we can get the -- Where do we need to get the solution from, and so thanks for all that, and I do think it is a challenging position, and I appreciate the SSC's input, and the AP's input, and I totally understand where they're both coming from, but that's just where we are, and thanks for letting me speak.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mel. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Could you clarify, one more time, your FWC comments on electric reels? Was that to ban them, or to not use them through the state in federal waters, you were possibly looking at?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey, and so what we're suggesting is that maybe electric reels, and this was kind of what Chester was talking about earlier, about deep-dropping, that maybe electric reels should be considered more of a commercial gear and not a recreational gear. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess, first, I'm a little confused, in terms of what we're being asked right now. You read a statement, obviously, from your perspective as the Chair, and you have kind of opened the floor for discussion of ideas, and are we going to walk through the amendment, or have we kind of already kind of gone through that real quickly, with what Mike did, and you're wanting us to talk through actions and alternatives for consideration at this point?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question, and so Mike was going to start walking through the amendment. Earlier, he was just going through the appendices, to show what information is in the background, and so we're going to dive into the decision document now, and we can start this discussion of what actions we want to take here and where we want to go with this. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: All right. Thanks for the clarity, and so I guess, before we dive in, just to respond to the statement that you just read, I had voiced similar concerns, I believe, when you made a statement back in September of 2021, and it's very clear that this statement is coming from the Chair, based on the title, but then you invoke the council in numerous places throughout the statement, as this being kind of a statement of the council, and I will at least put my name out there that I don't fully agree with this statement.

I also am concerned, at this point, kind of the path we're going down, that, because it's controversial, or it might take time, that we're not going to even consider some tough decisions, and so I think it's really important that the council take a serious look at how we address discard mortality. I appreciate the conversation this morning that there is uncertainty around discards, but we need to get these discards down, and I really liked how Jeff and the SSC phrased it, that it's paramount that we reduce effort and discards.

That is the problem in this fishery, and Chester indicated that the problem is discard mortality, and I don't disagree with Chester, but the other problem is we have too much effort, and we have too much fishing power, right, and so the only way we can reduce discards then is to keep people off of the fish, right, and stop discarding them altogether, or limit how many people can actually go out and target those fish, and those effort limitations, at this point, are a longer-term endeavor, and so the way I'm looking at this is we have to figure out how to keep people off the fish.

The other thing I will note, just as a point, is I've been trying to look at this not just as a red snapper issue, right, and red snapper, in many respects, is a success story, and we're seeing increases in abundance, and we've talked about that, but we have a lot of other fisheries in the snapper grouper complex that are in pretty bad shape, and we're working through amendments, or recently-completed amendments, and so how can we focus this effort more broadly on the snapper grouper fishery and helping to improve our stocks more broadly, and that complicates matters, and that could bog the process down further, and I recognize that, but keep in mind this is really a snapper grouper fishery and not just a red snapper fishery. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. All right. Mike is going to start walking us through the decision document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair, and so the decision document -- There is kind of the standard background information at the heading of it. Our objectives for this meeting really is trying to nail down what actions should be included in Reg Amendment 35, and this has

been brought up in trying to be on kind of a more expedited timeframe, and we're at the point now that, if this is going to be completed sometime in 2023, then we're going to need to start putting some, I guess, actions in virtual ink, and so that's the goal for today, is to nail down kind of what actions the council would like to see included in Reg Amendment 35.

We are aware that there needs to be inclusion of some revision of the OFL, ABC, OY, and ACLs for South Atlantic red snapper, as kind of the aftermath as a result of the stock assessment, and we are aware that there is some level of management change to reduce the dead releases in some form, but the IPT is going to need some guidance on what the council wants to see out of that frame, what that looks like, and so just kind of going through these, and they are loosely titled "management options" at this point.

First, looking at the red snapper ABC, and the SSC's recommendation, you kind of have a summary there of where we are, in terms of the current total ACL and how that is allocated to the sector ACLs, along with the recommendations from the SSC. Just noting here the italicized line is 2022, and that's recognizing that we are now in 2022, and we've had a season announced, and so, obviously, this management would not affect 2022, and the first year of new management would be 2023, but just making sure that that's noted.

There's a table there summarizing how that would be a change from the current ACL, and several notes here about how this would look in some of the assumptions that have gone into the projections and, ultimately, the SSC's recommendation.

One of the points that has received a fair amount of discussion, kind of following the SSC and AP meetings and leading up to this meeting, has been this assumption that is inherent to the projections that the dead discards decrease as the landings decrease, that these two operate in tandem, and that seems to be something, for especially South Atlantic red snapper, that we've seen a lot more variability in that. In some years, we've had closures with no, or low, landings, and very high amounts of discards, and so that is a pattern that we have observed in the data, that, as the projections move forward, there is some disconnect there that may need to be discussed a little bit more.

Looking next at the overfishing status, what we have here is from SEDAR 73, and it's kind of the breakdown of fishing mortality by these different fleets, and what you will notice is this recreational discard column right here -- You see these numbers of 0.328 and on up to 0.388, and all of these numbers are greater than the F rebuild, which I will highlight right here, and the F rebuild is 0.21, and so what we see here is that the fishing mortality rate from the recreational discards -- As was brought up before, the recreational discards alone, the fishing mortality rate exceeds the F rebuild, and so there is no way to get the fishing mortality rate under F rebuild without addressing the mortality due to discards, and that's kind of what is noted in the highlighted language.

Implementing the ABCs by themselves, without any other additional management measures, would fulfill the council's obligation to not set an ABC greater than the SSC's recommended level. However, there is the status of overfishing and ending overfishing, in terms of evaluating that fishing mortality rate, and that's not possible without some other measure, and it's not a matter of simply changing the landings, and it's a matter of reducing the discards as well, in order to bring it under the fishing mortality rate that would say that overfishing is not occurring. I think I can, I

guess, pause right there, before I go into the discard measures, if there's any discussion related to an action on ABC or some of the information that has been presented in the document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Are there questions or discussion?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so I will keep going now down to the management measures to reduce discards, and we see some summary comments, and you heard Jeff provide those, and so I'm not going to rehash everything there, and then the Snapper Grouper AP's comments, and these are excerpts from the AP report, and Bob gave those comments, and so those are there for your reference, but I'm not going to walk through the items that they already described.

We included some tables here, and this was kind of a result of the data request that you all made at the last meeting, just breaking down the data in different forms, and this Table 3 -- Really, the point here is to kind of show the sector breakdown between recreational and commercial dead releases, and you will see that the percentages there are heavily recreational, and, if you look on the long-term, there is a little bit lower percentage on the recreational side, higher on the commercial, but, really, within the last five years of data, and this is all coming out of SEDAR 73, but, really, within the last five years of data, we see over 98 percent of the dead releases are attributed to the recreational sector.

Because most of the releases are occurring in the recreational sector, much of the rest of the breakdowns here are focused on MRIP data, as opposed to trying to track down commercial discard data. There is issues with trying to track down the commercial discard data, and, if it's not going to lend heavily to the discussion of reducing the dead releases, we kind of focused-in on the recreational side.

The next couple of tables just kind of break down when releases are occurring, what wave of the year, and so remember that your waves are operating in two-month frames, Wave 1 being January through February and Wave 6 being November through December, and everywhere in between, and you have here the average percent of annual releases, and so how many releases are occurring within each wave, as a percent, and then there's also a breakdown of trips that caught red snapper and when those trips are occurring, and the bulk of those are occurring in Wave 4, and that would be typical, because you would have not only the summer fishing season that occurs, and non-directed trips catching red snapper, but that's also when the recreational season occurs, is in Wave 4.

Table 5 breaks down the state of landing for these recreational releases, and so there's kind of a breakdown by wave, as well as by state of landing, and what you see here is these numbers are the same as in this average percentage of annual releases, and that's the same as up here, okay, and these two are the same numbers. On the right side of the table, these state breakdowns are within each wave, and so, for example, in Wave 3, 92.64 percent of the Wave 3 releases occur in Florida, and then there are annual percentages there, for those states, at the bottom, and you can see how it breaks down among the states there.

There is more information in the appendix that I pointed to, but that's some of the more direct information that you all requested that may go into your discussions about what measures to take, in terms of reducing these dead releases, and so I will just bring up the questions here that would help guide further development of this regulatory amendment. Should the actions to reduce dead

releases of red snapper, and other snapper grouper species, continue to be developed through this regulatory amendment? If so, please provide guidance on what actions and alternatives should be developed, and then just noting that there is more information down in the appendix to guide the discussion, and that's all I have, and I will pass it back to you, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. All right. Let's maybe go back to Action 1 and make sure we're good with that. All right, and so Action 1 is to implement the red snapper ABC based on the current SSC recommendations. I think this is something that we've already talked about needs to be in this amendment, and I see that folks are checking out the tables there. Is there discussion on this action? I am also looking around the table that we're in agreement that this needs to be in this amendment. I see heads nodding yes. Any discussion on this action, before we dive into the rest of the actions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, it's more of a comment, or a thought, and, I mean, ideally, if we did a really good job of being able to estimate discards, or dead discards, and landings, you could have a combined ABC, and, based on that, you could actually potentially shift discards to landings, if we were successful at reducing discards over time, right, and I'm not sure we're there yet in this amendment, or action, but it's something that I think that we should consider in the future, if we can successfully get discards down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Any other discussion on this action?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the question is, is the guidance from the council to develop, I guess, kind of our standard ACLs, based on the ABC, and so we'll probably do an ABC equals ACL, 95 and 90 percent, and what percentages would you like to see of the ABC for ACL options?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so, and I see heads nodding yes, and it looks like that's what folks are thinking.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just to be clear, so we'll have the ABC equals ACL option, and we need two more, realistically, and I just wouldn't go below 90, because we don't even need to have numbers out there that we wouldn't even consider, and so keep the other options, I would say, personally, as high as possible.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sounds good. Thanks for that direction. Mike is taking some notes over here. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Mike, I think we will also need a discussion in there of why the council then is not addressing allocation issues, right, because the new information from SEDAR 73 I think uses FES information, and so doesn't that necessarily consider a reallocation, or allocation, issues, and, if the council chooses not to address those here, which, if they did, you would need a plan amendment, but we would need some sort of discussion, which can be rationale, brought back to you in September, or you can think about it, as to why you have chosen not to address allocation

issues, based on SEDAR 73, in this particular -- At this time, or in this document, and so we can work on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Kerry and then Tim.

MS. MARHEFKA: In my mind, the rationale for that is that this is a short-term solution to this problem, and we have the medium and long-term, and the MSE would be a very appropriate place to discuss allocation, and so that's coming, and this just isn't the appropriate place to do it, at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and that would require a full plan amendment, and we're trying to use a mechanism that would move faster. Tim and then Andy.

MR. GRINER: So are the recreational ACLs -- Is this in FES currency?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If I understand correctly, the landings for red snapper are in the currency of the reef fish survey, as opposed to the discards are in the currency of MRIP-FES, and so it's a little bit different than the situation that is the case for the other species, and we have FES, transitioned from either MRFSS or CHTS, depending on the species, transitioned into FES for those other ones, but this one, because the landings data comes from the reef fish survey, that is a completely different type of currency than what would be considered for FES, but the discards are coming from the FES data, and that may be some of the rationale that you might use, as far as why you're not reallocating at this time, because, even though the discards are affected by the transition to FES, the landings are in a different survey.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. That's what I wanted to understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was going to make a similar point, and I think, combined, between headboat and the Florida Reef Fish Survey, or whatever we call the red snapper special survey, greater than 90 percent of the current landings are quantified with those mechanisms and not the FES survey. There is some FES landings from Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, but it's a very small fraction of the overall catch.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Anything else on this action? Mike is typing up some of our discussion there on the screen. All right. Now we're going to dive into the management measures action, or actions. Anything else you want to add on this, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not a whole lot to add, but just looking to the council for guidance on -- You know, there's been discussions about gear or space or time, and now we're looking to the council for guidance on what options the IPT needs to start really looking into and developing, so that you all can start considering those actions in future meetings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Who wants to start this discussion? I threw out some ideas about outreach and education, some ideas about gear, possibly changing an aggregate bag limit. Thoughts on any of this? Don't everybody jump at once. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So those ideas are good, and I think that they're a way to maybe get to where we need to be, but we have to get an analysis on how much reduction really needs to be achieved, and we have recommendations, and how much of those options would really get us to where we need to be, and, if they don't get us to where we need to be, then we need to look at the percent reduction that needs to be required, or achieved, or required to achieve, some sort of a fishing season that may include the measures that you discussed in your paper, white paper.

I mean, I remember, the last meeting, and the one before, we were all pretty much in agreement that we were going to have to make some pretty big sacrifices, and so we're going to need to probably analyze some wave closures for recreational bottom fishing.

We need to figure out how many waves and which ones will be suitable, and in which areas, to achieve the reduction that is required to have a more liberal, shorter season, and it's going to be tough, but we sort of have to look at it, and we're in a corner, once again, and the only other thing is, if we don't want to look at time and wave and area closures, and we need to think about whether it be one wave or two waves or what wave, for the whole coast or just certain states, and do a more aggressive wave, and just take the hooks out of the water for a little while, or we need to go back and look at 17B, but I don't really want to even entertain that option, and so, if we could all get onboard with that, then I think we could achieve a shorter, more liberal season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Mel.

MR. BELL: Thanks. Chris actually covered some of the things that I was going to mention, but I would -- In sort of leading with outreach and education, I know that's perhaps a little difficult to quantify benefits from, as opposed to a gear or a wave or something like that, but I think it is critical, and -- Again, whether it's confidence in FWC's ability for quality outreach and education, or what the council can do, or all the states can do, that's important, and I was just wondering, if we have that in there, do we need to have some, you know, expectation for how we're going to assess that, assess the impacts from it, again realizing that, you know, we already have some difficulty in having confidence, perhaps, in just the discard data, but, you know, do we need to build in --

I'm all for building in that outreach and education component, as something to focus on and move forward, but, in doing that, I guess we need to explain how we would actually measure our success from that, but it is essential, because, again, this is about fishermen behavior, and so I like having that in there, and I just would never -- I don't know that we've ever sort of included that before as a measure that we actually were pushing, and, you know, we can't make people do outreach and education, or attend, but that is a strategy, I think, for achieving what we're trying to achieve, which is a reduction in discards and discard mortality.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I certainly agree with Chris's comments, and, you know, we have a lot of fisheries, or species, that are already closed in the January through April timeframe, and so I would recommend considering a temporal bottom fishing closure during that timeframe, at minimum, and maybe looking at other times of the year as well.

You mentioned gear modifications, and I like the ideas that you tossed out. With electric reels, I think we need to be considerate of those with disabilities, and so there's potential there for ADA challenges and problems, and so that's something we probably would want to talk to General Counsel about. I did have a question for Clay, and so, with evaluating -- One of the challenges is, obviously, having to quantify the benefits of some of these, and there is two things, right, and one is how many people actually do it, and then the other is what's the realized benefit of doing it, and so I know, at times, we've done some gear testing, and we have a gear modification team in the Gulf of Mexico, and I think there have been circle hook studies out of North Carolina.

If we wanted to look at, you know, the benefit and tradeoff of single versus multi-hook rigs, or long leaders and short leaders, we're talking about an effort over the next probably six to nine months, to get this completed, and is that something that could be even considered by the Science Center for research, and a kind of small study, to help inform the council?

DR. PORCH: For some things, like the size of the hook, there's actually been some work that's already done, and so it's just a matter of putting it in a table, basically, although those won't get you the kind of reductions that we're talking about needing here, which is a 50 or 60 percent reduction in dead discards, and it's probably more in the 10 percent range, or something like that.

For some of the other studies, working with our partners, it may be possible to get at them that quickly, but, for the most part, it usually takes longer than that just to execute contracts and everything else, and so it's hard to get in that short of a timeframe.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that, Clay, and so then, in thinking through this, in terms of other ideas, and I appreciate what Bob had to say with the AP comments, there is some pretty substantial sector differences here, both in what the data is showing as well as how they operate, and so I think that's really important to consider as we, you know, develop regulations to reduce discards.

With the temporal closure, I think we should give some consideration of is there a depth, a minimum or maximum depth, that we would allow fishing out to, and, unfortunately, the data seems to indicate that, you know, most of the fishing occurs 120 feet or shallower, and so it might not provide us a great benefit to do that, but I think it's worth at least looking at, to allow some accessibility to fishing, if we're going to look at a substantial temporal closure.

Then, Mike, if you can scroll to the appendix, the map of the area, there is a heat map in there from fishery-independent surveys. I think this tells really the story, right, and so this is, I think, five-year average data from the SEFIS and MARMAP programs of our fishery-independent sampling, but you can see, obviously, where red snapper are abundant and prevalent. What is not here is the overlay in terms of fishing effort and where the discards actually occur, but there is some correlation, and I'm sure a pretty strong correlation, between where the discards are occurring and where these areas are on the map.

I have talked to Clay and his staff, and they certainly have ways of analyzing this, to look at how many fish would be accounted for kind of within a particular spatial area closure, if we're going to consider spatial area closures, and I think this is a worthwhile endeavor to at least look at and

explore spatial area closures as well, to keep people off the fish and keeping them from discarding them, and I think that's something that is feasible.

I don't know exactly what could be brought back in September, but I think it's something worth exploring, and the council should discuss, you know, our preference, in terms of how to reduce discards, and, if this is going to be kind of stepwise, that we prefer, you know, no spatial closures, but, if we have to have spatial closures, we're going to try temporal closures first, and, if we're going to not go with temporal closures, we want gear modifications, so that it's kind of additive, in terms of the benefits we're trying to accomplish, and I think I have a good sense of that, but certainly I think it would be good for the council to talk about that, so that it will inform the staff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good points. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a lot that I would like to say, a whole lot that I would like to say, and I'm going to try to be as succinct and productive in my comments. This situation is very frustrating, but I will start off sort of building on this map here, and, obviously, you see lots of red off the coast of Georgia, but I think, you know, we've got to keep in our minds that, if you look at these tables that are in the document, that, overall, Georgia's fishing effort in the EEZ, directed at bottom fish, is fairly small compared to the rest of the region, and it accounts for, by this, 3 percent of the discards over that 2019 to 2021 period, on an annual basis.

I looked up, this morning, at the MRIP query tool, and, you know, I looked from 2010 to 2021, and, out of those twelve estimates, twelve years of estimates, of live releases, only two of them have PSEs that were actually below 50 percent, and so we're looking at, once again, restricting the opportunities for the private recreational sector to fix a problem, a problem that we believe exists, but is unvalidated, and, you know, I struggle with continuing to limit opportunity and access to fix a problem that a lot of people don't believe exists, or exists in the magnitude that they're being told.

I am skeptical about gear, and it's very difficult to quantify the benefits of it, for a lot of reasons that we've talked about at this group for many times, and it's difficult to enforce, and best practices is great, and we continue to sort of put an emphasis on that, but, again, how do you measure a person's change in behavior, and that's what this comes down to, is we've got to be able to measure the benefits of things if we're going to require people to do it, and a behavior modification -- I mean, there is vast amounts of literature, in the world of psychology, about how to change people's behavior, but I think one of the things that we all can agree with is you've got to show people a benefit for the change in their behavior, and, right now, nobody is getting -- They're not getting positive reinforcement.

I have tried, and I have worked, and I still try to carry that message out there, but what can we promise people as a benefit for changing their behavior at this point, and, I mean, it's going to be rebuild in 2044, and me and Chester probably ain't going to be here in 2044 to even see that happen, and, you know, that's -- I know we have to take the long view on things, but that's -- It's hard to say, well, in 2044, things are going to be great, and life will be wonderful, and that's great, but what can we give people back in the short term for positive reinforcement on what we're asking them to do?

I just -- You know, thank you for letting me unload a little bit, and I'm just trying to -- But I'm frustrated, and I'm frustrated that we're going to apply some things uniformly across the whole South Atlantic region, and disproportionately impact people that don't need to be impacted.

Electric reels, what do you about people kite fishing? What do you do about deep-dropping for swordfish? From an enforcement standpoint, that's going to be very difficult, and do you disadvantage south Florida from catching all these other snapper and grouper species to benefit red snapper, when they're really not occurring down there, and so it's -- I know this isn't easy, and I know we're all frustrated, but I think, if there is any way that we can give something back to the fishing community, to give them some sort of positive reinforcement for what they've already done, and what we're asking them to continue to do, and we need to find a way to do that, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud. I see your hand, Chris, but let's take a ten-minute break, and we'll come back, and we'll start with you when we come back, Chris.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again, and Mike is going to pull up where we were in the document, and Chris was next in the queue, but he has asked to pass. I think what we're looking for here is to try to -- Because I feel like we're making a list, like we've made at other council meetings, and we really need to kind of get to exactly what couple or three things we're going to ask the IPT to look into, and so, just reminding folks of the discussion that we had at September of last year, that trying to get at this discard issue, we were looking at what are some kind of short-term measures that we could take to indicate that we were working towards ending overfishing, knowing that we had this longer-term item out there with the MSE, and so these were kind of short-term, smaller measures that we were trying to deal with in this quicker amendment. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so I decided that I needed to just clarify that, the note that says wave closures for recreational bottom fishing, it was my intent for private recreational and to be able to have charter/for-hire and headboat people, that actually are making a living and reporting and doing their part on being accountable, to allow that to continue during the closure of private recreational, if we went there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that clarification. It looks like Mike got that on the board. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I just wanted to reiterate that, what Chris just said, and I just want to make sure that this does -- What we're talking about here, whether it's spatial or temporal or any of this, it's strictly for the private recreational angler and not anything else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that clarification. All right, and so some of the items that I brought up earlier I don't see up there yet that I wanted us to have a discussion about, and so I brought up electric reels, and I brought up single-hook rigs, and leader length, and so I'm putting those up there as well. To me, outreach and education is something that can continue to occur no matter what we choose from this list, and it's kind of something that is happening all the time, is trying to work on this outreach and education piece, but I think this is kind of ramping it up more, because

whatever we're going to put in this document is really about changing behavior, above and beyond use of descending devices and successful release of fish. Other thoughts here? Tom and then Tim.

MR. ROLLER: I'm asking here for a point of clarification. When we talk about wave closures, just for private recreational bottom fishing, I want to point out that our snapper grouper permit for-for-hire is open access, and so it is inexpensive and easy to obtain, and so was there any intent to discuss that permit as part of that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great question, and I don't know that we can do that in a framework action. Even if you put a control date on it, that would cause people to go out and get that permit, quickly.

MR. ROLLER: I concur, and I'm just stating it for the record, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: To that point, we already have a control date, and I think it was back in 2015, or 2016, but, getting back to what Jeff kind of alluded to, unless there is a scientific study that is going to help validate what using electric reels, or not using electric reels, does, then I don't see the point, and enforcement would be a nightmare, and so I don't know that eliminating electric reels will do anything, as far as the data goes, because there is no validation there, and I look at some of these other things, and it's the same thing with leader length, and there is no science that studies leader lengths, to say that, if your leader is six inches longer, or six inches shorter, you're going to kill less fish, and so I just want to make sure that, as we move through these, we are keeping in mind that it's got to be validated, some way, somehow.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say, back to the outreach and education thing, where I mentioned, you know, how do you ensure that happens, and I was just thinking, and, in a number of commercial fisheries, we require, for people that are permitted in certain fisheries, to take a course in something, whether it has to do with shellfish harvesting in our state or whether it's got to do with shark identification or those sorts of things, so that you do have the ability, if you desire, to require some sort of simple instruction in, you know, in this case, in dealing with discards, or avoiding discards, or discard mortality or something, and I don't know.

Obviously, you guys have the requirement for your permit, I guess, for snapper grouper, the fourteen species or whatever. I don't know if that's something that could be included, but that is one way to do that, and, in hunting, you know, you have mandatory hunter safety courses and things, with just a hunting license, and so that's just one way you could consider requiring some of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Andy was asking me, last night, and he says, okay, what are you going to come up with on red snapper, implying that I might do something radical, or suggest something radical, and so here it is. The way we're going, and the way this is shaping down, we're going to have to go to seasons. I mean, the reduction that is required is going to force you to go to seasons, or a

season, and I have been a proponent, since I first came on the council, of perhaps having some different management procedures.

I am going to -- We're just looking at stuff here that we might want to take a look at, or ask staff to take a look at, and that is that we declare a full-year season for red snapper, with something like one fish per person per day, across-the-board, no matter what platform they're fishing from, and that, at the end of six months, or a year, we take a look at what has happened to the fishery. If we see that the biomass is increasing, or that the fishery seems to be in good shape with that, then we continue on. If it looks like the fishery is not in good shape, then we shut it down for a period of time, and, in other words, again, a season.

Those are really, to me, the only two viable alternatives, and I realize they're radically different, but a lot of the stuff that we're talking about here today is nibbling around the edges, and I don't see us getting it where we need to go, and so, Andy, there it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chester. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I walked into that one, didn't I? No, and I appreciate it, Chester, and I don't necessarily think it's a viable option, but I'm certainly glad that you're thinking outside the box. I mean, we have to, obviously, figure out what's going to eliminate the overfishing, right, and this is a pilot kind of trial approach that could work, maybe, but there's a high risk that it won't work, right, and so it's kind of a double-edged sword there.

I want to get back to the temporal closures, and so, when I was indicating the maximum depth, I was thinking more broadly, and it's not just going to apply to private, and it's going to apply to the recreational sector. In talking, during the break, with Judy and others, concerns about, obviously, a total shutdown and what impacts it would have on for-hire businesses, and certainly we have to consider the economic and social consequences of this, and so the thought was to have some inshore fishery that could still occur, even with the temporal closures out to a certain depth.

Getting back to I think other ideas on the board, I mentioned the map, the spatial closures, and I think it's worth exploring area closures, and I would say probably just south of Cape Canaveral to the southern portion of South Carolina and then maybe a small area for consideration in North Carolina that we would look at as possible options, based on what we're seeing in the data. Then, with the temporal closures -- Well, I will stop there, for now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Discussion? Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. In response to Andy, and also a comment that Spud had made earlier, talking about what benefit there is to the anglers, if we get past just nibbling around the edges of reducing the discards, and we actually take measures that reduce discards substantially, then there's a point where further reductions in discards actually can translate directly into increased landings, and so more opportunity for fishermen to retain red snapper, and so, again, it can't just be a 10 percent reduction of discards, because we were talking about a need for 50 or 60 percent, but, past that, any reduction in discards is directly going to the almost equivalent weight in terms of landings, and so I think there is a benefit, but it's just that, for a long time, we really haven't done that much to reduce discards, not enough to stop overfishing simply by discards.

Having said that, and getting to the point of spatial or time/area closures, one of the things that I think we could do, and it may not be able to be done in time for the next council action, but I think it's something that Scott Crosson's study is going to be looking at, is hotspots for discards, and so you look at where the effort is, but you also see, in space, where are you getting the most discards, and where are the smaller fish, the regulatory-type discards occurring, and that would be the kind of area that maybe you wouldn't allow fishing year-round in.

Then, as I said earlier, another thing to think about is, in some areas, some designated areas, maybe you do allow year-round fishing, and what's going to happen is they will fish those areas down, but the areas don't contain a huge fraction of the total biomass, and what you're doing is effectively making -- It's reducing the effort, right, and there might be as many people fishing, as often, but, because the catch rates go down, because they're fishing in a designated zone, their effective effort is reduced, and so I think there are clever ways we can do this, but we just need to look at where the discards are occurring in time and space and think about how we might restrict access to areas where there are a large number of regulatory discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Clay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just was looking at the notes on the board, and so I don't want people to read this and think we're suggesting an entire area closure from south of Cape Canaveral to South Carolina, right, and that's not my intent here, and it's really what Clay was saying, in terms of looking at hotspots and areas to keep people from discarding red snapper, but that, to me, is the main primary zone, and where nearly all the discards are occurring, and so that would be the area of emphasis for analysis, and so I just wanted to clarify that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. I wanted to kind of follow-up on what Clay said, because I'm curious, and I know this is a very difficult thing to predict, but, if we took the measures necessary to substantially reduce the discards, and the discard mortality, I mean, what would be a reasonable thing that we could promise fishermen, as far as some timeline on when they might see the benefit of that, because I think that's what they're struggling with now, is we've basically been under an extremely -- What they see as a draconian management regime for now twelve years, and they have seen no tangible benefit of it, and, in fact, it seems to be going in the opposite direction.

If there was something that we could legitimately say, with some degree of confidence, that, if we take -- If we bite the bullet now, and we do the hard thing, are we looking at a two-or-three-year horizon, or are we looking at a decade horizon, because the 2044 rebuilding thing is pretty sobering to most people, and it's like, really, and that's the best we can look forward to, and so, I mean, not to pin you down, and nobody is going to hold you to it, but what you think would be a reasonable thing to promise people?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I wouldn't give numbers here, in the context of a promise, but I'm going to use hyperbole, just to make the point, and so let's suppose we came up with a way where we could reduce discards by let's say 90 percent, and I'm not saying we could, but just for the sake of argument, reduce discards by 90 percent, and that's most of the kill, and we only need to reduce

discards -- I say "only", but, for red snapper, 50 or 60 percent, to end overfishing, and so that means that, anything you accrue after that could translate directly into allowable landings, and that would end up being a very substantial increase in landings, and, like I said, I don't want to throw numbers out there, because I haven't looked at it, but I think it would substantially increase the length of the season.

Now, we could probably do some hypothetical calculations, defensible back-of-the-envelope calculations, fairly easily, to give a general idea of what the fishermen could expect, if we achieved a certain percentage reduction in discards, but, yes, after the -- In the case of red snapper, after that 50 to 60 percent, that all could go directly to increased landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. That's helpful, and so that takes me back around to the necessity of pursuing those things that are going to give us a measurable benefit, because it all goes back to what Clay is saying, that you've got to be able to demonstrate that you're actually reducing it in a credible manner, so that the SSC will acknowledge that, and then that translates into an actual positive result.

That's why the gear things -- I am always -- I am just skeptical about their benefits, because I just know how difficult it's going to be, and we've heard that, and I don't want to sound like a broken record, but, yes, those are good things, and we should encourage people to do them, because they are inherently beneficial, and the right thing to do, but, if we can't measure it, or measure it in a reasonable time span, then we're just going to burden fishermen with something else that they get the negative feedback loop for again, and, well, I did this again, and I did this, and I did this, and I still haven't seen any benefit from it, and so I'm skeptical about that, and the time/area thing just -- I cringe over it, but, for purposes of discussion, we've got to focus on the things that we can measure the benefits of, and pursue those to either do them or don't do them, depending on what our frame of mine is, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate that. I mean, I also feel like discards aren't fully validated yet, and we're using them for management, and I still feel like this amendment is focusing on short-term actions that demonstrate we're taking steps, and I just don't think, in Florida, that we can get onboard with these closures off of Florida in federal waters. That's why I was suggesting these other options. It looks like Mel had his hand up.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica, and I was just kind of thinking, when Clay and Spud were talking there a little bit about the rewards, and what reward comes eventually, and the thing is that the cost is we would be asking fishermen, across-the-board, to restrict their fishing for a number of species, because, again, we don't -- We have a snapper grouper fishery, and we don't really have a red snapper fishery, but the majority of the fishermen, again across the entire spectrum, are in areas where they're more focused on other species, and so you're going to restrict their ability to access all these other species, for a time, and then the reward becomes, well, now you can have some more red snapper, when they don't necessarily have that many red snapper to start with, and so that's just kind of listening to that back-and-forth and what's the reward, and the reward becomes more red snapper, but the reward is more red snapper that perhaps a lot of people that aren't that focused on red snapper and what they're more focused on, typically, are the other species that

you're restricting them from, and so the cost for the reward is perhaps a little greater for them, and that was just something I was thinking about, when they were talking.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I just want to offer an example, and I think I'm following, with Jessica, the short-term, or the temporary, part of what we're doing here, relative to the other thing that we're talking about with snapper grouper and re-envisioning what's happening with the fishery.

Chester and Dewey can probably help with some of the history on this, but, if you think about the shark fishery, the shark fishery struggles with dusky shark, right, and dusky has been prohibited for forever, and, even in the last assessment that was done in 2016, it was overfishing, and so, when you look at what their response was, a lot of the metrics, or management tools, that they implemented were more focused around gear changes and education of the folks, and that was across all vectors of the fishery, and so I don't understand why what we're proposing here is a temporary measure, and this isn't a prohibited species, and so, I mean, it's not to the same magnitude, but the idea of what the prescription was then and why does this not work similarly to that prescription for a prohibited species.

Why could we not use this to say that we're addressing the overfishing issues, and this is how we want to go about doing that, and we're looking at gear, and we're looking at educating folks on what we need to be doing, with the idea that the bigger approach that we're taking, for the holistic view of the fishery, is really what's going to help fix the majority of this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, there's a few differences here. There is a closure, off of North Carolina, from January 1 until July 15, and, second of all, dusky is a highly-migratory fish, versus the red snapper, to my knowledge, is not as highly migratory, and it's more of a focused structural area, and so that's a little bit different, but it is kind of, a little bit of an analysis, the same, but it is just a different animal compared to what you have here.

The stock assessments that continue spitting out the dusky -- It's not overfished, or it's overfished or something, but not overfishing is occurring, and a lot has to do with your data that you're given, and, when you shut down something, always you don't get no data from it, and the only data we have is a guinea pig fishery, which I named it, the research fishery, for sharks, and that's the only thing left, but this is a real conundrum, because, you know, I was asking Monica, earlier on, about what's the legal part here, and your timeframe about something, and, you know, if the council is doing something, or going that way, then maybe there is some leeway there, but you've got to be working on fixing the problem of reducing discards and not some of these other things that are more -- "Fluff" ain't the word, but more something on the outer edges than really dealing with what's there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

DR. BELCHER: I completely agree with you about the fact that the closures are there. The problem is that the fishery has been managed as a whole, right, and, from the get-go, we have divided it out into pelagic and large coastals and small coastals, and they're managed differently,

independently, and there's quotas that are applied to each of those, and there has been the whole discussions about seasonal movements. Because of the migration, we've had to split, up and down the coast, of when people get into the fishery, and so the fishery has been managed at the top level to start with and not necessarily focused on species-specific.

This one, we're actually going backwards, in the sense that red snapper is kind of our hot topic, and we've not really talked about the management goals for the red snapper fishery, per se. We've dabbled in it, but we haven't really sat down and done what we're preparing to do in the later amendment, and so I'm just thinking about some of the analogs that were offered even after that assessment was done in 2016, and there weren't more draconian cuts in seasonal components and things like that, and it was more of, again, the idea of the educational and gear changing, and they put circle hooks in, and the question comes down to the permitting. We do have HMS permitting for recreational, and we don't have that for snapper grouper, and so there is tools and mechanisms I think that we can discuss that are analogous to it, but they're not going to be exactly the same.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: One thing you have to be careful with is killing the fishery. On the commercial side, particularly with sharks, management has done a very good job of killing the fishery, and so the things that you had left to do was gear modifications, after the fact, because we said we couldn't take no more, and so that's something like you kill the fishery, and then you come back and do all these gear modifications, and that's simply -- You can't do that here, in some aspects, but there ain't but a few things to do to reduce their catch, reduce the red snapper catch, and that's back to what the SSC said, was you've got limit effort or hooks in the water.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Again, from the temporary standpoint, that's where I think the idea of the gear and the education is probably good, with the idea that we're actually not -- I don't want to see the fishery killed either, but that's where that next amendment is going to help us craft that fishery in better stead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and I see this as a measure that is starting to make progress, but, ultimately, it's this MSE that is going to come in behind this with an analysis on some of these measures, and I agree that I don't want to kill the fishery now, while we're waiting for that analysis, and, in my mind, we were taking some measures to reduce discards and to create basically inefficiencies in the effort right now.

I heard some things, from this side of the table, that maybe gear reductions and things like, and outreach, are not going to be enough, and so it seems like maybe you have some sort of percent reduction in mind, and I was thinking that we were trying to get to that percent reduction in the MSE and not all the way to that percent reduction in this temporary measure, and so, I mean, do you guys have a percent reduction in mind for discards, and are we trying to get to that right now, whereas I thought we were trying to get to that in the long-term? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: We'll look up the actual reduction that's needed in discards and landed catch, but I want to say it's on the order of 60 percent, and it's substantial. 65, I'm being told. With that said, a year ago, the Fisheries Service sent the council a letter, like we always do when

a stock is either overfished or undergoing overfishing, and indicated, obviously, that red snapper was making rebuilding progress, but continued to undergo overfishing.

The Magnuson Act says that you're supposed to end overfishing immediately, but does not define what "immediately" means, right, and so that's kind of the question before us, in terms of addressing the overfishing. Based on your comments, and others, about gear modifications and outreach, that certainly will get us something, but it likely be far from the goal of ending overfishing.

I think we're putting a lot of -- We're banking a lot on the MSE to help us through this, and that's still a good ways away from actually helping us, and so that's why I've been pretty strong this morning in recommending some temporal and area closures, and I recognize that they are not going to be well liked, and these are going to be controversial, but I think we're going to have to at least evaluate these, through analyses, and consider them and decide what we can do to reduce discards, based on those options and other ideas on the board.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I guess this most recent discussion about the, you know, sort of the effort diminishment, through gear restrictions, makes me say, okay, how do we ensure, going forward, that, if we adopt these things, that we're going to have the credible work done necessary to quantify their benefits, so that that can be integrated into this MSE, because, ultimately, and I know I keep sounding like a broken record, but, if we can't prove the benefit of something, and we can't prove and document and quantify the reduction in discards and discard mortality, we're not making any progress.

I don't disagree that if the Service is willing to give us some credit, however that credit is for those things, that's fine, and, if it gives us the ability to move forward, but I just -- I don't want the necessity of quantifying benefits, because, if we're going to adopt them in the long-term, on a permanent basis, then we need to be able to demonstrate their efficacy, and I just want to make sure that that doesn't get lost in the urgency to do something now, versus this long-term strategy for fixing the bigger problems in the snapper grouper fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm just going to think out loud here, just listening to all the conversation, and building off of Carolyn's comment of, you know, just putting all these different education and gear things into play, and so, in my mind, this short-term, it's sort of like this is going to help us get to the MSE, and then, hopefully, at the end of the MSE, we'll have some fixes, right, and so why not go ahead and start with the education, and let's talk about what -- Okay, everybody is talking about a behavior change, and so what behavior change are you looking for, and so let's talk about what are the behavior changes you want, and maybe put out some sort of campaign for a protocol, an education protocol, to teach everybody how to reduce the dead discards.

Like Chester said, it's dead discards, and so how do we educate the public on at least having live discards, or more live discards, and work towards a goal like that, and, granted, yes, we can't quantify it, but there's a lot of things that we can't quantify, and I went back and looked at the presentation here, Jeff's presentation, and, I mean, they're saying they're concerned about the

discard information, and it may not be accurate, and so we really -- Since we really don't know the discard amount, the discard information either, you know, to me, it's kind of a no-brainer, commonsense thing.

Let's go forward with some education, and, even trying to quantify that, and you may not be able to quantify the discard mortality, but, through surveys and things, you could quantify how many people got this education, and, building even off of Mel's, having a requirement, and I think Tom actually said that, getting a hunting license, in some states, you need some sort of hunter education, and so I think we can do some things, and, yes, maybe they're not quantifiable, but common sense says they should at least help, and so, anyway, I'm just throwing those things out there, and we can kind of -- I was actually thinking of -- You know, when Carolyn said sharks, I actually was thinking about sea turtles. I mean, there's protocols out there to resuscitate sea turtles, and there's no reason that we can't develop protocols to increase live discards, and so, you know, maybe that's something to talk about more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We have a couple of questions here, and John is going to try to ask some questions and maybe try to clarify some things.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and this is about one of the things that came up in looking into this and the past management of red snapper, and, you know, we're under Amendment 43 now, and this is a reg amendment to that, changing the ABC, and the crux of that amendment was the difficulty in estimating discards. At that time, the Science Center had said they couldn't do a discard-only projection analysis, because of the uncertainty in the discards, and there was statements, in a letter, that discards were so uncertain that they couldn't be used to monitor the fishery, and we couldn't be monitoring the fishery on a discard-type ABC situation, and so that is why we got into using ABC for the landings and not looking at the discards as strongly.

I guess the question is, for the agency, essentially, is so what has changed with the discard situation today and the quality of the data that we feel like we can, you know, achieve a certain percentage reduction and analyze that, and then monitor that over the next few years, since 2017, because it would seem like the SSC certainly has said the discards are extremely uncertain.

We've talked a lot, in recent meetings, about the difficulties with validation, and we've raised questions about the commercial discards being very uncertain at several meetings, even though they do have some observers, and certain the private recreational is as uncertain, and so I think that, if we set out in this reg amendment with a number for discard reduction to be achieved, then the IPT, and the council, is going to have to resolve the conflicting advice that is in approved Amendment 43 and talk about, you know, why do we think we can do more, quantitatively, with the discards than we could then, because I feel like, otherwise, that creates a potential issue and uncertainty, and perhaps a point of contention, with members of the public, that might say, you know, what has changed, and so we're going to need to be able to answer that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I would say there is a difference, in the sense that, if you combine the discards with the landings and attempt to monitor that, then you have really high uncertainty in the discards, and so, if you try and manage on an annual basis, it's going to be extremely difficult, and it's just like with rare-event species, and it's challenging to have in-season monitoring, or annual monitoring,

right, because you have high uncertainty, and so, for monitoring purposes, it's really hard to wrap the discards in with the landings, but it's a different thing from taking measures that you can reasonably demonstrate would at least reduce the discards, on average.

One of the problems that we have now is, when we -- As Mike had mentioned, when we give you the projections, with a particular amount of landings that would achieve rebuilding, we're also assuming that the discards were reduced in the same proportion, and so that's to say that we're assuming the council would take actions to reduce discards by that proportion, which of course has not happened, and so the alternative is we could start doing projections that assume that discards will continue as they have, which is the more realistic assumption, right, because most of the discards are happening outside of the open season.

The open season is a very short time, and so we could do that, but what that would end up meaning, ultimately, is that there's not going to be any landings, and so I think that the essential difference is what we said is, because the discards from year to year are so uncertain, we can't really monitor the discards, but I think we can say, on average, steps can be taken to reduce the discards by a certain percentage, and then those get put into the assessment projections. If we knew, for instance, that we took steps that, on average, would reduce discards by 65 percent, we could put that in the projections, and, ultimately, that should give us a different amount of landings that we could take in a longer season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Monica want to weigh-in, and I wasn't, obviously, sitting in this seat a number of years ago, when you were working through the last amendment, and there is obviously new information as well, right, and so we, obviously, have a new assessment, and it clearly indicated that we had taken steps to reduce overfishing, but hadn't ended the overfishing.

Early on in this process, I was asking kind of similar questions about the uncertainty surrounding the discard estimates, the sensitivity runs in the stock assessment itself, and there were sensitivity runs done, obviously, basing discards on some, you know, reduction relative to what was being estimated, and so, you know, what I at least gained from that was that, even if you assume that discards are considerably lower than what has actually been included in the assessment, overfishing is still going to occur, and it might be at a lesser level, but overfishing is going to occur.

The reason I said that General Counsel might want to weigh-in on this is, I mean, we certainly, as a council, need to build a record, right, and so I mentioned earlier that the key here, in terms of taking action, is ending overfishing, and so what that record looks like and how we arrive at that is still to be determined, but, if the council can make a record and justify how we, as a collective body, are ending overfishing, then that will be taken into consideration when the Fisheries Service reviews the amendment for approval.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: When you're looking for justification for the potential for closing areas, can you use the success stories in other areas, like for the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and the success in their groundfish fishery off of California and Oregon, because, you know, they started on it in 2002, and they started closing areas for rockfish, and it was devastating, because I

would go out there to go on birding and whale watching trips, and so I watched what was happening to their fisheries, because like the lady that was running the birding trips said you need to keep an eye on this, because it's coming to your coast too, and shutting down these areas has been devastating, and it was, but now they are reopening large areas to fishing.

They are still keeping some of the hotspots closed, but they're reopening a lot of the areas out there, and the ones that survived are doing really, really well, the for-hire boats that survived, and the commercial fishermen that made it through the closures are now doing really, really well, and so, if we're looking for reasons to support decisions that we make, can we use successes in other areas as our justification?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know the answer to that. Clay.

DR. PORCH: I think so, and, in fact, that example has been brought up with others in our agency, when we've discussed the challenges that we have here in the South Atlantic region, and those steps they took were, as you say, fairly draconian, because the situation was so bad with rockfish, but we're getting to that situation with some of other stocks, like gag grouper, and so I think that success is a good model for us.

I will admit, however, that it's even more challenging here, because we have a lot more recreational fishing than they do over there. I mean, we have more recreational fishing in the Southeast, in general, than the rest of the country combined, and so, yes, it is a big challenge here, but it is a success story for them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I will give you another example. In the 1970s, up in Cape Cod, they closed the cod fishing fishery, and everybody that was in business, taking out people fishing, the charter boats, they all went out of business, and they became whale watching. They did whale watching, later on down the line, and so I don't know how that's going to affect charter boats in our area, because I don't know that we have something else to do if you close an area for us not to be able to fish, and that's an example of we need to kind of consider -- We're already less now than we ever have been.

I mean, I fish quite a bit, and I don't see any boats anymore. If you check how many charter boats are actually fishing, even if you check the federal permits, people are not fishing like you think they are, and so I don't even know how all this is coming to pass, when you don't really have that many people using the resource, and I'm in Savannah, Georgia, and I don't see a lot of boats fishing, and so I don't know if all of this is -- If all the information is -- That we can validate it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Judy. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Going back to what's on the board, I want to make sure we're giving the IPT clear direction, and I guess compartmentalizing this, in my mind, we have at least three different actions that also could be combined to look at the benefits. One is an action on gear modifications, and another would be temporal management, and then the third would be area-based management.

One of the things that I want to make sure is clear to the IPT is we have some kind of specific things on the board, and, if they want us to provide more direction, we can here, but I don't want it to be limiting to the IPT either, and so, for example, we talked about a January through April bottom fishing closure, and maybe that's not the best time, and maybe we want to do it some other time of the year, and so, to me, it would be beneficial to have the IPT then bring back alternatives, to give us an idea of what they think would be the reduction in discards and harvest that would occur during those timeframes that we could then build the actions and alternatives around.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I wanted to follow-up on this I guess benefits of education about best practices, and so, obviously, that's not one of the ones that is sitting there as a possibly quantifiable benefit, but I guess it goes back to what we're talking about, and building a record of us trying to take actions to address the overfishing caused by the discards --

Do we need to articulate the fact that we have been engaged in outreach and communications on best practices and use of descending devices now for several years and that, typically, most education campaigns build a cumulative benefit, that you sort of start off, and then, as you progress through time, their effectiveness is greater, because you interact with more people, and then there's sort of peer justification for behavioral changes and that kind of thing, and so is there any value to that, really, in this discussion, or is that just window-dressing on top of the other things that we really have got to consider, which is what you just described, Andy, and so that's just an opinion that I would like about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Spud. I mean, I don't consider window-dressing, and I think it's good to acknowledge the efforts that the council has made, and keep in mind that the reductions for descending devices and addressing barotrauma are incorporated into the projections, right, and so I think that's good to acknowledge, but that's already incorporated, which means that we still have to reduce discards beyond what's already considered in those projections.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: If I recall correctly, barotrauma is only 20 percent of the discard mortality rate, and so I wonder then, to what end -- What kind of fishing behavior, outside of using descending devices, what best practices are available then, other than keeping your hook out of the water less?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think that there's other maybe more obscure things, like not removing fish from the water, and, I mean, there's lots of other things that people are doing that adds value to the more tangible things, like descending devices or properly venting and that kind of thing, and so you're sort of building a cumulative better behavior, but you can't measure it. That's the problem, is you can't measure it and pin it down in numerical values, but you know that, through informed judgment, that it's making things better, that people are reducing discard

mortality, because they're doing all these other things, and so I just want to get it on the record that we're doing this, and we continue to do it.

I mean, we've given away lots of descending devices, and we've done lots of things, and we're going to be the ICAST show in July again, interacting with probably hundreds of folks, trying to get the word out, and so just, you know, as part of the record, that we're doing it, and we continue to do it, and it needs to be given at least some consideration in the overall approach to dealing with discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree with that. I mean, I also think that we need to continue with outreach and education, and I noticed that it wasn't one of the things that Andy selected, but I also can't imagine trying to do this outreach and education about handling and best fishing practices, and I agree that it's broader than descending devices, but, yet, we're also going to tell folks that it doesn't matter, because these temporal and area closures are coming anyway, and we've already lost credibility here, and then now we're suggesting more outreach, which I think is positive, but, yet, we're going to say that we can't quantify any of these behavior and, sorry, but we have to close you down anyway. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to add to Kerry's question about what else can you do, and I've heard both commercial fishermen and experienced recreational fishermen say this, is that one thing they do is, if you find yourself into red snapper, you adjust your location, and you move, or adjust your fishing practices, and so it's that sort of thing, responding to -- If you're catching them, try to get off of them, and I have heard people describe that they do that, and so folks have kind of figured out a way around that a little bit already.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. So far, what Andy highlighted here was gear, temporal closures, area closures, and I just don't think temporal or area closures are where it's at in this short-term amendment, and I really think that outreach and education and gear are more appropriate here, and so I guess I'm looking to the committee to help understand what we want the IPT to talk about. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I will just deal with the 800-pound gorilla in the room. If time and area closures are not going to work in the state where the majority of it happens, then all of this is sort of a moot point, and maybe we can just stop the talk on that and figure out if there is some other alternative that we can explore, because, if we can't affect the cure where the disease is, it really don't make any difference, and so that's as blunt as I can -- I'm trying to be polite, but that's as blunt as I can be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud. Mel and then Tim.

MR. BELL: Spud has got a point there, and I was just going to suggest that I think temporal would be a little easier than area, because, as soon as you start trying to -- It would be easier to quantify too, in terms of just looking at how things break down into waves, and let's say temporal in particular, with the recreational waves, and you can analyze that, and you can see where your savings is, and you can see where your potential savings is, by state or whatever, but temporal would be easier to at least put in there, realizing that it's not going to be popular, but it's at least something that's more readily analyzed than trying to deal with specific areas of bottom, based on a heatmap or something, or people's favorite fishing locations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. I have Tim and then Trish and then Tom.

MR. GRINER: I appreciate, Spud, you going ahead and throwing that out there, because, sooner or later, you do have to address the disease, right where it exists, and that is Florida, and so I know it's not pleasant, but it doesn't make any sense, and there is four states here, and not just one, and, if the problem exists in one place, we've got to address where the place is, and I think the spatial is a problem, but I think that you have to take a good, hard look at some kind of temporal closure, whether it be, you know, you only open it up in Wave 3, 4, and 5, and, other than that, it's shut down, but you have to address this where it happens. I mean, like I said, there is four states here, and it doesn't make any sense to try to do something where the problem doesn't exist, and you have to put the medicine on the wound. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish and then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm going to go back to my suggestion earlier about the gear and education and outreach and trying to, you know, develop a protocol, or best management practices, whatever you want to phrase it, and maybe I need to clarify too that, when I said increase live discards, I meant changing dead to live, and so I didn't mean increase increase, but, again, since this is a short-term start, to me, it still does not make sense not to do this, and then, Chip, maybe you can answer this, and, when we move into the MSE, maybe we'll have -- We will have some behavior change by that point, and I was wondering, because we're talking about quantifying, and is there a way to model -- When you get into the MSE, a way to model these behavior changes, to see how it's working?

DR. COLLIER: That would be a question for the modelers, and, unfortunately, we don't have them here today, and so I can't give you an answer on that, but hopefully we would be able to incorporate some of this information. You know, it's going to be a -- It's always a struggle to model behavior, and we kind of ignore quite a bit of the behavior when we do many of our amendments, and we assume that behavior is going to be much the same, but we're going to work on it, and see if we can address it, but there are some studies indicating the benefits of outreach and education, and, you know, it does help to reach out to people and tell them why, to explain and get the buy-in. I mean, I think all that stuff is very important.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish and then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just -- Not to add any workload or anything, but the council staff is very talented at their outreach, and I think it would be -- Whatever comes of the outreach and education, I think it would work, because you guys are very good at that, and so I totally -- We need to keep that on the table, and I think, maybe in the MSE, we can get some kind of quantification on it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I would keep outreach and education on the table as well. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. First of all, I just want to concur with Spud's and Tim's comments regarding the spatial problems of this fishery, particularly as it relates to North Carolina being a small component of the red snapper catch. One thing that I wanted to bring up, for discussion, was there was an interesting point brought up in the Snapper Grouper AP comments regarding earlier season openings, and I guess this would fall under temporal.

From my own anecdotal experience with other fisheries, shallow-water grouper being one of them, the fishery is pretty good the first week you open it up, and then it becomes harder and harder, right, and so, if we stagger the seasons, maybe open them up earlier, or have a recreational season after a commercial season, could we potentially decrease discards, down the line, over the course of the year, because fishermen only fish in a segment. You know, we have more popular places. Now, this, I recognize, like I said, probably wouldn't be quantitative, but it could be an interesting out-of-the-box way to think about things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tom. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think one thought on outreach, as it pertains to the other actions that go out there, is the staff is extremely capable, and they do an amazing job, but people have to be amenable to the message, and, you know, to achieve a 60 percent reduction in discards, we're going to have to reduce the effort that interacts with red snapper by 60 percent, but that's really the only way we can do it, unless, you know, we can overcome the difficulties in quantifying those items under gear, but, up to this point, that's been one of those things that has been viewed as very difficult to quantify, and largely because we don't know much about our fishery.

We don't know how many people do these different things, and how they operate, and it's extremely variable from North Carolina to here, and it's the same with the area things. It's nice to look at hotspots, but think about the MRIP data. The MRIP data is reported as you fished beyond three miles, and so that's going to be extremely difficult. The for-hire data is also on very large areas, as was mentioned, and so I guess I'm not as optimistic. Maybe that will happen, but it's certainly not going to happen in the timeframe of this regulatory amendment, and I just don't see how that's at all realistic.

If we're in a situation of telling that we're going to do outreach and education to encourage people to follow best practices, along with telling them that we're going to close 60 percent of the area, or the effort, where red snapper are encountered, we're going to have a repeat of the last time we went out and talked to fishermen about closing large portions of the South Atlantic to all snapper grouper fishing, and there are hundreds of people in the room, and the last thing that anyone wants to talk about is best fishing practices, and so I think we really have to be realistic.

If we're going to take this regulatory amendment and target a specific percentage reduction in discards, and I understand and respect what Clay said about that, but, you know, I think the discard information remains uncertain, and it may be biased high, and it may be biased low, as the SSC has said, but, however you do it, once you take that and say we're using that information, and we're going to hold the council's feet to the fire for X percent reduction, we're putting a lot more stock in that information than I feel like is justified.

Certainly I feel like the issues on Amendment 43, about the uncertainty in that data, still exists, and so maybe you're not using it to monitor the fishery year-to-year, but you are using it to judge the management that the council is doing, and, if we're held to get 60 percent, if you guys come up with regulations that you think are going to do 30 percent through these other things, if the agency says, you know, they don't think that's enough, then you're going to have to do more, or, if you argue that you think outreach and education and gear can get you there, I don't know where the agency is going to stand on that, but I do believe, if we have to go out with education and

outreach, along with a 60 percent cut in effort that encounters snapper grouper, red snapper, then the outreach and education is going to be fruitless, and staff is going to basically be thrown into the lion's den, and I'm not really interested in trying to set up an outreach and education activity that is trying to occur in the same environment that we experienced last time we went out with those large area closures for red snapper, because I know it will be completely ineffective, and so we just have to be realistic about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just to add to that, by law, we have to account for the discards. Just because they're uncertain, it doesn't mean that we could ignore them, and so they're incorporated in the stock assessment, and, of course, as I said, the projections are, as they stand now, assuming that the discards are being reduced to the same extent the landings were being reduced, and maybe we need to change the way we're doing our projections and then assume that discards are unchanged, unless specific actions are unchanged.

Of course, if we did that, it would say that we would be overfishing, at the rate that we're going now, and then probably wouldn't allow any landings, and so I think we want to be really careful there, but, by law, we do need to account for the discards. We're not ignoring them, but we're just not monitoring with them, and that's the only change that was made.

The other thing is that I can get the point where we may not be able to get enough information together to well-define time/area closures in time for this amendment, but, you know, the sentiment I'm hearing, and like I hear it won't work, and it's not that it will work, and, I mean, I think, as the SSC articulated, that's probably the best way to achieve a reduction in discards, and it clearly would work, and it's just a matter of how big the time/area closures would be.

What I'm hearing is, really, it's a matter of there's not a will to do it, but it certainly would actually work, and I think that analysis that I mentioned that Scott Crosson and team is doing will look at all these nuances and try and come up with some alternatives, and that is a couple of years away, by the time they complete that, and so I think it's fair to make the point that, in the short-term, we may not be able to come up with good time/area closure, and maybe somebody can come up with something that's back-of-the-envelope, but I think, over the next couple of years, we need to seriously look at that, because that's probably the only solution, unless you want to take away everybody's electronics, or something like that, to make effective effort less.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. Hearing that, then I question the need to pursue any of these things in a short-term regulatory amendment at this point, because I don't see that we can accomplish anything in the timeline that we need to, with time/area closures or anything like that, because we're not going to be able to measure the benefits of them. We would be implementing them in hopes of accomplishing something, rather than an ability to actually prove it, and so adopt the ABC recommendation that we've been given, because we have to do that, and hopefully we can use the MSE to build on some of the information that's going to hopefully be provided to us in the future and try to solve this bigger picture, but, I mean, you know, I'm speaking for a state that's only accounting for 3 percent of the discards anyway, and so, even if I went home, and we put in

time/area closures, it's not going to matter enough to make a difference to the whole South Atlantic anyway.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud, and so we've got a lot of hands going up. Let's go to Mike first.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just, after hearing Spud's comment, I do want to remind the council that, when you initiated the work on this amendment, back in September of 2021, the discussion surrounding that was the intent of this action would put in the ABC, and there would hopefully be some type of additional action, measure, to reduce the discards, but, if that fell through, if it was found to be too difficult, too time consuming, whatever, there was the intent, when this action was started, that the discard-reducing measure may be rolled into the longer-term amendment and the work of the MSE, and that was part of the original intent of this regulatory amendment, and so I just wanted to remind you of your previous discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Mel and then Chester.

MR. BELL: Kind of following-up on Mike and what was just said, my thinking was what we were trying to do here, and I realize Magnuson says we have to end overfishing immediately, but there is no definition of "immediately", but, if you are trying to get some place immediately, you have to start, and, at least if you start, and you're moving in the direction, you are moving towards the goal, and so, along the lines of what Mike was talking about, our original intent was to try to, yes indeed, adopt the ABC, which we have to do, but then incorporate some things in here which at least get us going in the right direction, and it may be difficult to quantify, perhaps, like with the outreach and education, but I guarantee you that you will get help there, but it's just how you quantify it.

Maybe some of the gear stuff that we talked about, but I think my thinking was we weren't necessarily trying to get to the 65 percent goal in this amendment, but it's just let's get something in here that we can move forward with and start the journey towards 65, or whatever we need to do, and so I think we're kind of like getting stuck here, because we're trying to, all of a sudden, get to the 65 percent solution here, but, if we focus on moving in the right direction, we are heading towards ending overfishing as quickly as we can, and then bringing in this part of the plan and bringing in a follow-on amendment, after the MSE or whatever, but I think trying to focus on hitting the 65 percent here is going to cause us to stumble.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well said, Mel. All right. I'm going back to my hand list. Chester and then Dewey.

MR. BREWER: Just following-up on something that John said, for outreach to have any good effect, you've got to have some credibility, and our credibility right now is not good, because, when we had our outreach that was effective, when we were talking about descending devices, and we were telling everybody that, listen, we've got to get this discard mortality -- We've got to get it down, and this is the way that we do it, and, if we get this in place, and it's effective, it's going to have a positive effect. What happened? What happened?

We didn't see -- It may have had a positive effect, but it wasn't enough, and it didn't do what we wanted to do, which was to get people more days on the water, and we got less, and so I agree with

John. I think going out with this thing, where you're talking about outreach, at the same time that you're talking about some of this other stuff, is -- It's not going to be a pretty picture.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chester. On my list here, I have Dewey and then Andy and then Monica.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It's an interesting discussion here on how to look at fixing this. One way, and this is just my thoughts, of immediately fixing it is to issue a permit that you have to have to go fishing, snapper grouper recreational, and then you have to take an online video and pass that video, and included in your permit is a number, that the permit is numbered, and so then you can quantify, later, if needed, to the judge, when there's a lawsuit, because actions aren't being taken quick enough to recover the red snapper, that you have done something quantifiable, and the people that are going fishing have been -- They have passed the video that you're putting on, because a lot of these other things, like behavior, is kind of like a little kid that you're trying to teach something.

There is different ways of teaching the kid, you know, and, back in the day, you probably got a whipping on the bottom, but, nowadays, that would probably be child abuse, and so you've got to go tender with these folks and different things on how to do that behavior, and so there ain't but a few ways to skin the -- To do this, and I would think that the permit thing, with the number on it, and make them take a video, that shows that they passed, and say, hey, well, we've done this, but the other ways are just kind of anecdotal, and there is no way to quantify that, but, if they take a class and pass, and it's shown in there that they've got a permit, then it starts from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to respond to that, before I go to the list, I will say that Florida already has the State Reef Fish Survey permit in place for people that are going offshore to fish for these thirteen species, and we are outreaching that and doing education on that, but, if Florida is where the heart of this problem is, I'm wondering, if Florida requires an education course before people go offshore, after they get that permit, and we know who those people are, and they have identified themselves, and they are required to get this State Reef Fish Survey in the State of Florida, on both the Gulf and the Atlantic side.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, in HMS, there is two different things. Like I think the charter/headboat people have got to take it for the shark endorsement and also for the federal classes and safe handling practices that the longlines have to take, and we're now able, once we've taken the in-person, and we're able to do it online, and so that might be a good thing for Florida to step up to the plate for and say we're going to do a tutorial video that you have to pass a class to further certify that you're a red snapper handler specialist, or something like that, you know, and so it might be good for Florida to do that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. I saw some hands go up on this discussion in particular. I'm going to go to John and then Judy, and then we're going to come back to this side of the table, with Andy and Monica.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Just a quick question, Jessica, on you all's survey, and do you estimate discards in that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking at staff, and so it's a paper survey that's sent to folks that we send out a subset, and it's a statistical sample, and so apparently yes. I see heads nodding yes, that we do ask that information.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It seems like we might want to look at that as part of this, and compare it to MRIP, because the crux of this whole thing is this is private recreational discards, and they're MRIP, and they're self-reported, and the SSC has talked about bias either way, and we know they're grossly uncertain, and they're as uncertain as they've been all along, and I think we've got to look at some outside ways to get a handle on that, if we have any chance of targeting a specific discard reduction and coming out of that with any credibility whatsoever left.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Good point. Judy, and then we're going to go to Andy and Monica.

MS. HELMEY: I think we are -- According to -- I think we do have to do a video, look at a video, when we get a federal permit, and, believe it or not, a lot of people -- It might benefit from the education end, because, really, a lot of people don't really know the difference between a genuine red snapper and a vermilion snapper, and so that might -- That education might help a little bit, because they come by the dock all the time and show them to me, vermilion, which are genuine red snapper, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Judy. Andy and then Monica.

MR. STRELCHECK: I keep hearing we don't have any credibility, right, and that certainly is the perception probably by a lot of people. We sat around this table, at least virtually, six or nine months ago, and kind of started down this path, mostly because we were going through amendment after amendment of species that were undergoing overfishing and overfished, right, and red snapper is a little bit different, right, because we're actually seeing some increases in abundance, but I think that also points to the need for better outreach and education with regard to explaining the situation, right, and we know that abundance is up, but we're not at the biomass level that's required under Magnuson, and that's why additional action was taken, as well as this issue of discards. Whether we're 50 percent off, in terms of the discards, the discards are still overwhelmingly the major portion of mortality.

My concern with the conversation that's been going around this table, and I do appreciate Mel's intervention, and even Dewey's comments, is we aren't addressing the problem if we don't look at how we control effort, or manage effort, going forward, and it's just a growing problem, right, and I've heard Spud say, and I appreciate it, and I'm trying to figure out what's my elevator speech, in terms of giving back to fishermen, right, and so, if I'm caught in the elevator, and, well, what are you going to give me if we do this, right?

The problem we have with a lot of this is there is a shifting baseline, and there is way more anglers, there is way more effective technology today than there was ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago, right, and so I think we're fooling ourselves, in some respects, to kind of start with that in mind and say that's the end product that we want to achieve, and so I want to get back to, I think, we need to go down the path of exploring temporal and area closures at this point.

I realize that they would be wildly unpopular, and there is a huge effort that we need to do to explain why we would be pursuing them, but I don't want to throw them out today without us

actually analyzing them and looking at the actions and alternatives and having really some substantive conversation around what we can do, and so I would encourage the council to keep those included as part of this action and let the IPT do some work and bring that back to us in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. Monica and then Kerry.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I guess, kind of on a similar line of what Andy was saying, is that you're discounting information that you don't have in front of you yet, right, and so you haven't seen anything from the IPT, any analyses anyway, on what would be required to end overfishing. If you give the IPT latitude, they can bring that back to you in September, and this -- I understand the questions about the uncertainty of the discard information that John talked about, but that information comes from a stock assessment, SEDAR 73, that your Science Center and your SSC has said is the best scientific information available.

That's the information you have in front of you, and your record, so far, is just reducing -- Not just, but only reducing the ABCs and ACL won't end overfishing, and the Magnuson Act says you have to end overfishing, and so, if you do measures, put forward measures, that don't consider the kind of reduction you need in the dead discards to end overfishing, then your legal risk goes way up, right, and so you become much more vulnerable in any kind of litigation, or even under the Magnuson Act, under what we would consider to meet the requirements of the Magnuson Act.

What I have heard so far is you wouldn't be meeting the requirements of the Magnuson Act, because you're not ending overfishing, and so, again, I would encourage you to consider measures that you don't have the analyses for yet, right, and you could get them in September by the staff. Would they be unpopular? Absolutely. Would they be necessary? Probably. Maybe. I don't know, but you should all look at that information in September, instead of throwing it out before you have even seen it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Kerry, you had your hand up?

MS. MARHEFKA: I think Monica just answered my question, but I want to be clear. I was going to ask what the practical implications were of just moving forward with the ABC recommendations in this amendment, and what I heard from Monica was we would then not be in compliance with Magnuson, if that's all we did in this amendment, and is that -- Did I hear that correctly?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes, based on the record that you have so far before you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, and I guess I'm a little confused, because somehow I've gotten the impression that we can't turn around meaningful analysis of temporal and spatial closures in two months, that it would take longer than that, and so, if we can get something meaningful in a couple of months, that will help inform this decision, then I'm all for that, but I guess I've heard mixed messages somehow in all this, about getting something that would be reliable and trustworthy and useful as a basis for decision-making, and so, if we can get something that helps us, I'm fine with the analysis, but, you know, if it's going to be preliminary, or somewhat inclusive -- I mean, my god, we keep laying more uncertainty on top of uncertainty here, and it's just kind

of -- At some point, we almost get paralyzed, because of the uncertainty, and so I'm not against it, but it's just that I want to make sure that -- Are we actually going to be any better off in September, making an informed decision about the cost and benefits of some of these things, than we are right now?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's a great point. I think I'm going to suggest to our Vice Chairman that we break for lunch, and then, after an hour-and-a-half, come back and try to wrap this discussion up, and it will give people more time to think about this, and have some more conversations and think about what we want to do now and what we want to get back at the September meeting, so that we can make another decision, but we do have some decisions to make today about what we want to move forward with and pass to the IPT, and so, Carolyn, I'm going to pass to you to tell us when to come back for lunch.

DR. BELCHER: It will be just like yesterday. It will be 1:35, since it's five after twelve, and we'll be back in an hour-and-a-half.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. BELCHER: We're going to get started with the meeting again in a few minutes, and we're just kind of solidifying some bulleted points. Nick Smillie is going to go through a quick intro of I guess highlights of the new website, correct?

MR. SMILLIE: I just had a few council members come up to me and ask me how to access some of the briefing book documents, and I'm not going to do my whole spiel, because I know we've got red snapper to talk about, but I just wanted to show you this, really quickly, because I feel like it might help save some time and some pain for you all.

We've got the new website up right here. If you scroll down, you can access the June council meeting on the main page, or you can go to the meetings drop-down and view all of the council meetings, but this was one of the major improvements that we made with the new site, and, if you haven't found this yet, I'm hoping that it will save you guys a lot of time, and so, if you go to the June council meeting page, you can click this whole briefing book download, which will allow you to download all of the files in the briefing book all at once, and that's kind of the main point of that button, and it's not to navigate the briefing book materials.

If you keep scrolling down on that main meeting page, we have what we're calling the live agenda, and so this is the agenda for the whole meeting, and, embedded within the agenda, in every specific committee, you have all of your attachments, and so, if you go down to Tuesday, and let's say today, and you want to see the Amendment 53 decision document, all you have to do is click on that, and it opens the PDF up in a new tab, and then you can toggle back to that agenda and open up more attachments, if you guys want, and so I know you probably have your specific ways of navigating this and going through the meetings, but this is a really user-friendly, intuitive way to handle this.

Spud compared it to like a binder, right, and you go to your specific tab in the binder, and then you have all of your documents right there, and so I just wanted to give you guys that quick little tutorial, and hopefully it will help save some time as we're going through all this stuff, and so I

didn't know if anybody had any impending questions, but probably you guys want to get started here. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Nick, I'm getting used to the new website, and I like it. If we find something, like let's say, today, I might have wanted to look up Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 29, and I found instead Dolphin Wahoo 5, and so, if we find something like that, should I email you and just say, hey, this was misplaced, and we're going to -- That sort of thing?

MR. SMILLIE: Yes, that would be fantastic. We're trying to fix all those tiny little bugs as we go along. If it's a false link, or something like that, you can just let me know, and I will find the PDF and put it in, but I don't know if any of you all have tried the search feature down here, but you should be able to search amendment PDFs with this search feature, which we're working on making a little bit more user-friendly, and, as we get more documents onto the site, it will work a lot better, and so that's another good little helpful hint there, but, yes, thanks for that.

MR. DEVICTOR: Nick, documents that are added after the briefing book goes out, are they going to be added to the recent documents? Is that the place to look for them?

MR. SMILLIE: Yes, and so anything coming out now -- For example, today, I got the SGRA 35 Chair Review, and I just popped that in recent documents, but I also put it within its committee in the live agenda, and so I can add these in real time, whenever -- For example, when the committee reports are coming out, later in the week, when we go to Full Council II, those will be located at the bottom here, right here on Friday, and these, instead of just being empty, will all be linked to the committee reports, and so good question. Anything else? Great. Thanks. I hope you're liking it. We put a lot of work into this thing.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Nick. Jessica, it's -- Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I would like to kind of rephrase the answer, the knee-jerk response that I gave to Kerry right before the break, when she asked me if this would be illegal under the Magnuson Act. I'm not a judge, and I don't play one on TV, and so, whether it's illegal, we'll see the kind of record you would develop. Whether it doesn't -- I would say, if you don't address the overfishing, then, yes, it wouldn't comply with the Magnuson Act, but I would leave it up to the courts to decide what's illegal and not illegal.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Diving back into this discussion on Reg Amendment 35, who would like to start this discussion? When we left the discussion, just to recap there, you can see some bullet points on the screen, and some topics, and we're trying to figure out what will go to the next meeting and what is the IPT going to come back with for the September meeting, and so just to kind of recap, and we've been struggling with what are the few items that are going to go onto the next meeting. Who would like to start the discussion? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would still like to go back, and I don't, obviously, want to belabor where we were before, but I still would like to go back and discuss the merits of what we proposed with addressing the ABC and then talking about those things that we're making in earnest to address the issues of overfishing, which would be gear and the expanding outreach and education to the industry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's start there. We've talked about gear restrictions, and the ones that we talked about included prohibiting electric reels for recreational, requiring single-hook rigs, and what else are we thinking? We also talked about expanded outreach on best fishing practices. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just a question. On the single hooks, is that just private recreational, or that would be customers onboard for-hire, too?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. I think it's up to the committee. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I would recommend that that be the entire recreational sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike is taking notes. I didn't hear a lot of support for leader length, and so I don't know if we want to move forward with that one. We talked a little bit about the size of the hook, and I don't know if we want to move forward with that, and I see that Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Based on practicality, I think, I'm not a fan of leader length or hook size, and I was going to ask about electric reels, and I know that it was brought up that there might be some ADA compliance issues or something, and does that just need to be noted, that electric reels, with the exception of, I don't know, but some sort of ability to accommodate uses, and just capture that in a parentheses or something?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Will do. Mike is typing that up there. All right, and so, so far, we've talked about some gear restrictions, continuing to expand outreach and education on best fishing practices, and we have some points up there as well, and we even talked about a course. Anything else on this? Tom and then Carolyn.

MR. ROLLER: Just on the issue of electric reels, and not just incorporate accommodation for disability, but I think it's important to note that electric reels are used for a multitude of other fisheries, and it was mentioned earlier, such as swordfishing and kite reels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This is just for snapper grouper, yes. Good point. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just to reiterate again too that this is looking to be a temporary measure, until we can get into the FMP discussions that we want to have for the fishery as an overall.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we have, on the list, outreach and education for this short-term action, gear for the short-term action, and we talked earlier, before we took a break, took a lunch break, about some of the concerns about trying to do outreach, or trying to do some of these other short-term measures, while discussing these temporal and area closures. I see Mel's hand is up, and then Spud.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that I think the addition of the -- Where it says "Florida requirement for educational video", I think, if that can be linked to your State Reef Fish program, permit, somehow, you've got a powerful opportunity to deal with a large number of people that are contributing to the thing we're trying to deal with, and so that's a pretty powerful linkage, and you uniquely, as the state, are set up to be able to do that, if you can pull that off, and that would be great.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it's a great idea. I think that we can, and I don't want to speak before we look into all the different challenges that come with that, but I think it's a great idea as well. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. Not to get the cart in front of the horse, but I'm just trying to make sure that I understand. If this is a short-term -- So, if we go forward with this, and this is accepted and put into practice, whatever is approved in this would be in effect until when? Until it is removed or replaced? I mean, so it will have a life as long as it exists, until it is replaced by something else?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's my understanding. I'm looking around, and Monica has her hand up.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes, it's in place until you change it, unless you put some sort of sunset provision or something like that in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Looking at the list, I would like to hear a little bit more discussion on the aggregate bag limit and how folks envision that, if you all want to talk about that a little bit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So there is an aggregate bag limit now, but there's one for snapper, and you've got another one for grouper, and you could have a snapper grouper combined aggregate bag limit and determine that number, and, you know, the document would include options of is that number ten, or is it fifteen, and then I think that you would have species in there that like maybe one of those is a gag or a black grouper, and you would specify some of the existing limits that we're working on as part of the overall aggregate that we would be suggesting, and so it was just an idea for this short-term action. Maybe it's better suited for the long-term MSE, and I'm not sure here. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I guess just a question, to follow-up on that, and is it realistic to expect that we could get an analysis that could help us be informed about options, and the benefits thereof, in the time we're trying to turn this around in?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm not sure, and so we were looking at this, and we were changing some of the species that were in the aggregate as part of the visioning, but I don't remember it having snappers and groupers combined, and I think it was looking at -- Myra is saying no, and it was just looking at one or the other. All right, and so, so far, we've had a discussion about the outreach and education piece moving forward, the gear piece moving forward. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Before we get off the aggregate bag limit, just to make sure I understand that, you're talking about having an aggregate bag limit, and not like we did before, where it was like a group of species, like a group of snappers, or a deepwater aggregate, or a shallow-water, but just an overall aggregate for everything, and, if that's the case, I don't see that that really helps us with the discard problem at all, because that wouldn't change anything with discards, because it's still the same effort. Maybe it would even make it worse, because you've got more days to fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so it seems like we are leaning towards the temporal and the area closures coming in the long-term action, following the MSE, and is that what we're thinking? I'm looking around the table. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I would agree with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would fully disagree with that, and so we spent the better part of the morning, I thought, talking about what needed to be done in the short-term, and you guys are writing off some viable options that I think could be considered in the short-term. Now, how we define "short-term" is to be determined, but what you're talking about is not going to even scratch the surface, in terms of reducing discards in this fishery, and you guys really need to focus on reducing discards, and some substantial management changes need to be made in order to reduce the discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that we are set to make substantial changes in the long-term. We've already started that, and it sounds like we already have a contractor and we're working on it, and so I would say that we already have those long-term pieces underway. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So we've been talking about this for a year, and we're now talking short-term and long-term, and we have to end the overfishing, and what's being lost here is ending the overfishing right now. We're talking about actions that -- I mean, outreach, you don't even have to take an action at this council, and you can make recommendations and do that now, right, and the South Atlantic Council does a fantastic job of outreach, right, and those efforts are already underway, in many places, and can be expanded, and so, really, the only action you're taking here, potentially, would be some gear modifications, in the short-term, and reducing the ABC, and it's clear, based on the catch level recommendations, that the discards are substantially higher than the landed catch right now and overwhelmingly contribute to the fishing mortality. When you say long-term, I mean, long-term could be three years from now, and that's not addressing the overfishing, which needs to be done, quote, unquote, immediately.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: We all hear what you're saying, and we've heard what Monica has said, and we understand, but I think the frustration is that we don't feel like we have the information we need to fully understand the consequences, both positive and negative, of various options of temporal and spatial closures, and I think that's what we're struggling with.

We talked about, this morning, you know, that, yes, we could get some short-term analyses that might give us some general ideas of what might happen, but are we -- I mean, we're looking at possibly implementing unprecedented socioeconomic impacts to the private recreational fishery, and I really want to know what those consequences are going to be, so that I can do a cost-benefit analysis, in my mind, and hopefully do the right thing that addresses overfishing, but also doesn't do any undo unnecessary harm to the people that are being affected.

I guess that's my position on this, is do we rush out and do something and not really understand if it's going to give us what we need, or do we take some time to better understand what we might

get as a benefit of a choice, because it's going to be a very, very difficult choice, and it stands to affect one state out of the South Atlantic much, much, much greater than another state, and it would be easy to sort of say, well, too bad, and you're going to have to take your licks, but I think we just want to make sure that we're doing this right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Monica and then Mel and then Clay.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, Spud, you asked some great questions, but how do you know what those kinds of concerns are, until you've seen some kind of analysis before you? It's almost like you're making decisions and pre-judging what might come before you, and I'm not saying that you don't have a good idea of what that might be, but you don't have anything in front of you that says here is what would happen if we closed this area, or did it for this time, or did whatever, and you don't have that until your IPT looks at it and gives you back something.

Right now, you don't know, and you have an inkling of what you think, but you don't know, until you see some sort of analysis, and how does what you're doing now end overfishing, plus the last thing is you're not putting anything in place. All you would be doing is getting information in front of you in September, or whenever, so that you can make those kinds of decisions, as to whether you want to go forward with it, whether you don't, and those sorts of things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud, to that?

MR. WOODWARD: I guess maybe I'm not making myself clear, and it's not discounting the necessity and the efficacy of time/area closures, but it's being armed with sufficient information to really understand what choices we should make, and it's going to take time to get that, and is it feasible to do it in the short-term of this action that we have in front of us, Regulatory 35? You know, I mean, are we going to have the level of understanding that we need to know what the consequences will be? I think that's where the disconnect is.

We want to do this right, and we want to make sure that whatever we do is the best balance between cost and benefit, but, you know, I guess I heard kind of different things this morning, and maybe I am mistaken, but it sounds like, for some of these things, it will take a year to two to really understand some of them, and we might could get some more, you know, cursory evaluations of it, and, I mean, if we can get -- You know, if we can get what we need in the short-term, then fine, and I am not personally discounting time and area closures, but I just want to make sure I've got the information that I need to make the best choice, and so that's kind of where I'm coming at this from.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go back to the list, I would also say that we have 17A, and we have all the discussions that came about from 17A, when we were talking about that, and closing red snapper, and that it was a long process, and, you know, we were losing credibility with the public, and so I wouldn't say that we don't have anything. We have kind of been here before, and so, ultimately, it wasn't really implemented, because there was a change in the stock, but I'm going to go back to the list here. Mel and then Clay.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica. I'm just kind of listening to the back-and-forth a little bit, and, I mean, I understand what Andy is saying and Spud's concerns, and so I would just ask, and is there a way we could -- Because all we're doing right now is coming up with a list that would be potential

action areas, and so is there a way of incorporating, at this point, the potential action that would address examination of maybe simple -- That we have confidence in being able to look at data in September, but just dealing with temporal restrictions, as simply as we can, with the idea of trying to have the best confidence in whatever we come up with that we can by September, and I think that's what Spud is saying.

When we get to September, what are we going to be looking at, and will we have confidence in any of that that we can move on it, but is there a way to incorporate, at this point, at least an action that just simply deals with simple temporal adjustments, and then, as this thing moves along, we may find out that, no, we're not going there, and we've taken actions out before, and also recall that we've gone down an amendment process with VMS, where we took that very unpopular topic all the way to the end, and we didn't go anywhere with VMS, and my apologies to Pat O'Shaughnessy, if he is there and reeling from that, but, I mean, at this point, all we're simply doing is developing actions, which can come out, but I would say put that in there, if it can be structured in a way that we have a relatively secure feeling that, by September, we'll have something to look at that we can judge, like Spud is saying, is this going to work or not going to work, and do we know enough or not know enough.

I mean, I would sort of argue for considering an action to deal with something temporally, if we can get some assurance that we'll be looking at something, and, to Monica's point, you don't know unless you give it a try and you look at it, but that's all I would argue for, but, areas, I don't -- I think areas, by themselves -- I mean, we struggled with areas for fourteen years, to try to go down a -- To implement MPAs, but simple temporal restrictions, based on what we know and are confident in, as best we can be, about the landings and the discards, and, I mean, is that something that we could kind of move towards as a compromise here?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. I think I agree Mel, and we definitely can answer some of the questions that Spud has raised, and we definitely could provide information on the potential impacts of temporal closures, but also combined with space, so you can look at the difference, for instance, in catch rates from MRIP by state, or even at smaller scales than that, and so I think we can give a fairly informative presentation on what different time/area closures could look like.

We might also be able to roll in our survey data and look at where -- To some extent, where hotspots might be, and maybe there is some small areas that could be closed off, but I think we can do those sorts of analyses, and, in fact, the State of Florida has their hook-and-line survey that's been going on for several years now, and so there ought to be a wealth of information that could be mined there, and so, from my perspective, we can provide something that would be useful that's more than a back-of-the-envelope calculation, more than something preliminary. I would like to do that in partnership with council staff and our state partners, but I think there's definitely something we can produce.

Now, the analysis that I alluded to earlier that Scott Crosson was doing, that I said would take a couple of years, is going to look at a lot of other possible options, and that will take more time, and the MSE -- They actually use some of the same types of information, and that leads me to my last point of the MSE isn't necessarily going to solve all of the issues. The bottom line is, even in an MSE context, you have a harvest control rule, ultimately, and the harvest includes the landings

and the discards, and so you still have to have mechanisms for reducing discards, but, in any case, I don't think it's particularly wise to put off any look at time/area closures until we have every I dotted, and every T crossed, because I think there is useful information that we can provide.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I'm wondering if we're kind of talking past each other here, because I feel like you guys are saying we need to look at the impacts for red snapper, and what some of us are saying is we're trying to look at the snapper grouper fishery as a whole and how these closures could impact the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, and so are you going to be able to come back in September with how these temporal and area closures are going to affect the snapper grouper fishery as a whole or just how they're going to help red snapper? I guess that's -- I am trying to restate, maybe, what Spud is trying to say.

DR. PORCH: I mean, it's the same dataset, and so we could talk about how various time/area closures would affect the whole aggregate species composition from the reef fish fishery, and that certainly can be addressed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would still come back to what we said, in June and September of 2021, about how we're intending to address effort and discards, but we were doing this in the long-term action and not the short-term action, and so I still come back to the discussion that we had then, and we're still on that same track, I thought, and now it's like we're kind of changing the track, in order to help red snapper, when I would say a number of us around the table are more concerned about how this affects the snapper grouper fishery as a whole. Andy and then Clay.

DR. PORCH: I was just saying that we can provide information that I think is useful to this, and so I don't think I would -- I am just recommending not to delay action simply because you don't think there would be any useful information, and I think we can provide something that's useful and informative.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think there's maybe some confusion over what would be contained in the short-term versus the long-term, but I still get back to how are we addressing the overfishing, right, and that is the mandate that we're operating under that we need to work on addressing, and we can't defer how we're going to address overfishing into the long-term. We need to be addressing it now, right, with a potential longer-term management strategy that could look different, and improved upon, relative to what we've done in the short term. The challenge here is we have substantial discards, as everyone knows, and, without looking at some of these other management alternatives, I just don't know how you're going to address those discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so what's the pleasure of the committee here? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I guess, in the interest of avoiding a stalemate, I would be agreeable, although somewhat hesitant, to include time/area closures for consideration, with the caveat that we're going to have to have the kind of information that we need to make a fully-informed decision before there is any further consideration of it, and that will be, I guess, a judgement call on our part, as to whether we feel comfortable or not, and, you know, I'm still a little skeptical that we'll have what we need, but, you know, that's -- I am willing to go along with that, but -- With a big but.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: To your point earlier, Jessica, I fully agree that the problem here is the potential impact we would have on everything else other than red snapper, and that's where the data become perhaps a little more complex, and the picture becomes a little bit -- Maybe we get to September, and we're definitely not comfortable with it, but this -- You know, we're focused on a red snapper amendment, or well, based amendment, and that's the problem, is red snapper discards, but the problem is the potential collateral damage, if you will, that we could do to our other aspects of the snapper grouper fishery across-the-board.

That's what terrifies me with this, is that we're so focused on this one species, and the issue with the species, and we end up wrecking -- Unintentionally, perhaps, wrecking other things, but that's where we would have to have a very clear understanding of what we're looking at, come September, and, if we're not comfortable, then the action comes out, perhaps, and we move on with the other things, which I would argue the other things do get you going in the direction of reducing discards.

They're not getting you to 65 percent, or 50 percent, or 40 percent, perhaps, but they're getting you moving in the right direction, and so you are making way towards the goal, and, again, immediate is not identified, but you're never going to -- Immediate includes getting underway, and that's what we would be doing with this, and the other actions, is getting underway towards dealing with discards, even if it's at a slow speed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, thanks for that, Mel, and I largely agree with you. I will state that it's immediately end overfishing and not reduce overfishing. I think we're in agreement, Jessica, in terms of what you're saying, and what Spud is saying, in terms of we don't want what Mel termed "collateral damage" to these other species, and I would actually turn it around and look at the positive, and the collateral benefits that we might receive for especially some of the stocks that are in most need of rebuilding and addressing overfishing, like gag grouper, which we'll be talking about later today, right, and so there's long-term efforts, both that are being funded by the council, that Clay and his team have funding for, but there's also information readily available to look at spatial data, in the context of not only red snapper, but other snapper grouper species.

We certainly would make a commitment to bring that back to the council in September for discussion. How complete it is, as Spud points out, and how informative it is, and whether it answers all the questions to be determined --

You know, one thing that I think I would like to understand better, and it doesn't have to be answered at this meeting, but, when we come to September, or December, if there is concern about timing and getting this done, then that's when we should have a conversation about splitting this out and taking action with one amendment, or framework, and potentially taking a little bit longer with the other action, but we need to have a schedule and a commitment as to what timeframe we're going to work that on, rather than just saying the long-term and then fumble around for two or three or four years, until we do something else. I think that's the key to all of this, and what we're seeing is just let's put it on the table and get some analysis out here, and let's look at it, and then we can decide how to respond to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you guys going to come with discard and landing estimates by state, wave, fishery, for all stocks in the snapper grouper complex in September?

MR. STRELCHECK: We stand ready to work with the council staff to provide whatever information this council wants.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have a statement there to develop analyses for time/area closures for the snapper grouper fishery to consider for inclusion in September. I guess I would also ask what about outreach, and what about the gear changes, because, if we don't approve this, which I do not support this, and Florida does not support this, and, if we don't approve this, then I would like to have something else, besides just the ABC reduction, in that document that's analyzed that we can move forward with. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, I support the gear, and I support the outreach, and I would go further, to say that I think it would be valuable, as much as we can, to reach out to all the folks that have been involved in outreach and communications and quantify, as best we can, what we've done thus far, in terms of interactions with people, participants in workshops and so forth and so on, descending devices, quantify all that stuff, and then look at what we've done thus far, and what we would like to do going forward, so that we have some measurable element to this outreach and communication and education activity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to go to Mel while Mike is trying to capture that.

MR. BELL: I would echo what Spud -- I definitely would keep the gear in there, and we definitely should have the outreach and education in there, and I think -- Again, I realize that you can't commit to making an adjustment to incorporate some mandatory education thing with your current program, and I understand that fully.

Another crazy thing to think about is, and this is sort of outside the box a little bit, but, you know, we talk about the need for a federal snapper grouper permit, or something for recreational, or some requirement there, but, short of that though, I wonder if you could have some sort of requirement for retention of certain species, or snapper grouper species, a requirement for documentation of an approved either federal or state education and outreach -- Education course or something, or even a video course.

In other words, you know, certain fisheries, we do require them to go through a course, and they have to have this, but that's not -- Other than the development of a video course type of thing, where you print out a certificate of completion or something -- I mean, that's not hugely expensive or complicated, but you could incorporate that for the entire fishery, perhaps, and then we've got everybody incorporated and not just Florida fishermen that happen to be associated with your requirement, and so that's just something to think about, is an online type of training.

I mean, I'm going back to hunting, but, to have a hunting license, if you're of a particular age, generally, in places, you have to have proof of some sort of hunter safety course, and generally that tends to be state-by-state, but, I mean, that's something to think about, is a requirement across-the-board for everybody for participation in the federal snapper grouper fishery, to have documentation of that training.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So is Mel saying this documentation of training ahead of permitting or licensing, or something like that, and who would do that? Would the states be the ones doing all this, or would the feds be implementing this program of videos before permitting and licensing and all that other stuff?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, in the State of Florida, we could tie it to the State Reef Fish Survey requirement that we have, but that's for thirteen species, but, yes, we could do it at the state level, and it seems to be we are where the majority of these snapper grouper species are being encountered and discarded, and so I think that's a place to start.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: One follow-up, and how about states? Is it possible for states and -- I guess it would be up to states to get an exemption from this, especially if they don't have records of discards and stuff like that, particularly north of Cape Hatteras for blueline tilefish, where different surveys have shown that's what the majority of you catch, is bluelines, and so how could states get exemptions from this policy or anything like that, and how would that work?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know the answer to that. We don't even have it in place yet, and now we're talking about exempting people from it. Just saying.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The discussion is going around in circles today a lot, and I'm just trying to chase the cat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just curious, and do we -- Under time/area, do we need to throw some stuff up for staff to actually analyze, or do they just need to come up with some ideas on their own? I mean, for analysis only, this is what we're being told that we need to at least have in the document, so you guys can look at in September, and, if we don't have it, and it's still being -- I don't want to say shoved down our throat, but shoved down our throat -- Not really. Then you're going to miss a whole other quarter of not being able to do anything. I mean, is there any more elaboration that the council might want to do, or this committee might want to do, on that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: If you have something, then throw it out there, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Well, I mean, I don't want to be that guy, but I feel like, for this topic, and it seems like this is the only thing that's going to get some traction, and it may not be appropriate to do in this particular amendment, but one for the future, if that analysis was already done, and then it could be -- I'm going to send an email, real quick, to Mike, and just throw it up there, and it's nothing malicious, but it's kind of the only way that I see forward, as far as analysis, and I wouldn't want to have some stuff come up that didn't fit the bill for what needed to be done, and so you all can take it and marinate on it for a minute. I just sent it, Mike.

Again, these are the kind of tough things that we've all looked at each other and decided that we had to do at some point, over the last couple of meetings, and, now, they are pretty extreme measures, but maybe they're not, and maybe some states could handle moving -- Eat a wave, or something like that, and it might not affect that much, and we may even get more bang for our

buck, in the long run, and get -- You know, what sort of came out of visioning, with our private recs, they said they wanted to know when the season was and when they can keep a more liberal amount of fish and whatnot, on down the road, and so, I mean, there's a lot of effort out there, and there's not much of a way to curtail it, other than what we're being told here, and so those were my thoughts. It's not necessarily my wants, but my thoughts on how to move forward on the issue of time/area closures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think you're better off being more general in your ask, and let us talk about it, because we've got other things to think about. With gag grouper, we've got overfishing there, too.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure.

DR. BELCHER: So, I mean, if we're too focused in one direction, we may lose an exclusion, and so, again, back to what Jessica's ask was about can you handle the other fifty-four species --

MR. CONKLIN: This is no way, shape, or form in the form of a motion, and it's just for discussion.

DR. BELCHER: Right, and I'm just discussing back with it, and that's the other parts of that, and, again, it's that yin-and-yang of all of these species, and, unfortunately, there is more yin-and-yang than just one and two, but so that's the only thing I caution about, is getting too specific, or too close, in what you're asking for, because you may end up squishing an impact in another direction, on another species, that you didn't intend to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have something that Chris has put on the board here. Is there discussion of that? Mel.

MR. BELL: I think, just to echo what Carolyn is saying, I think, at this point, trying to get into the analysis of this in our heads, or maybe we're too far down in the weeds here, and we need to rely on the IPT to work through options or something, and this could be input for them to consider, but I think, if we try to negotiate through this stuff ourselves right now, we will be a good bit more over time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it sounds like Mel has made a suggestion that we don't get down in these weeds. All right. Your Vice Chair said the same thing.

MR. BELL: I do appreciate the input.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have, here on the screen, what folks have suggested to look at to come back to September. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I don't disagree with giving the IPT the discretion, but I think I want to go back to what you said earlier, as I think there is a minimum level of resolution that we need in order to have useful information, and that's state, and, with a state like Florida, that's divided into zones, we can work to figure out where the delineation of zones are, and wave, and fishery, and that's private, headboat, charter boat, commercial, and do it for 2005 through 2021, and do it for

as many of the species within the complex as there is data available to do it. I know that's probably like a twelve-sided Rubik's Cube, but that's -- You know, if you're going to do advanced fishery management, you've got to have advanced information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We'll get that on the screen here in a second. Spud, are you also suggesting a discard-only projection, or are you requesting hotspots, or are you requesting anything else?

MR. WOODWARD: I would say anything that we can get to help us fully understand, and so, if we can get discard-only projections, and hotspots, that were alluded to earlier, anything that could help us understand, and, if we focused in on discrete spatial closures, what would that give us as benefits, and, also, I think, if at all possible, to have some comparisons of your FWC state reef fish discards with the MRIP discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think we've got all that up there. I think Mike has it on the board now. We have, on the screen here, about what would come back to September, including some analysis that we're suggesting would help with the time/area closure discussion, and we have some outreach and education items that we've talked about, and, under gear, we have the electric reels and single-hook rigs. Is there any other pieces to this? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Under the time/area closures, I don't see anything dictating that we want to look at any economic or social impacts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds great. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just for some clarity, one, I wasn't sure what you meant by discard-only projections, and so I just wanted to understand what was intended there, and, as far as economic and social impacts, I don't know what the thought was there, what scale of impact we're looking at, because that could be a rather detailed analysis, and that probably would not be completed in two months' time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's part of our point. I think that the council is suggesting that we need a bunch of these things in order to feel comfortable moving forward with these time/area closures, and so just -- Now it's on the screen, and I'm hoping that that helps, but I agree that I don't know that it can be done in two months either. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: When have we ever asked for an amendment, or an action, to be completed in three months? Never. It's always a sequence process, where we ask for actions and alternatives, and we bring them before the council, and we do analyses, and we bring them back to the council, and so, if we want to pile on here, to make this complicated, which appears to be what the council wants to do, fine. You can do that, right, and we're not going to bring all of this back, and I can guarantee you that, but that's not a realistic expectation here either, right?

You need the actions and alternatives before you, and the IPT needs your direction to decide on what those actions and alternatives are going to be, and then we can do the socioeconomic analysis, and then we can do more of the biological analysis, and then we can write the framework action, but, to expect that we're going to have everything in September is unrealistic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Well, I think the quandary too is that, obviously, we all have a little bit of twitching over past experiences, and the uncertainty is one of the biggest things of this, is that, having walked that path, and I was on the other side of the fence with 17A, and so I can't speak to what the council itself dealt with, but that idea of we're going into this with uncertain numbers, and yet we're being asked to do something that can have a very profound impact, and we have a very tentative relationship right now with the industry, I think is what we're trying to do, is we're just trying to find some degree of comfort in the field of the fact that we are highly uncertain on everything that we've got.

I mean, discards, we've talked about that for years and years, that we're just not comfortable with what's there, but we're going to use it, but yet we're still trying to sell that, and we're not comfortable 100 percent of the way, and how do we even get remotely comfortable to throw it out there and talk to the populous about it? I think that's the biggest part of it. I mean, we all have our comfort with what we're willing to put in the bank, but I don't know that we are 100 percent even close to thinking that we've got enough of an answer to go forward and say, yes, we can sell this.

I mean, that's where I think we were thinking that we could approach this with what has been floated through other places, which has been outreach and gear restrictions, knowing that this isn't the end-all-be-all, and we're not washing our hands and walking away from it, and we're saying we're doing this until we can get to looking at it from the holistic approach. I mean, it's that bottom-thing that makes it difficult, and we get so nearsighted on one particular specie, and we kind of forget that we've got four or five others out there that are having similar struggles.

I mean, red porgy, and how long have we been kicking red porgy, and, yet, that's not one that we're really putting this much attention to, but, yet, it should be part of this, and I think that's where that pushback is coming from, is that we want as much certainty as we can give, the same way you want to have a high degree of confidence with what we're doing going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what's the pleasure of the committee here? I see people suggesting that they're good with what's on the board there for the next steps for this regulatory amendment.

DR. BELCHER: We've got to start somewhere.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I almost dare not to speak this, but I've been asked to do so. Are we at a point in this amendment where we need to do any additional scoping, or can that wait until after? Okay. We've done some preliminary scoping, but I am seeing heads shaking, and so I'm guessing that means wait until after September to think about scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, it looks like it, and I see heads nodding, and it looks like, yes, wait until after.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I would dare say, Madam Chair, that, after the conversation we've had, we're going to get plenty of scoping tomorrow night, and tonight.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I am just, again, seeking an answer to my original question, and so what was intended by discard-only analyses, and, specifically, what kind of socioeconomic impact analyses are we interested in here? It would be good to flesh that out, because, right now, it's pretty vague.

MS. MCCAWLEY: F of zero.

DR. PORCH: F equals zero, and so no discards and no landings?

DR. BELCHER: No directed fishing, is what I think we were going for with that. In absence of a fishery, what happens with discards?

DR. PORCH: So maybe it's semantics, but, if there is no landings, there is still a fishery, right? They are still fishing and discarding things, and so you want projections for which species with only discards, no directed landings, and what's the purpose of that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: It's just for red snapper and just for there being no landings, and so there's an FMSY, and there's an F rebuild that is 98 percent of FMSY, and what's the yield at F rebuild, and that would be assumed to go entirely to discards, and this was raised because there was a lot of discussion, at the AP and other places, saying there is not that much yield of red snapper that we're getting in the first place, and it's only two days.

Rather than have impacts on the entire snapper grouper fishery, we'll just give up red snapper, and several people on the AP said that, and so I think the council would like to see, you know, how much of the pain of this potential area or seasonal closure can be reduced if we just say, okay, give up what would probably, next year, be one day of red snapper fishing, and it may not be a lot, but I do think they would like to have that, because I think a lot of people are saying you're going to make me shut down for four months of the year, so I get one day of fishing for red snapper, and most of our fishermen have already done the math on that, and they're like, no way, and so I think we need that analysis, that all of the red snapper yield goes to offsetting discards, so we can try to moderate the closure, as much as possible.

DR. PORCH: So maybe we can have further discussion with that, because that's not actually going to make that much difference, because most of the kill is dead discards for red snapper, and, I mean, we can do that projection and make it zero landings, but I don't see that that's going to be especially informative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think we would still like to see it. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just recalling one of the assumptions that got brought up earlier, and probably for clarification related to this, and is it the desire of this projection to be discards based on recent discards or based on the standard projection methodology that was done before, because the

standard projection methodology that has been put forward already assumes that, as landings go down, discards go down, and it's been observed, in this fishery, that that is not necessarily the case.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I would think you have to set that aside, and you just do the projection at F rebuild, and you find out what the available yield of the fishery is, and you say that's what is available for offsetting discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I appreciate the explanation, and, I mean, we certainly want to think about this in the context of other National Standards and Magnuson requirements, but I think, if we did go down that path, you would have to make an argument that we're optimizing yield for the snapper grouper fishery at the expense of red snapper, right, and I guess two other points that I will make.

One is a question, which is, is it reasonable, in this day and age, to have a year-round fishery for snapper grouper? I think that's -- I'm just going to leave it at that, and I don't want an answer, but I want you to just think about that, because I feel like we're kicking the can down the road, and today's red snapper will be tomorrow's -- Fill in the snapper grouper species. I think it's really important that we think carefully about this, given all of the things we've talked about today with fishing power and with open access and uncontrolled fishing effort, in many cases, and how that is ultimately going to make our fisheries of the future look and the vision we have for those fisheries, and so thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this discussion? We're going to take a five-minute break, and then we're going to go into gag.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We are moving into gag, which is Amendment 53, and we are going to start with the Snapper Grouper AP input, and I'm going to turn it over to Bob.

MR. LORENZ: All right, Madam Chair, and thank you very much. After listening to Amendment 35 and the deliberations here, I think, from what I gather, sitting with the AP, is cheer up for Amendment 53, and you have kind of a good chance here for getting some good fisheries management, and, in my opinion, hitting triple, or a homerun, and it shouldn't be all that difficult.

One of the main things you've got going for you is this is a species that everybody has an opinion on at the AP, just like red snapper, and every single person has an opinion. The interesting thing is there is some consensus, that we kind of agree. When we were told that SEDAR 71 showed that it's overfished, and experiencing overfishing, people are -- I think all the committee members generally agree there's probably something that we should do, and it's not critical, and, boy, now is the time, maybe, to act on some kind of a rebuilding plan, and so we've got that going for us, and I personally think a lot of the things you've learned with red snapper, the greatest hits on some of the things that work, the circle hooks and that sort of thing, is going to be great, and, here, you just need to fill in the other management aspects.

When we get to the Action 1, where, you know, it was mentioned that the private sector needs to be defined, to have gag for a better chance of rebuilding, and, of course, here we go again with a license or a permitting system, to know the population of the recreational anglers, and, of course, if you do that, and maybe gag -- When you're looking at this, you may not want to put every species in it, but, boy, gag is -- If you've got snapper, and, okay, gag is maybe the first one on the list, and this might be a nice one to pilot this kind of licensing system, control and the reporting, because it's doable, and you can get your arms around it fairly easy, and you get to what we -- Your rebuilding plan, and you will update your ABC and your ACL and your OY and have some great management tools that will come through to you.

There is one thing that could occur, and you do have the -- There are some sectors that you want to know about what the numbers of the recreational fishermen are, which is for the purpose of knowing what that population is, how big it is, and how it can impact things, but remember that data can be used for different ways and for different arguments, and so probably your challenge, in my opinion, is going to come when you get to the allocations later.

Remember the private recreational fishermen, if you do know how many there are, that could always be used as an argument to give us some more fish, to help our massive population have adequate fishing experience, and so that could be your difficult thing down the line there.

This is one that everybody agrees that gag needs some work. When we get to Sub-Action 4a, the commercial trip limit, that has some qualifiers on there. The AP preferred the -- Well, either Alternative 3, the 300 pounds, or the 400 pounds. The 300 pounds came with some conditions attached to it, and it was -- Always the discussion is there are going to be restrictions on spearfishing, and continued restrictions on spearfishing gear, which I think has already occurred, and that's where they said, okay, leave it 300 pounds, if spearfishing is going to continue as-is now, and there is going to be no change with that.

There also were those people in the AP, on the commercial aspect, that did like one aspect of it, and that is can they have access to gag grouper for as much as possible, and some thought you could get by reasonably with a 300-pound limit. They consider it part of their portfolio of species that they go out for, and it can be on the, you know, fishing grocery list, for a crew to fill that in on a trip out.

We kind of went with the alternate, and the 400-pound limits would be if -- We're not going to do too much. Obviously, if you're going to shorten seasons, then, of course, there's going to be folks asking for a larger trip limit, to make that trip more worthwhile, but, if you can keep the seasons expanded, and there is a lot of folks talking about control for spearfishing, then 300 pounds would be a better flavor for them.

Getting to Sub-Action 4b, the spawning season closure, I don't remember too many being hot on that, and that could have been actually mentioned for a future that -- I think there was some call that, in the northern areas, and I'm getting confused with this, because this did come up more with discussion of red grouper than the gag grouper, would be the fact that you would have the gravid females, or you would have the roe at a certain time of year, and which you add a month, and so that's probably how that sub-action came in here, but that's kind of split between the commercial people that would feel that you want to add another month on a closure and not, from what I know of the AP.

I think it's more like that, if there are any added restrictions, to try to make it as, you know, simple as possible, and that could possibly be one means, if an extra month means the season is let go, and nothing else really changes, and maybe that's something to consider.

Sub-Action 5a for the recreational vessel limit, yes, they did come in with recommending Alternative 3, which is four fish per vessel, for more conservation, or Alternative 4, a six-fish-per-vessel limit, and I guess we're all presuming that that all can be superseded with only one fish per person, and you're not going to allow four fish with two guys out there on a boat, and that sort of thing.

The final one would be the recreational spawning season closure, and, yes, it was talked about, again, the possibility of roe fish and it being, yes, something that could help in recovery, but I don't think that's tremendously popular, and this was one area where certain stakeholders, and that would be the charter captains, and particularly the headboats, and this could be -- Something like this, if you close May, could be extremely punitive to them, and, I mean, it's been brought out, and, if you take out the headboats, which, you know, they serve the average American citizen at a very small price, and I know, when you get up beyond Florida, when you get into Georgia through North Carolina, that gag is very important to anybody running a headboat.

It gets a chance for an exciting fish to be retained, when they're just starting their season, and they're just starting to get their press and all, to get their customers, and so, though that was discussed, to add a month if you get into thinking of socioeconomics, you may want to look at a few particular sectors, and I know there is the for-hire, but you would have folks like the headboats that could be profoundly affected, with an additional one-month closure on one of these things, because this is one of the species that can draw people to the boats, and it's like getting all the dollars up in a casino, and so be careful on that one, and that concludes what we had discussed.

I think gag is something, with the number of people that think something should be done, that you should be able to get a lot of nice ideas, and a lot of endorsements, for very reasonable ways to move forward in the managing of this species, since you're going to not get a lot of pushback that nothing is wrong, and so thank you very much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. Any questions for Bob? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Bob. A quick question. You mentioned, you know, the charter fishermen were a little bit more opposed to adding an additional closed month in the spring, and was there any other consensus about, or interest in, having another closed month from any other groups?

MR. LORENZ: No, and it only comes up as kind of a general conservation thing if we must do something, and you have roe females out there, and wouldn't that be something sensible to do, but, no, I didn't see tremendous amounts of support, or a lot of people beating the table, for reducing it a month. It's just a default if nothing else works.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? All right. Thank you for that, Bob. Now I'm going to turn it over to Allie to start walking us through the document.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I am going to not read this background to you guys verbatim, for the sake of time, and so I'm going to start and kind of just do a quick overview, using this table, and so our most recent assessment was the SEDAR 71, which indicated that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. You guys received the assessment results in June of 2021 and gave us direction to start the amendment at that same time. You were given more information on the rebuilding timeframe in September of 2021, and then you received the overfishing letter from NMFS on June 10, 2021, and so that kind of gives you a lay of the land on where we're at.

As far as the ABC and OFL for this species, if you will remember back to December, there was some discussion about the probability of rebuilding for this species, and we took the possibility of using 60 percent P rebuild back to the SSC in February, and the SSC came back to you guys in March and continuing to recommend the 70 percent P rebuild, with the recruitment from the stock assessment. At the last meeting, you guys did accept the 70 percent P rebuild, and so Table 1 is going to be your OFL and ABC recommendations, unless they are modified, or your decision on that is modified.

In this amendment, we're adjusting catch levels, revising sector allocations, and then considering those other changes to management. Those changes to management, because of the significant reduction in catch levels that we're going to need to accomplish to get from where the fishery has been operating to those new catch levels, and so, for this meeting, we don't need to approve for public hearing. We don't have a draft amendment yet, and so what we're going to need to do is just review the action and alternatives. It would be helpful to select preferreds, where appropriate. However, we don't need to do that, and then just suggest any alterations.

Your timing, there was an error in the version that went to the briefing book. We don't have a draft amendment at this time. You will get a draft amendment in September. We're not there yet with this amendment. Again, in September, you will have a draft amendment, and we'll have you select all the preferreds, and then, at that meeting, we will have you approve for public hearings.

Then a really quick recap of what we did in March, and so, in March, we had scoped this amendment, and so, at the March meeting, you guys reviewed the scoping comments, and also the LE AP's comments on spearfishing enforceability. Like I mentioned, we took that P rebuild back to the SSC, and you guys ended up accepting a 70 percent P rebuild and the recruit relationship from SEDAR 71. For Action 1, the rebuilding schedule -- Actually, before I get into this list, the slide that was referencing those action numbers has changed a little bit, slightly.

I got a little confused, and so I have them labeled here, and they were labeled correctly there, but bear with me as we move through a slightly changed decision document, but, for Action 1, in March, which is that rebuilding schedule, you guys selected Option 3, which was a Tmax of ten years is the preferred. For Action 2, the ABC, ACL, and OY action, you removed the 20 percent buffer, and then you selected the ACL equal to OY equal to ABC as your preferred alternative.

For Action 3, allocations, remember we reviewed that novel allocation that was first discussed in December, and I gave you kind of a shadow shark example, and I went through that in detail. You guys then removed Option 4a, which was that novel method, based on a single year of landings, and then you modified Option 4b and 4c to use a three and a five-year average from 2017 to 2019 and 2015 to 2019.

For Action 4, the commercial management measures, you guys removed Option 3, which was the length and slot limit. For Action 5, the rec management measures, you removed Options 2a, c, and e, which were the one, three, and five-vessel limits, and then you also removed Option 3, which was the size and slot, just for the recreational sector.

Action 6 pertained to restricting or removing spearfishing during the rebuilding plan, and you removed that action altogether, and then Action 7, which was accountability measures, you directed staff to modify the action language to include both the commercial and the recreational sectors.

The purpose and need statement, I've got one small modification since the last time you guys have seen that, and this just incorporates the OFL in the language of the purpose and need, and so your purpose now reads: The purpose of this fishery management plan amendment is to establish a rebuilding plan, set an acceptable biological catch and overfishing limit, sector allocations, and annual catch limits for South Atlantic gag, based on the results of the most recent stock assessment.

The need for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic gag, rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practical, adverse social and economic effects. We will be working on the draft amendment document for the next meeting, and so, if we have any modifications to the purpose and need, I will pause here and see if we can get those incorporated before you see it in the amendment document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything on the purpose and need statement? I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Moving right along, I'm going to jump into Action 1, and we should be able to move through Action 1 pretty quick, and so Action 1 is establish a rebuilding plan for gag. I'm going to go through the purpose of the action for each of these, and we have some time to wordsmith these, but these will help build your rationale for the amendment as we move forward in that process, and so a rebuilding plan must be established to end overfishing and rebuild the stock.

Your alternatives here are Alternative 1, the stock currently does not have a rebuilding plan, and Alternative 2 is T_{min}, which, in September of 2021, you were given clarification that, if F equals zero, the stock would rebuild in seven years, which means, under National Standard 1, you guys are limited to ten years, and so this alternative is that shortest time period, and then your Preferred Alternative 3 is the T_{max} of ten years. Again, the discussion kind of just goes over where we're limited here with National Standard 1. Again, the Snapper Grouper AP discussed this action and did recommend that the recreational sector be defined by a tag or an endorsement, for gag to have a better chance of rebuilding, and, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any changes or modifications needed? All right. I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 2 is revising the total acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for gag. Again, just going over the purpose of the action really quick, the total ACL is being revised to incorporate the new ABC recommendations from the SSC, as well as incorporating the recreational MRIP-FES landings.

Your alternatives on this one, Alternative 1 would retain the current acceptable biological catch, and then Preferred Alternative 2 sets the ACL and the OY equal to ABC. Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 give you a 5 and a 10 percent buffer between the ACL and the ABC, respectively. Table 3 is a summary of each one of those alternatives, and then we have a column here for the recreational landings that were used. Each one of the preferreds, except for Alternative 1, uses that FES landings stream, and then Table 4 shows you your actual ACL in pounds gutted weight.

Figure 2 kind of gives you a snapshot of how the fishery has been operating, and so the blue line is the recreational MRIP-FES, and the commercial is the orange line, and then total landings is the green line. Then, to give you a little bit of perspective, and so Figure 3 is kind of looking back and looking forward at the same time, is how I like to think of it, and so the orange line here is the average total landings, including FES recreational landings, and so I didn't use the old currency here, and so this is the average total landings from 2015 to 2019, and so it gives you an idea of how the fishery has been operating.

Then the blue bars are going to be the updated ACL underneath the preferred that you have currently selected, and so what we're looking at here is essentially the gap between where the fishery has been operating and these updated ACLs, and so, if you look out towards 2028, the ACL is above where the fishery has been operating for the average past five years, and so I will, with that, turn it over. Again, with this action, you have a preferred selected, and we just added Figure 3 to kind of help visualize where we're at with this one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion on this action? All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just, for the record, to make a similar comment that I've made in past meetings, and so I'm fine with the alternatives, and, I mean, the small buffers, essentially, on the ACL, to me, are comparatively small relative to the buffer between the overfishing limit and the ABC, and so, oftentimes, we're concerned about setting the catch limit equivalent to ABC, but, given the OFL is almost twice as large as the ABC here, the risk of overfishing would be lessened.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any more discussion? All right.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The next action is going to take maybe a little bit longer, and so bear with me. We've got a lot of tables to go through, and so Action 3 revises the gag sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and so the purpose of this action is allocations need to be reviewed, since the recreational landings stream has changed to incorporate the new MRIP-FES landings.

Alternative 1 retains the 49/51 percent allocation to the recreational and commercial sector, respectively, and Alternative 2 takes the method that was used to determine the 49/51 split, and I will show you that in a minute, in the summary table, and essentially recalculates it using those MRIP-FES landings. Alternative 3 uses the comp ACL formula, which was typically used for unassessed species, but it has been used for some assessed species, and the main example is red porgy, and it was used for red porgy.

Then Alternative 4 is the novel allocation method that came about in December that I've been calling share the pain and share the gain. You have two sub-alternatives under this, which is essentially the basis year, and so you're picking how you want to base this allocation, whether three years from 2017 to 2019, or five years from 2015 to 2019, and so what this method does --

We have a figure, and I don't want to skip ahead too much, but Figure 4 is a review of the shadow shark example that I went over in March, and so, essentially, what this does is it takes the total landings from whatever basis year you decide and it looks at the difference between those total landings and the catch level in year-one, and so each sector takes a proportional hit in year-one, and then, from year-two throughout the rest of the rebuilding plan, as the catch levels increase, the poundage is split evenly between each sector, and so the allocation changes slightly each year, and it tapers off of the year previous. We'll look at how that kind of plays out in these tables. If anybody wants me to review that method in a little bit more detail, I can as well.

The one thing that I have highlighted here, that we didn't touch on in March, that I want to make sure that we kind of get on the record, is that, because this allocation changes each year for the ten years, I did want to make sure that we specified that the allocation percentage in that last year of the rebuilding plan would remain in place until modified, and so the IPT added that and kind of highlighted it for your attention.

Table 5 is a summary table, and it shows you the basis for the allocation and the percentages, and so I talked about the current allocations are based off of landings distribution from 1999 to 2003, but they're based on CHTS recreational landings, and so Alternative 2, again, would use the same landings distribution from 1999 to 2003, but, instead of the CHTS landings, it would use the MRIP-FES, and then you have that ACL formula, and then Alternative 4, which we'll go into in a little bit more detail here in a minute.

Table 6 shows you your sector ACLs in pounds gutted weight for Alternatives 1 through 3, and so we'll get to Alternatives 4a and b in just a second, but those are going to be your numbers for the first three alternatives, and then Tables 7 and 8 provide you your numbers for the share-the-pain-share-the-gain allocation method, and so Table 7 is that three-year basis, and, if you look at how the allocations change each year, we're pretty similar, by the end of the rebuilding plan, to the current allocations. We end up at a 48/52 commercial and recreational split. You start out, in year-one, with a 39/61 split.

Then, if you're using the five-year average for the share-the-pain-share-the-gain method, you start out at a 49/51, and you end up at 50/50, and so there's a lot less variation in this alternative, and the allocation formula, just to point out the years, and so that allocation formula uses a mean landings from 2006 to 2008 and 1986 to 2008, and so, when considering that option, just think about those years and if those are representative of the fishery.

Again, we have that example, and this is just nice, clean, even numbers, so if we want to follow the numbers in the calculations through, and then these are very similar graphs to what we looked at with the total ACL, but you're looking at all of those allocation options for each sector, and so Figure 5 -- That dashed line is the average commercial landings from 2015 to 2019, and then all of the colored bars are all of the sector, the commercial sector, ACLs for each year. We did it out to 2027, to kind of give you an idea, and so, by 2027, you've got some allocation options getting closer to how the fishery has been operating.

Then, if you look at the same thing for recreational, and so, again, that dashed line is the average recreational landings from 2015 to 2019, and then your colored bars are the rec ACL for each year. For the recreational sector, we do have some sector ACLs that are going to be over, or at, how the

fishery has been operating thus far. We have a preliminary analysis for this, and so there's a lot of information in this table.

The one thing that I wanted to start with is these two columns, the recreational closure date and the commercial closure date -- Currently, the species has an in-season closure for the AM, and so this I like to think of more as a date in which the sector would reach its ACL. However, this is an in-season closure in place, and so, while it might not be specifically on June 28, this would be when you would trigger that AM. However, if you removed the AM, this would just be the time in which the sector would reach their ACL, and so I wouldn't think of this as a hard-and-fast closure, but this gives you an idea of each one of the allocation options.

The one thing you won't see is Alternative 1, and there is a table in your appendix that goes over the season lengths with the total ACLs underneath the current allocation percentages in place, and so Alternative 1 is included in that chart, and I apologize that it's a little confusing, but there is no difference between that for the total ACL, because it's based on the current allocations, and so you can kind of see, for each of the years that we had the analysts look at, and we kind of bookended it again, and we have ten years, and so we didn't want to overload you with years in this chart. However, if we wanted to look at any of the years in between 2023 and 2027, when we end the rebuilding plan, we do have a decision tool, that I will go through at the end, so we can kind of play with these options a little bit as well.

I know that was a lot of information, and I do have a draft motion here, if the committee would like to pick a preferred. It's not required. However, it would be helpful, moving forward, especially with the decision tool. At this point, we could kind of set it and forget it and move on to looking at other things, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. Is there discussion here? Do we want to select a preferred? I really liked the shared pain and shared gain of Alternative 4. I'm wondering which sub-alternative, but what are the committee's thoughts on this? Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: I am kind of leaning towards 4b as a preferred, and I think, if we're going to look at fair and equitable, and I think we're looking at shared pain and shared gain, and I think this is about as fair to the commercial and recreational sector as we're ever going to get, and, in fact, I think, once it's all said and done, we're going to be back to -- Especially in the recreational sector, we'll be above any level that I think they would see a closure for a long, long, long, long time. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris and then Mel.

MR. CONKLIN: I was going to speak on behalf of 4b as favorable, and it also gives the recreational sector one extra percent of allocation at the end of the time series.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are one of you making that in the form of a motion to select the preferred as Sub-Alternative 4b? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes. **I will make that motion.** Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Tim. Do we have a second? Second by Chris. All right. It's under discussion. Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, I was just going down that same road, and so I could have seconded, but that's fine, and I think 4b. I really like the whole of 4, and I think b probably makes sense, for a lot of reasons, and so that was a bit of brilliance there, in terms of working through that, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on this selection of a preferred for Action 3? **Is there any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 4 will modify the commercial management measures for gag, and so we've got some sub-actions, the first being reducing the commercial trip limit, and so the council is considering modifying the commercial trip limit to achieve the reduction in harvest needed to constrain the catch to the updated commercial ACLs. Currently, the commercial trip limit is 1,000 pounds gutted weight, until 75 percent of the commercial ACL is met, which, at that time, it would drop down to 500 pounds.

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would reduce the commercial trip limit to 200, 300, 400, and 500 pounds, respectively, and, currently, you don't have a preferred selected for this action. We've got the summary table there, Table 10, and so we went over the step-down in March, and we looked at how many times that step-down has been triggered, and so, reviewing that really quick, this was put in place in 2014, and it has been triggered one time. However, there has been a total of three years that the commercial ACL has gone above 75 percent.

Looking at the preliminary analysis, a majority of trips harvesting gag landed less than 200 pounds gutted weight, and then 94 percent landed less than 500 pounds gutted weight, and you can see how that breaks down in Figure 7. Then, in Table 12, you have the predicted percent change in landings per trip from the current 1,000-pound trip limit, and so, obviously, the lowest predicted change in landings, going down to the 500 pounds, increasing as the trip limit gets smaller.

Just a recap on the Snapper Grouper AP's feedback, and they talked about the 300 and 400-pound trip limits as the most preferable. There was discussion over a smaller trip limit if spearfishing gear is allowed during the rebuilding plan, noting concerns, again, over those larger males, and the AP noted that the commercial sector would like to see a longer commercial season, versus a larger trip limit, and so, with that, I will turn it over. The committee doesn't need to pick a preferred on this, but, again, when we get to that decision tool, if we do have a preferred for this, we can kind of set it and forget it, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion on modifying the commercial management measures? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just looking at -- The AP said they could go with 300 or 400, but they also said they wanted a longer commercial season, and so --

(There is a gap in the audio recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for working on that, Kelly. So we're working on the decision tool here. We're putting in the options on the decision tool. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, and it is a Mac thing. I was able to see it on a PC thing, and so I find that very discriminatory. No, and I'm just kidding.

MS. IBERLE: My apologies. I will note that, right now, the options that I have in are the current spawning season, no alterations, the share-the-pain-share-the-gain, 4b, and so a five-year basis, and then a 500-pound trip limit, and so, in 2023, we have an ACL overage, or closure. By 2027 though, there is no overage, and then, in 2032, again, no overage, and so, when you come down here, and so the projected closure, meaning the ACL date, would be June 30, and so about a month in, and then, by 2027, we don't see a closure, or the ACL being met, and I haven't prepared -- I prepared a little bit of a roadmap, but not that specific trip limit, I don't believe, but I can play with the ACLs and see what year you first get out of the closure state, if you want. That's what this is for, and so, if we're looking at the commercial ACL, we would put in -- I am just going to go with 2025, and we'll see where that gets us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was there, but I just can't remember, and I know the AP didn't have this decision tool, but I forget if the AP knew what the projected closure dates would be when they made the recommendations for 300 to 400 pounds. They have not? Okay. That helps me figure out whether or not -- Because, to be fair, I think we're all kind of all over the spectrum as well, and there's just a lot to weigh, and that helps me figure out how hefty to weigh what they recommended, when maybe they didn't have all the information we have.

MS. IBERLE: We were still working on this analysis, and we didn't get this until right before the briefing book, and so the AP didn't have this preliminary analysis. Looking here, I just put in the 2026 -- Hold on. That is not the correct one. Let me put in the right one, and we'll see where we get. All right, and so the 2026 commercial ACL, under the allocations alternative, 4b, we're just sneaking under, and we're at negative 1 percent, of exceeding that ACL, and so you're just sneaking under for 2026, and so that would be the first year where you wouldn't exceed the ACL or have a closure, under that suite of options, and so not altering the spawning season and then the 500-pound trip limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. **I think that we've all kind of agreed that maybe for now that we'll pick 300 as a preferred, or not that we'll pick, but we suggest that the council consider 300 as the preferred, but with the intention that hopefully we can get more feedback from the advisory panel when they have the closure information in front of them.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: The decision tool you mean? Yes. Okay, and so I'm going to take that as a motion. All right. It's seconded by Trish. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Chris just had a good idea, because he's not going to talk, but I want him to get credit for it. If there was a way to say, you know, in this timeframe we would be at the 300-pound trip limit, but, in 2026 or 2027, when a higher trip limit would no longer create a closure, we would like to increase the trip limit to 500 pounds or whatever, and is that something we could do within this document?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and I don't see why that wouldn't be possible. We would definitely take it back to the IPT, and I would imagine that the IPT could toss that around and see -- Kind of redo that analysis and see where that kind of gets you, and so I don't foresee a problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Would you like to -- Well, let me go to Monica first, and then we'll come back.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Kerry, you would want to see it in here, rather than at that point, at 2026, I think you said, looking at how everything performs, because you could do a framework to change a trip limit then, too. I am just thinking out loud.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, I would rather do it here, for many reasons, and so, at the very least, I would love to see the IPT look at that within the suite of options now, and, if we find out it's complicated, or there are other reasons we can't do it, I'm not wed to it, but, if we are rebuilding - - That's also part of, you know, sharing some of the gain, is being able to get that trip limit -- Again, we're still managing for the same numbers, but it's just, within an industry, what's the best way we would like to use those numbers to maximize our economic benefits, and so -- And things may be different. Who knows what gas will cost, or diesel will cost, in 2026, and so I would love to at least look at the option to do it here, if that's within the realm of what we're prescribed to do.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay. We'll look into it. It's a different kind of rulemaking, to let the public know that, in X number of years, this is going to change. Maybe that would just be written into the regulation, that, at X time, then the trip limit changes to this, and it's just something to think about. Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then do we write that as direction to staff to look into it? Yes. Okay. I see Kerry suggesting yes, and do you mind capturing that?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so, right now, I have the direction to staff, and so I guess my question would be are we retaining the selection of the preferred of Alternative 3, and then is there is a specific year that you would like to have the IPT to consider for an increase, or do you want the IPT to mull it over? Kind of how specific do you want to get?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I personally would like to give them the latitude to mull it over and see a way that they think it would work the best. I think what we're trying to say is 300 is not an economically-ideal solution for us, but it may be the only solution we have right now, but, if it becomes then -- When we're back in the black, if you will, if that becomes an option, can we have that written in?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have a motion to select Alternative 3 as the preferred for Action 4a. Any more discussion on that motion? **Any objection to that motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Action 4b would modify the commercial spawning season closure. The council is considering modifying the commercial spawning season closure to allow for an

increased opportunity for gag spawning before being harvested. Alternative 1 would retain the current spawning season closure, which is from January 1 through April 30, and Alternative 2 provides you one additional month in the spring, and so you would extend it to May 31, and Alternative 3 would extend one additional month in the winter, and so you would have a closure from December 1 through April 30, and then Alternative 4 would extend an additional month in the winter and an additional month in the spring, and so December 1 through May 31.

We have a little bit of information on the red grouper spawning season extension, and so this was done through Reg Amendment 30, and it extended the spawning season for red grouper off the Carolinas an additional month, noting concerns over spawning aggregations in the month of May, and so, looking at the preliminary analysis and kind of the seasonality of gag commercial landings, we do see a peak in landings right when the season opens. Those kind of gradually decrease and then level out by September through the end of the year.

You heard from Bob that there was discussion of an extension of the spawning season for that additional spring month. However, when we talked about this, when we got to the recreational sector, there was some concerns, as Bob noted, on the recreational sector having access in May, and then, obviously, when you're looking at Figure 8, according to historical landings, it seems to be that May is an important month for the sector as well. Again, we're not required to pick a preferred for this action, and we don't currently have one, and so I will turn it over and let you guys discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What are the thoughts here? I think we heard from the AP that adding one additional month might be okay here. All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Do we have an analysis, or can we get an analysis, now that we've picked a preferred at the 300 pounds, and we're going to go have the IPT look at how that would play out, if we were increasing that, and can we have that information overlaid with whether we didn't change the spawning season or whether we added a month, because, if it's not really going to make any difference whatsoever, I don't see that the purpose of adding another month to the spawning season is.

MS. IBERLE: We can look at that with the decision tool, and so we can modify the spawning season closure with that decision tool, and so, if you're playing with that, if you come up here, this is essentially your months of the year, and, if you have 100 percent here on the bottom, that means 100 percent of that month is closed, and so, essentially, you pick a day of the month to close it, and so what you're seeing right now is the current spawning season closure from January 1 to April 30, and so what we've got locked in here now is your selected preferred for alternatives.

Then I can switch this to your selected preferred for the commercial trip limit, and so, coming down here, we're still looking like we're meeting the ACL in 2023. By 2027, you would not be expected to meet the ACL, and then, when you come down here, you can look at the projected closure date, or, again, the date that you meet that ACL, and so, under those specific scenarios, you would be getting to July 15. Then the ACL that I have in there, and let me confirm the year for you guys, and so this is year 2026, and, by 2026, you are not expected to exceed the ACL, and, if you look down here, again, you have no projected closure date, and so that's kind of that scenario, in a nutshell.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess the question for the commercial council members is -- Tim, I appreciate your comment about, well, if it doesn't really get us any additional days, maybe it's not worth shifting it. It looks like the decision tool would potentially give you some additional days if you moved it from April 30, or May 1, to a June 1 opening, but I would take that with a little bit of a grain of salt, because you're essentially not harvesting those fish that would be available, obviously, when you shift the start date, but is it ideal, from a market standpoint, for the commercial to sell gag over the summer, and, you know, do you benefit from having gag available during the summer months, or is it worth even considering kind of another start time for the fishery?

Then the other comment that I will make is Alternative 3, to me, in the short-term, really wouldn't do anything, and so I wouldn't recommend pursuing that, just because we're going to be closed by December 1 anyway, and so it doesn't gain anything, and so there's only two viable alternatives, if we wanted to switch the season, and it would be Alternatives 2 or 4.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MR. MARHEFKA: Andy, I think it's interesting that you're looking at it that way, because that's definitely -- You know, as a commercial person, that is the way I'm thinking, but, as a biologist, we're looking at spawning season closures and not a closure to make sure we can change when we market our fish, and so I think I was trying to go back, and I'm sure we've had this discussion before, and I might have even asked the question at the last meeting, but forgive me, and I do not remember, but what are we seeing in the literature, as far as the aggregation happening into June? How much protection are we going to get for the actual spawning aggregations, because, in mind, that's why we did this.

Also, I believe that I would -- I know the way the document is laid out, but, in my mind, if we're going to have a spawning season closure for biological reasons, then it's something that we do together, recreationally and commercially, and I am nervous about picking a preferred here without having that fuller discussion, if the reason is for biological reasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree, and so maybe we can have the discussion kind of at the same time here, and I agree with you that I should we pick one for commercial and recreational. I would kind of lean towards May, which is, I think, Alternative 2, and so I will just throw that out there as a thought here. Tom and then Tim.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to reiterate that point, and I think that we have to think about this combined recreational and commercial, if we're going to extend the spawning season closure into May. I will say, anecdotally, in North Carolina, we do see a lot of the bigger fish getting caught in May, when the season opens.

Now, the question for us is is that because of it's on a spawning aggregation, or is that just because we're opening the season and they've just moved into those places where they do in the summer, right, and so I would be interested to see if there's any information on that, but I think we have to think about them together.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tom. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I am not real comfortable with closing -- With changing the spawning season to include May. I mean, we've had that closure in place for a long time for a specific reason. Yes, we looked at red grouper, because red grouper was different, and we had clear evidence that those fish were still full of roe, and we don't see that with the gag. The next problem that I see that is, again, one of those snowball effects, the unintended consequences, is so May is the day where everybody goes fishing, May 1, and that's when everything starts. Everything is back open, you know, all your bottom fish.

Then you're going to run into a situation where the commercial guys are going after the scamps, and we're going after the porgies, and we're going after everything now, but you're going to start discarding gags, and so I think we would run into a lot of problems, and recreational would be the same way. Then you talk about recreational discards, and everything that's caught in May would be thrown away, and so I really think we need to just bite the bullet and keep it at May and get through these first couple of years. After that, it's not going to matter. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would also argue that this is a perfect thing to come when we look at the MSE for snapper grouper, because, you know, if shallow-water grouper is closed for spawning, and it's not all closed at the same time, what sense does it make? It just doesn't make sense to do it piecemeal in here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so are folks suggesting no additional months to this spawning closure for commercial or recreational? All right. I see thumbs-up. Okay. Then that would be selecting no action on both of those. Okay. I guess that would be a motion, and does someone want to make the motion to select no action for Sub-Action 4b and then -- Let me see what the other one is. It's 5b. Chris and then Tim.

MR. CONKLIN: I would like to make a motion to select Alternative 1, no action, in 4b and 5b as the preferred alternative for Action 4b and 5b.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MR. GRINER: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. There's a motion, and it's seconded by Tim. Any more discussion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Since we hadn't really gotten to the recreational component, if we were to extend it to May 31, would that allow the recreational sector to have any more fishing days?

MS. IBERLE: There is a separate decision tool for the recreational sector, and I can go ahead and put those options in now.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I just think we need to see that, before I can make a decision on this.

MS. IBERLE: Do you want me to leave the -- So we do have a little slot here for the vessel limit, and I'm going to leave that at no limit, which is the current bag limit, and so this won't -- We haven't gotten there yet, but I'm just going to leave that as-is. Okay. With that, we are at -- In 2023, we're at July 24, approximately fifty-three days. By 2027, no closure, and, again, in 2032, no closure, and then let me get to your recreational ACLs, and I'm going to go ahead and pick 2026, and so we're still over the ACL in 2026, and so that means that 2027 would be the first year without a closure. Does that make sense? I kind of sped through that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Are there questions about the decision tool? All right. Are there questions about the -- Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just out of curiosity, and I think I know the answer to this, but, if we change the vessel limit to four, I don't think that would have much bearing on that, will it, but just plug that in there, just to see.

MS. IBERLE: With a vessel limit of four fish, that get you to August in 2023, and then you're just over in 2026, and so the sandbox ACL the year 2026, and you're just over, and so, again, these are predicted, and so it could be over or it could be under for 2026. The other thing I wanted to note for responding to the literature on the spawning season is, in Reg Amendment 35, and I hate to bring that back up, but, in the appendix of that amendment, there's a literature review that goes through the spawning season closures for as many of the species in the complex as I could find, and so there is a table for gag that compares the spawning seasons across several publications, and, if I remember correctly, most of them indicated March as peak spawning, and so I did want to note that, and you guys can check that out, if you want.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, just for the record, if we were to go to a four-fish vessel limit, and open on June 1, we would have sixty-one days, as opposed to forty-seven days, and so that would be an increase of fourteen days, two weeks, in year-one, in 2023.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any more discussion of the recreational decision tool? Okay. Can we go back to see that motion one more time? All right, and so the motion is to select Alternative 1. I'm sorry. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Could you say that one more time? I didn't get that.

MR. ROLLER: If our season opened, recreationally, on June 1, and we have the four-fish vessel limit, that would give us sixty-one days, as opposed to -- In 2023, as opposed to forty-seven days, if we opened on May 1, and so would be two more weeks, and so June and all of July, as opposed to May and half of June, and is that right? Am I wrong? What am I saying wrong?

MR. GRINER: I thought that was the -- That change only came about from six fish, or from the current bag limit to reducing to the four. It didn't come about by changing the start date from May to June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was just changing the vessel limit. Okay. Spud. Spud says he's good. All right. Let's go back to this motion on the board. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just to clarify, I was trying to figure out if changing the start date and not the vessel would do anything, but the vessel -- This is really confusing, but changing the start date doesn't really give us many days, correct, and so --

MS. IBERLE: Let me -- This is going to -- What you're about to see is going to be -- This is like a magic show. The current spawning season and a four-fish vessel limit, and so this is not changing the spawning season, and restricting the vessel limit, and you're at fifty-two days. Then, if you're extending that spawning season out to June 1, with a four-fish vessel limit, you're at the sixty-one days.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Okay, but what happens in the next time interval you have? That gap closes, right, or we don't have a closure, or we're close to having a closure, right?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so the sandbox ACL, and that is the recreational ACL for 2026, and you're at 2 percent over. The predicted landings are 2 percent over the rec ACL, and so you're right over, and then, in 2027, you're 15 percent under, and so no expected closure in that year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So, with that scenario, you basically give up a month of non-peak spawning to get one more week of fishing, and that's what I saw, and so you close your season for a month, and you get another week, and so I think I'm going to stick with my motion then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Two weeks, I think. It's two weeks.

MR. GRINER: No, and you only get the two weeks if you do a combination of the changing the spawning season and changing the bag limit, and not one or the other, and so Chris is right that, if you don't do them both, you're really just giving up a month for eight days, or whatever it is, and I think the other thing that's going to be very, very important is, you know, I think that works very well for the private recreational angler, because there are not a lot of five and six guys that can get together on the weekend, and there's a lot of three and four guys going out, and the charter guys, and they're taking out six-packs starting on May 1, they are going to have some explaining to do, if you go down to -- If you change that vessel limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just a comment about the model and projections, and I think a couple of things to keep in mind, and so I like the conversation about, well, what happens if you change the season start date, and it could add more days, or it could subtract days, depending on scenarios, but keep in mind that, obviously, with the fishery being closed January 1 to April 30, that pent-up abundance of gag is then available on May 1, and so, if you move the start date to June 1, well, there's a lot of fish that weren't caught in May that are now available for June, and so the projection model might say you get a week, or more, and that may not actually play out.

We're using kind of historical trends in landings in order to estimate that, and then the same is true, and I want to talk to my team about the longer-term projections, but, you know, it's indicating that we may not meet quotas, or we may have substantially longer seasons down the road, but there's a lot of caveats to that, in terms of catch rates and fishing effort, and so I would say, the closer you are to 2022 and 2023, the more realistic the projection scenarios are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right, and so we're back to the motion, which is basically selecting no action on these two different sub-alternatives as the preferred, and that is the no action for modifying the spawning season for both commercial and recreational. All right. I'm just checking to make sure everybody knows what we're voting on here. **Is there any objection to this motion? I see no objection, and that motion is approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Action 5 will modify the recreational management measures, and so Sub-Action 5a establishes a recreational vessel limit, and so the council is considering a rec vessel limit to achieve the reductions in harvest needed to constrain catch to those updated recreational ACLs.

Alternative 1, no change, would retain the recreational bag limit of one fish per person per day within the three shallow-water grouper aggregate. Currently, that's no more than one grouper may be gag or black grouper, and there is no vessel limit, currently. Alternative 2 would be a two fish per vessel limit, not to exceed -- Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 won't exceed that bag limit. Alternative 3 is a four-fish per vessel per day, again not to exceed the bag limit, and then Alternative 4 is a six-fish per vessel per day, and so Table 14 is just your quick summary. In your discussion section, this bullet is highlighted, and this came up during discussion at the IPT.

Currently, the gag and black grouper bag limit is essentially tied together, for lack of a better words, and it was done this way out of concern for identification between black and gag grouper. We'll come back to that in just a second, because we have a formal IPT recommendation, but, looking at the preliminary analysis, Figure 9 is the distribution of gag harvested between your MRIP and headboat, and so the black bars are private rec, and the white bars are headboat.

Then Table 15 is the predicted percent change in landings, again essentially by MRIP and then headboat, and so, when you're looking at a six-vessel limit, there's not much of a change between -- No change for MRIP, and then a small change for the headboats, and so, in March, you guys asked to look at kind of the effect of a vessel limit on headboats, and this is kind of what we're looking at here. Again, the four-vessel limit is very minimal effect on the private and for-hire for headboat, and then increasing again when you decrease that to a per vessel limit.

I mentioned that gag and black issue, and the IPT does recommend that the council consider how modifying the gag bag limit would affect black grouper, and so, again, that bag limit is kind of tied together within the aggregate, and it was done so because of identification issues. Again, recapping the Snapper Grouper AP, the AP recommended a vessel limit of either four or six fish per vessel. We don't currently have a preferred for this action, but I will turn it over, and, if you guys want me to plug anything into the tool, let me know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm looking for discussion here. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I want to go back, just briefly, to the spawning season closure, just to make sure, and that's for the shallow-water grouper complex and not just gag, right? That's just gag?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's just gag.

MR. WOODWARD: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So what are we thinking that we want to do here? Do you want to see the decision tool again? The AP recommended four or six per vessel. In order to get to no closure, you would have to -- With a six-fish vessel limit, you would have to go all the way to 2028. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Is there any analysis, or data, that can look at what percent of the charter trips land six fish on a charter trip, versus the percentage that only land four?

MS. IBERLE: Figure 9, if you're looking at the white bars -- I am thinking this over and making sure this is answering your question, and so, down here, you have the harvest per vessel, and so you can kind of look at the distribution, over headboats, and so you have the vast majority harvesting one, and then two, three, four, and then, when you get to five through ten, we're not much above zero percent, and that's percentage of trips. Does that answer your question?

MR. GRINER: Well, that's just headboats, and so headboats very rarely catch many gags, and it would just be a tangled mess, but I was thinking more of on the six-pack charter fleet, guys that are taking four or five or six guys out, and they have a six-fish -- Right now, they have a six-fish vessel limit, and so one per person, and I was just curious how many of those trips actually catch the full six fish.

MS. IBERLE: The MRIP category, and correct me if I'm wrong, anybody else, but that's everybody that is not a headboat, and so that's private and charter lumped, and so we would have to pull charter out of that, which I believe is something that's doable, but we would bring that back to the IPT.

MR. GRINER: I was just curious, and I didn't know -- I know we've only been in this charter reporting for a short period of time now, and so that probably won't help us any, but I was just curious, and, even lumped together, we may be able to glean a little bit of something, but I'm not sure, and I just -- Like I said, I don't really know one way or the other, but I just don't want to see any recreational guy that is paying good money to go out and, all of a sudden, he's going to -- They're going to catch four gags, and each one of them is going to reel them halfway up, and so the next guy says, here, you can reel the rest of the way up, and then we'll split the fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just to Tim's point, if you look at Figure 9, even though it doesn't split out charter and private, it doesn't show any trips, during the 2017 through 2019 time period, with six fish or more, under MRIP, and so, in answer to your question, at least under the MRIP data, none of the trips were maxing out with six fish or more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: In looking at that, on the bottom of Figure 9, are we to believe that there is only fifty-four trips that have been sampled to come up with them numbers, and is that what we're saying, between 2017, 2018, and 2019, that there was only fifty-four trips that were sampled recreationally, charter and headboat, and is that what I'm seeing?

MR. STRELCHECK: I saw the same thing and had the same thought and question, and so I don't know if that's a typo, or we need to check that, because that seems awfully low.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That should have an asterisk by it or something to look at, because that's -- I'm sure that South Carolina -- They do a charter/headboat reporting, 100 percent, and, I mean, that seems like a low number.

DR. COLLIER: Those numbers are likely right. Those are about what we see in many of our snapper grouper species, and that's why a lot of them are called rare events, and we're not dealing with huge sample sizes. When you're looking at parsing it out at these different levels, there's a lot of uncertainty associated with them, and so, when we're talking about days of season lengths, you also have to keep that in the back of your mind. It's pretty --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: That strikes me a little curious too, because I assume that's dockside interviews, where the fish were actually observed at the conclusion of a trip, and that just seems, between PR and charter -- That just seems awfully low. I mean, Judy gets dockside interviews at her dock of quite a few, and that just seems a little weird, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, perhaps Mel could help us here a little bit. I mean, they've been gathering this data for a long time, and so maybe he could have his folks look into seeing what kind of numbers they have on their charter trips, as far as how many gags per trip over the range, how many trips are one fish, two fish, three fish, four fish, whatever.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I am actually typing an email right now to my staff, and so, yes, I'm looking into that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Based on what we know about Figure 9, anything we want to do here for a recreational vessel limit for gag? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I guess I just have a question. Do we want this vessel limit to be constrained? I mean, do we really want it to be constraining on harvest, because four and six really doesn't constrain it. Two does, and we didn't analyze three, apparently, and three is kind of like, well, you could split a fish between six people, and at least you could minimize the fighting at the dock over -- I guess you could argue about who gets the front and who gets the back, but, you know, it's -- I just kind of wonder, and, I mean, if we really want this to make a difference, then I guess can you -- You can't put three in the tool, can you? All right. I was just curious.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Spud, I think you're exactly right, and I think that's why it's important to try to look at some of that data there, because, if most of the trips are only four fish anyway, it doesn't really help you to change it, because you can leave it at six and not penalize the few boats that do go out and catch six fish, because you're not hurting anything. The majority of them are back at four anyway, but, if you put it down at four, you're going to penalize the few guys that do go out and have those good days, on rare occasions, where everybody on the boat gets a gag.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, you could go down to one. I mean, gag is not in good shape, and you could do something like what was suggested on commercial and do something more restrictive right now, and then knowing that you want to increase it as the ACL increases, and you could also consider prohibiting a bag for captain and crew, and then just a reminder that, whatever we do here, we probably want to do the same thing for black grouper, because of the identification issues down here in the Keys, and so just a couple of thoughts there. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: All right, and I'm going to just go for it. This is what I had -- When I read through this, this was what I picked, and so we can talk about this for discussion purposes. I was thinking Alternative 2, two fish per vessel, but, with the headboats, let them have one fish per person on the headboat, and so like, I mean, if there were twenty people on a headboat, and they all got a grouper, they can only have twenty.

Then keep the fish maybe gag or black or combined, and that was just kind of my conclusion, reading through this, me, myself, and I, and so I thought four to six fish seemed kind of high, that the AP recommended, and so, I mean, you get a 30 percent decrease, or change, in landings, and I'm looking at my notes here. I guess the majority of the effort is private rec, and so, anyway, that's my thought, thinking out loud, and I'm just throwing it out for discussion purposes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You said Alternative 2, right, Trish? Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Could we see Alternative 2 plugged into the decision tool, and then I will follow-up?

MS. IBERLE: Let me review that from the top, and so we've got the current spawning season, no alternations there, and your five-year basis share-the-pain-share-the-gain allocation, and a two-fish vessel limit. Coming down here, we've got a closure, or exceeding that ACL, in 2023. By 2027, you are no longer exceeding your ACL. I am going to play with the sandbox ACL here really quickly for you, and we start out at 2024, and it's still over.

All right, and so it looks like 2026 would be the first year without a closure, or without exceeding that ACL, but, if you notice, you are just over, and so you're at negative 1 percent, and so, looking at 2023, the projected closure date, you're getting a little bit into July, sixty-nine days, and then, again, in 2026, there's no expected closure.

MR. ROLLER: I have a little bit -- Based off of Figure 9, it's hard for me to swallow dropping to two fish per person, knowing that that's going to be very painful for the charter/for-hire fishery, right? Now, it does buy us some days recreationally, and so I think that's worth discussing, for the greater parts of the industry, but I would be curious to see more of a six-pack analysis there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim and then Dewey and then Spud.

MR. GRINER: Is there any reason why you can't split this bag limit out into private recreational and charter/for-hire, with having separate ones? I mean, I think Tom makes a good point.

DR. COLLIER: I mean, you can definitely parse it out into those two different groups. You do need to consider that that sample size was forty-six, and so now you're splitting that to a smaller and smaller number.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey and then Spud.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering, and this question will probably be for Andy, but, given the year of the for-hire reporting, and it won't be used for maybe stock assessment for a few years, but when we will be able to see analyses that come out of that, even if it won't be used for management purposes or something, but just to give -- I'm sure that there is some compliance assistance getting done, but it's been a year so far, I believe, and it may be some help, in the future, to look at that, the people that are reporting, even though it's self-reporting, just to see what they're showing for some of these other things, but these low sample sizes, and the MRIP process, and I know we're running from MRIP as hard as we can go, or I know at the Mid we are on different things, and so I was just curious about when would that analysis be done for that, for like each state, and, you know, the time of the year or something like that, and no confidentiality, but just a good overview.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I've talked to my team recently about this, and we aren't going to be able to, obviously, provide landings statistics at this stage, given that we're only halfway through year-two of the program, but we think we can bring back some summary statistics and data later this year to the councils, and we can work with John and Carrie Simmons at the Gulf Council to bring back that data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Spud and then Mel.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, sort of thinking along the lines of the commercial trip limits, what about a smaller vessel limit earlier on and then increasing the vessel limit in the future, as the stock rebuilds and abundance increases, assuming everything goes as we hope it goes, and can we analyze that? If you have a two-fish vessel limit in your first two or three years, and, I mean, it's painful, but then you could possibly bounce back to six and not have any deleterious effects after that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what I was thinking, too. We're writing that on the board as direction to the IPT. Also, we could -- Another thing we could do is consider prohibiting retention by captain and crew, but we don't -- I don't know if we can analyze that, about how many are kept by captain and crew. Mel.

MR. BELL: It's just South Carolina, and this is based on our mandatory logbook data, but, I mean, I was thinking we were focusing on the years 2017, 2018, and 2019, maybe, but, in 2017, 2018, and 2019, the average per year, across those three, is really one per trip. We haven't seen -- If you go all the way back to 2008, and we were up close to six, and this was the average for the year, is six per trip, and then, in about 2003, we were over six, but we haven't been more than averaging

out -- Well, even close to two per trip since 2014, and so there's not a lot of gag landed on charter boats in South Carolina per trip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have some direction to staff to consider some lower number for a vessel limit and then increase that later in the rebuilding plan. Judy and then Kerry.

MS. HELMEY: I am good with that, two per day, and then to go up as it changes. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Judy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I was just eavesdropping on your conversation, and the way I was picturing that sort of progression to a higher limit, as least for our sector, was not based on -- At that point, it's not based on some new ABC, or any new benchmark, and it's based on the ones that were already projected that we have now, and, now, obviously, if something came about in the interim, and we find out that things weren't going well, then we would address it, but it's based on the numbers that are already in this document and what we expect them to be, because those are the ones that we're managing to until we get a new one, right, and so I just wanted to make that clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Thank you. All right, and so we're going to go ahead and stop here for today. This evening, we have the Q&A, and that starts at 5:00. If you're not sticking around for the Q&A, then we will pick this back up in the morning at 8:30 in the morning, and so nice job today, but back into the gag amendment in the morning, and we will pick it back up with Action 6, which is revising the gag commercial accountability measures. Thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 14, 2022.)

JUNE 15, 2022

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Key West Marriott Beachside, Key West, Florida, on Wednesday, June 15, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again. We are still in the Snapper Grouper Committee, and we will be continuing with the gag amendment that we left off with yesterday, and so Allie is going to continue walking us through the gag amendment. However, she has a couple of things that she would like to clarify, some items that were left over from yesterday, and so I'm going to turn it over to Allie so that she can talk about those outstanding issues and then take us through the rest of the document.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, first, I want to correct a statement that I made yesterday and an error that's in your decision document, and so, pertaining to Action 5, Sub-Action 5a, in your

alternative language, it has that gag is part of the shallow-water grouper aggregate. This isn't a shallow-water grouper aggregate only, and this is just a grouper aggregate, and it does include tilefish, and so I wanted to get that on the record. We'll get that changed for you and clean up that alternative language.

Running down some stuff from yesterday that I just want to get some clarification on, the recreational vessel limit, I wanted to make sure that we either include black grouper in the alternative language or like specifically note whether or not we're going to do that, and this doesn't necessarily require you to change anything with black grouper, and you would simply be adding it in, and so, if you didn't want to change anything with black grouper, and so say Alternative 2 for the rec vessel limit action would just read to establish the recreational gag vessel limit of two fish per vessel per day and one black grouper per person per day, and so you're essentially just putting the black grouper bag limit in there and not altering it. Do you want me to keep running through these, or do you want to chat about that one first and then come back to the other ones?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to -- Let me try to restate what Allie is saying here, and so we've talked before about the confusion in south Florida between gag and black grouper, and so what she's suggesting doing here is almost like stating the no action for black grouper throughout all of the alternatives there, and so you would have a gag vessel limit, and then whatever the alternative is suggesting for the vessel limit, and then you would just keep restating that the bag limit for black grouper is one per person per day, and so it's just a restatement, kind of, of the no action relative to black grouper, indicating that, when you change the vessel limit for gag, that you're not necessarily changing anything for black grouper, and so I'm just making sure that folks understand, and I see heads nodding yes. Monica has a question.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Not a question, but, Allie, and you're probably going to do this anyway, but then we put in the discussion why we're doing that and the identification issues and all that sort of thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Allie is getting that there in the document.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The next item for clarification is we discussed, yesterday, the possibility of starting lower for both the commercial trip limit and the rec vessel limit and then increasing that as you move through the rebuilding plan, and so we have direction to staff on that, but I want to make sure that we're clear on whether or not you would like the IPT to come back to you guys with an analysis on that increase or whether or not we want additional alternatives for both of those actions to be added to your suite, your current suite, of alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I'm looking over here to Kerry and this side of the table on commercial, and so it seemed like we were suggesting, by a certain year, that we intend to increase the commercial trip limit, and so do we want some alternatives for what we would like to see? Like are we stepping up to 400, or 500, or 600? Do you want to see some alternatives, or do you just want to state one number? We might have to suggest alternatives to step up to. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, let's look at some alternatives going up to, I would say, 1,000.

MS. IBERLE: Do you have a specific date in mind too that you would like to first implement the increase for those alternatives?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think it was the intent that whenever we can, to get it up from, what was it, 300 to 500, and then, if and when this thing supposedly is going to be rebuilt, we would like to be back to where we were harvesting before, up to 1,000 pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: Then the last thing that I wanted to get clarification on, before we start into AMs, and so, for the spawning season, for both the commercial and the recreational action, you guys picked no action as your preferred, and so we don't have a draft amendment for you at this meeting. However, in September, we will have a draft amendment, and I wanted to get clarification on whether or not you guys wanted both Action 4b and 5b included in that draft amendment, and then, at the September meeting, we could have final discussion on that action and then provide the rationale for moving it to Considered but Rejected, that section of the amendment, and so, essentially, like are we carrying this forward, or are we dropping it now?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Since we selected no action on the spawning closure, do we want that to stay in there for one more meeting, since the public would be providing comments on that? I see some heads saying no, to put it in Considered but Rejected now. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I would agree with that, unless there is some compelling reason that we would want public comment that might change our minds, but I don't think so, and so I would say clean it up and move it out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to be clear, what that would mean is it wouldn't go in the amendment at all, because we're still kind of in the early stages, and so it wouldn't be something that we could bring back later, because it wouldn't even be in there, if it comes out at this meeting. If it comes out at the next meeting, then it would be Considered but Rejected. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm fine with that, and my justification for that would be that we're going to be looking at all of this is the MSE, and it doesn't make sense, to me, to look at this as a gag grouper alone issue. I think that this isn't the appropriate time to look at this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Well, that's all I had to make sure that I got clarification on, and so, without further ado, I am going to jump right into Action 6, which will revise the gag commercial accountability measures, and so modifications to the gag commercial accountability measures are being considered to prevent commercial landings from exceeding the commercial ACL and correct for any overages, if they occur.

I have Alternative 2 highlighted, because there's some subtle changes here, but I'm going to use Table 17 to explain this to you guys, because it helps me keep things a little bit more straight, and so Alternative 1, the current AMs that you have in place for gag, and so you have an in-season AM, where, if commercial landings exceed, or are expected to exceed, the ACL, the current commercial season closes, and then you also have a post-season AM that is reliant on three triggers,

the commercial landings exceeding the commercial ACL, the total ACL being exceeded, and the stock status as overfished, and so, if all three of those triggers are present, then the commercial ACL the following year is reduced by the overage.

Alternative 2 would operate similar to black sea bass, and so NMFS would annually announce the commercial fishing season end date, and so we don't have a start date in here, and that's what was highlighted in that alternative, because the start date we would be using -- Now we can actually add in a date here, the end of the spawning season closure, and so that spawning season closure would still be in place, and then NMFS would just announce the end date, and so that would be the bookend for the season.

Alternative 3 removes that in-season trigger and then uncouples the post-season, and so the only thing that is needed to trigger the post-season AM would be the commercial landings exceeding the commercial ACL, and so it would no longer be tied to stock status or the total ACL. Alternative 4 is essentially a hybrid alternative of Alternative 1 and Alternative 3, and so you're retaining the current in-season AM, but you're uncoupling the post-season AM, and so, again, no longer tied to stock status or the total ACL.

Alternative 5 was one that we added in December, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about this, because the IPT kind of discussed the feasibility and found some issues with that, but, essentially, it would remove the in-season AM, and then the post-season AM would be reliant -- Or the trigger would be reliant on the commercial landings exceeding the commercial ACL or the total ACL being exceeded, and so there's an IPT recommendation. The IPT recommends that the council consider the merits of modifying the commercial accountability measures. If the commercial accountability measures are modified, the IPT recommends removing the stock status trigger from the post-season accountability measure only.

Then, like I mentioned with Alternative 5, and so the IPT discussed this one, and we had some concerns about a situation where the total ACL being exceeded and the commercial sector having to pay back from an overage that might not necessarily be a result of the commercial sector, if that makes sense, and so the IPT recommends removing Alternative 5, and it just gets a little bit hairy with the payback on that one, and that's essentially it.

Again, this bullet here just talks about how the Alternative 2 kind of functions like the black sea bass season announcement, and so we don't have a preferred currently for this, and there isn't a necessity to pick one, but I will turn it over to you for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Just to add to that first bullet point, I know the IPT was talking about the need for this action, and I couldn't quite think back to why are we changing -- Or why is the council changing the commercial AM, and I think it's pretty standard to the other ones, where you have an in-season closure and then the payback if the total is exceeded and it's overfished.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. At the very least, I think that we need to remove Alternative 5, and that was the suggestion from the IPT, and so I see heads nodding yes, and so I think we want to remove Alternative 5. We don't have to pick a preferred. Are there thoughts here on this commercial accountability measure? Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: I'm wondering if we need the action at all, because it seems like the commercial AM is working now, with an in-season closure, and so I'm wondering if we just remove this whole action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so staff is suggesting that, if we want to do that, that maybe we have a motion. Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: **I would make a motion to remove Action 6 from Amendment 53**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Jack and seconded by Kerry. Any additional discussion on this? It seems like this accountability measure is working, and we're going to go ahead, and we can't even remember why we put it in the document, but we're going to go ahead and take it out. Any more discussion? **Any objections?** All right. **Seeing none, that's approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. The last action is to revise the recreational accountability measure for gag. You're going to find this table familiar, and it's the same exact table that we just went over, and so, again, the current accountability measures are an in-season. If the recreational landings exceed the rec ACL, the season closes, and you've got those three post-season triggers that all three need to be triggered for there to be a recreational payback. Alternative 2, again, NMFS would announce the end of the season, and the start of the season would be the end of the spawning season closure.

Alternative 3 is no in-season AMs and uncoupling the post-season. Alternative 4 retains the in-season and uncouples the post-season, and then Alternative 5 is that "or" statement, where you've got the recreational landings or the total ACL, and, again, a little bit of a hairy situation with that "or" statement, and so the IPT recommends considering both consistency across other snapper grouper species and the need for an in-season AM for this species.

Recreational AMs are being considered for the following amendments, and so red porgy, and we heard that that's been submitted. That altered, or modified, the AMs, the rec AMs, for red porgy, and then you're going to hear about Amendment 52 shortly for tilefish, and that also modifies the recreational AMs, and then, in addition, the IPT recommends removing Alternative 5. Again, there may be a situation where the ACL is exceeded, and that post-season AM is triggered, and there's a payback from a sector that might not have necessarily contributed to the overage of the ACL, and so a little bit of a hairy situation there. With that, I will turn it over for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion on the recreational AM? We had a similar recommendation from the IPT on Alternative 5, that maybe we should remove Alternative 5 from here, and so, at the very least, we probably need to do that. It looks like we're getting that on the board. Any more discussion? We don't have to pick a preferred today, but we could. Do we want to discuss this recreational accountability measure further? Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: You all have been talking about recreational AMs for a while, and I think Alternative 4 is kind of in line with what you've been talking about, and I know, as was pointed out, red porgy removed the in-season AM, but we shortened the snowy season, after the RA found out that he or she could shorten the season based on the in-season, and so I don't know, and it seems like Alternative 4 is kind of in line with what you've talked about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was thinking something similar. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: These always make my head spin a little bit, and so bear with me. My only concern, and I feel the same way with our sector, is, if it's not tied to the total ACL, then, in theory, that sector could go beyond their sector ACL and not have accountability measures in-season, correct? What I want to avoid is any sector being -- One sector being constrained hard, with a hard cap, and one sector not being constrained, such that, ten years down the road, it ends up being a de facto reallocation for either sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there more discussion? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I think what Kerry is describing is actually what's going on with blueline now, and so I think that's why we were separating -- Taking the "or" out, so it wasn't tied to all three, and I think that was what we were thinking before, right, because, right now, the blueline rec -- Because they're not meeting the total ACL, the blueline recs are continuing to fish without a closure, because, if the stock is not overfished and they're not making the total ACL, except I guess they did last year, maybe, but, for the most part, I think that was the logic behind blueline, and so I think what you're talking about makes sense, and so I think, especially if these stocks do start recovering, and they're not overfished, and then, all of a sudden, you're unconstrained again, and so I think that's the scenario we've been thinking about when we talk about these AMs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To me, it's also partly are we keeping the in-season accountability measure or not, because one alternative is removing it, and one is keeping it, and so I thought part of this was we were trying to get the in-season rec AMs out of there, but just -- We don't have to pick a preferred, but, if people have an idea here -- Just to make this more complicated, Allie is suggesting that maybe, if we wanted to, we could have another alternative that removes the in-season but retains the current post-season, and so is that something that we want to do? Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: I think it's good to retain the in-season in this case. I think the season is still going to be fairly long, and, like Rick said, I think Alternative 4 is probably a good option. **I would make a motion to select Alternative 4 as preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Jack. There is a motion. Do we have a second? Second by Trish. It's under discussion. All right, and so, once again, this particular preferred would keep an in-season accountability measure for gag. Any more discussion here on this motion to select Alternative 4 as the preferred for Action 7? **Any objections?** All right. **That motion is approved.** Can you remind us of the timing, one more time, from yesterday and what will come back in September and all that?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so, in September, we will have a draft amendment included in your briefing book. We'll review some of the amendment summaries, and then we'll ask you guys to pick any remaining preferreds and approve for public hearings, and so we're good for now. Thank you, guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Next up will be the golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, Amendment 52. I'm sorry. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Excuse me, Chair, if I could, but did we finish our discussion regarding the recreational vessel limit? I feel like we kind of cut off in the middle of it yesterday, and did we select a preferred or anything like that?

MS. IBERLE: For the rec vessel limit, I believe we just -- Of course, I just closed the document, and my apologies, but we had direction to staff to consider the increase in vessel limit, and so starting at two fish and moving up to six, and so, with the clarification, we'll come back to you guys with additional alternatives for that action for next time for increasing that vessel limit.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and did we -- Okay, and we didn't do anything like discuss whether that vessel limit applies just for recreational or excludes headboats or anything like that?

MS. IBERLE: I think, when we left off, it was all-encompassing, but that's probably good to get clarification and make sure that I'm clear on that, before we move forward, and so that's a good point. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Also, Tom, if you have particular -- Since we talked about it like we did commercial, where, over time, you could suggest increasing the vessel limit, do you want to suggest alternatives and at what year you would start increasing it, like we did for commercial?

MR. ROLLER: Well, I think it's important that we discuss increasing the vessel limit over time, right, and I think that we need to incorporate that into what the season allows us to do. I think, ideally, it would be nice to get back to where we are today, which is one per person, and it would also be interesting to see if the public has anything to say about what they really want it to be like. This fishery varies a lot from North Carolina to Florida, right, and we discussed the for-hire logbook in South Carolina, and they travel a lot further to catch them, and that's not the case in North Carolina.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what I heard there -- Go ahead, Trish, and then I will try to summarize. It seems like we're suggesting that we want the IPT to look at increases in vessel limit, eventually trying to get back to where we are now, which is one per person, with no vessel limit, and it also seems like we're trying to get input from the public on does this apply across-the-board to private anglers, headboat, and charter boats, that we're looking for some discussion from the public on that. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Absolutely. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish and then Tim.

MS. MURPHEY: I've just got a concern about having headboats included in this, because I was just sort of thinking how headboats -- You know, they've got twenty-plus, or thirty, and I'm not even sure how many people will fish on a headboat, but then to keep them to one gag just seems awfully -- I don't know if "punitive" is right, but I'm just thinking about, you know, folks that they come down just to get on a headboat, because they don't have a private boat, or they can't afford a private charter, and to cut them out, and I would like to see the headboats excluded from that, and maybe just have one per -- I guess it was -- I forget what the other fishery is, but it's just basically one fish per paying customer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me try to interpret that, and I will look over here to Allie, and so can we go to that one action and put some alternatives in there for how this would apply to headboats, and is that how we would do this?

MS. IBERLE: I believe so, and I think -- I'm trying to think if we would separate it out and have an action that would modify the private recreational vessel limit and then an action to modify the charter/headboat vessel limit, and I'm not exactly sure how that would shake out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It seems like it should be in the same one, so that, when you're selecting one, you're selecting how it is applied, basically, and it seems, at this point, we're just talking about headboats, and so maybe this is direction to the IPT to try to add in some alternatives that would allow headboats to be more one per person, and that's what you're suggesting, right, Trish?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. While Allie is doing some typing there, Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure that we're clearly understanding that this is still part of the gag and black aggregate bag limit, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good point. I'm wondering if we can just suggest that that vessel limit that we selected excludes headboats, and that's just a thought, but I know the IPT will figure it out. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I'm a firm believer that it should be for charter and headboats. Anybody that takes the non-boat-owning public out, who are paying, that can't go all the time, and they should be able to -- They should be able to market their trips to whatever number we set, and we heard yesterday that something like 2 percent of the charter trips actually catch more than six gag grouper, or something like that, and so just giving -- We've heard before that just giving the customers the chance to catch that many, and I don't think it's going to be that big of a deal, and it's not like the numbers are going to go way out of proportion or anything, but just the opportunity still needs to be there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would feel that way if gag was in better shape. Right now, I'm okay with the headboat, and I'm a little concerned about the six-pack, but, Tom, have you got some thoughts on that?

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and thank you, Chair. I agree with Chris a little bit. I just think that we need to consider it for the charter industry. I do hear your concern regarding the shape of the fishery, but I would be interested to see what it looked like. I would also point out that one of the parts of this discussion, and I think the AP got to this, is why they said four or six, is because that doesn't really increase your days very much, going from six to four, and so I think the other question we need to be asking is whether the fishing public wants a few more days to have a two-fish bag limit, versus a four, and I think that that's something that we need to articulate to people, to see if they want more days or a bigger limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Great point. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I just want to repeat my mantra, which is all recreational fishermen, no matter what platform they're on, get treated the same, and so, to me, the number of fish per trip, or per boat, is almost non-consequential. As long as you're treating everybody that is fishing the same, I am very happy with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I mean, I think it's fine to explore a variety of alternatives, but I think, given the status of this stock, and adhering to the share-the-pain-share-the-gain philosophy, that, you know, we look at restrictions early on and then, when it's feasible and appropriate and not risky, lift those unnecessary restrictions and go back to what Chris was talking about, and anticipation is a big part of a trip, you know, and being able to say, well, if we do get on them, good, and we can keep these fish, and that's a big part of the psychology of fishing, but I think, right now, early on, we all recognize the need to try to help accelerate this stock's rebuild, and so I think -- You know, get a suite of options, and then we'll debate what's the proper course of action when we get them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That's kind of where I am. Allie, do you think you have enough to craft some options there with the IPT? Okay. Anything else on this gag amendment? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Spud and Chester, for your comments. I do agree with you, but I do think it's important just to see what people want to hear, and I think that, if we -- You know, talking about treating everybody the same, I think that's going to put more importance on people deciding what their want as their vessel limit, and I think that just needs to reiterate that we need to see what those days may look like, two versus four, because that's going to be a big part of the for-hire discussion, or at least I would expect it to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that. Anything else on gag? All right. We're going to get going. Once again, we're in the golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, Amendment 52, and I'm going to turn it over to first Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Good morning, everyone. Today, we're going to be addressing Amendment 52, with regard to catch level adjustments and allocations for golden tilefish and modifications to the recreational management of blueline tilefish. You received a decision document and a draft amendment as part of the briefing package, and those documents were as follow-up from the last council meeting.

We did advance as much as we could. However, a lot of the analysis in it is qualitative, and we did get some additional analysis, which we'll walk through, in the decision document and touch on those and how those affected the actions that are being considered. With that, I will move forward with the decision document, and, as indicated earlier, we are responding to SEDAR 66 and the movement forward with an establishment of the catch level adjustments and additional management measures for golden tilefish, as well as addressing the issue on the exceeding the ACL and the activities relative to the recreational blueline tilefish.

Therefore, the measures included in the amendment are to address the ABC, total ACL, and optimum yield for golden tilefish, to revise the sector allocations for golden, modify the fishing year for golden, and look at that for the hook-and-line and longline sectors, as well as establishing an incidental trip allowance for the longline sector for golden tilefish once the quota is caught, a

modified post-season recreational accountability for golden tilefish, and the management measures for blueline would be looking at a recreational bag limit, a recreational season, and modifying the post-season recreational accountability measures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Bob, do you mind coming up here and giving us the feedback from the Snapper Grouper AP?

MR. LORENZ: Good morning to everyone, and I guess, just as a matter of clarification, or revelation, me personally, this is not a fishery that I personally pursue, and I'm at probably a point in life where I probably not be wealthy enough, and I'm probably no longer young enough to go out, where I live, to go after these things on a sportfishing basis, and so what I will be giving is -- You know, I have no personal knowledge of this, and so, as the Chair, I'm giving what folks on the -- Truly on the AP committee have given as input.

The interesting thing with the AP, with these fish, is there are a lot of folks like myself, that half the AP will be pretty quiet when you speak of these species, yet we do have members, two in particular, that are very enrolled and extremely knowledgeable on this, and they both tend to come from opposite ends of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's area, and we have a gentlemen in the north, who fishes off of Hatteras, which is a lot more -- It's more like -- For our area, when you consider north of -- You know, once you get beyond Palm Beach and all, and, up in North Carolina, that's where we have deep water pretty close to shore, and that particular AP member, first name Andy, he is one who gave us a lot of input on this fish, with respect to recreational fishing, because he actually is running charters, for bluelines in particular, and they're becoming increasingly popular with him up there, and he makes a pretty good living doing that, with the demand that's starting to develop for that up in that area, and so we have an expert up there on the AP, and there's a resource to talk to.

With respect to the recreational fishing limit, he's more in the charter industry, and very good at it, and I do know we have -- As I think I mentioned yesterday, there are people -- You will see on social media, and I see it in southeastern North Carolina, and there are some people that are getting pretty good with the boats, the big boats, the fast boats, and they're able to run out and get these things, fifty or sixty miles, and so, as we speak, going forward, that could be an issue to consider, and none of those people have yet to show up on an AP, and I don't know whether any of them will be giving any comment on this, but, again, that would be for the recreational sector.

When we get to the tilefish at the southern end, and, you know, you're down here from basically whatever, the Fort Lauderdale-Miami area, through the Keys, and we have a very enrolled AP member, Vincent, and he's very knowledgeable on tilefish and golden tilefish, and he's a longliner, and that's what he does. He's an owner-operator, and he owns a number of boats, and along with distributing seafood, and he has submitted, and I know he's submitted, because I've read it, and he has submitted comment on this, and it's very good. It's articulated better than I could ever do up here for him, and so I really suggest that that be read, as far as with an opinion on that end of the fishery down here with the golden tiles.

Where the AP was, and I guess it's stated that the clarification of the catch levels -- You know, when are we going to implement this, and I think there's word out there that the -- Is it the ACL, or the amount of tilefish that people will be able to catch, will be increased a little bit, and so that's where a lot of that concern is coming from.

Here again, there's been -- With this type of fishery, and this is evolving rather quickly over a decade, the past decade, but, a decade ago, there wasn't much thought of tilefish in recreational fishing. If it was done, it was not really on anybody's radar, and I guess, due to social media and that, there apparently is a recreational fishery developing, and I know I've seen it in things like *Sportfishing Magazine*, for the deep fishing and that sort of a thing, where people can get out to the 400 and 600 feet of water, and they have the gear, and they have the equipment, that can find the bottom where these things are on. I am told it's a muddier bottom, in order to get these fish.

There were statements made, and I know we have council members here that I have heard, in years past, state that, that it's important to the market for these fish, this kind of great white meat to be available when the shallow-water grouper season is closed, and that's reiterated strongly within the AP, where I said we have two people that fish for them, but we do have folks that own or are invested in restaurants, and we had a chef on the AP, and they all pretty much concur with that, that a desire for this type of a product to be available when the shallow-water grouper season is closed.

The second one, you hear about the longline endorsement holders benefitting from the January 15 opening, and that has some color to it. That's actually a recommendation, and it was popular, kind of based on a quality of life aspect for the fishermen, that apparently the golden tilefish commercial operation, at least certainly down here in Florida, where it was stated, strongly -- It's almost a derby-type situation. It opens up, and people feel the need to go out and immediately fish, and the quality of life aspect was a thought.

You've got to get some boats ready, and you've got to get some crews together, and you've got to get ready to go, and you are doing all of this between Christmas and New Year's, and this doesn't make for the happiest of families, and so it's strictly based -- There is a limited amount of time they're going to be able to get these, and, if it's going to be kind of a derby, for the time being, push it back a little bit, and that was strictly for social benefits, which is stated down there.

There is a desire to get the season longer, to get it out towards Easter, and maybe we might be rolling towards that. That was for the longline industry, the January 1 start date, and they're basically thinking let the hook-and-line sector -- They can start that January 1, and I guess that's where the thought is, that they'll get a little head start on that. You may want to consider the hook-and-line endorsements in the future, because there seems to be increased participation with that particular gear and method of going for the golden tilefish.

I'm not real up on that, and the -- The consideration of a bycatch allowance, and that would be when the season is closed, and I believe that you can pick a few of these, and I have stated the golden tilefish, and some of that concern was when you were going for the other deepwater species, certain types of grouper species, to have that bycatch allowance.

Then a statement with the -- There was some concern that the longlining issue and bycatch -- They just wanted to make it clear that, whenever in the documents coming from the AP, and you're speaking about bycatch, is the bycatch of the species, or the tilefish, like the golden tilefish, while fishing for other species, and so it's rooted in that. I want to make it completely clear that the longlining effort for golden tilefish, due to where they are, is a pretty clean fishery, without a lot

of bycatch, and they want that point to be noted by the council and to be considered, that there is not a bycatch issue with longlining.

Now we'll get into -- Again, going with the recreational landings, it's, again, something to watch, and it's a new fishery, and so this is new ground, where people are increasing participation, and, again, a comment always comes up like the identification of the fishermen, and so you get into some type of a permitting system and some type of accountability, at least for reporting it, and that constantly comes up, is here's one at the ground level that, as a fishery is developing, and it is developing due to modern technology and the ability to safely go for these fish, due to the distance they are for most of us, and consider going somewhere with these fish right now to watch out and know who is actually fishing for these, because it may be surprising either way, and you may have a couple of very good fishermen that are blasting this all over social media, a few good charter captains, and then, for the most part, there's a lot of people not participating in it, and maybe there aren't that many private recreational fishermen that are able to -- That are doing this on a regular basis.

Again, in blueline, and a lot of this is coming from Andy, that this is abundant in Cape Hatteras in the shallow water, and he said, you know, if there is a conservation means, then, yes, certainly you could eliminate the captain and crew being able to keep their limit. This isn't becoming increasingly important up in that area, in North Carolina, and it may become so in Florida, that are closer to this deeper water, and so, again, something to consider, that there might become a growing interest in a charter fleet for these type of fish, because apparently you can get a very good price for that day's charter for this type of a species, and it's considered fairly exotic by the fishermen. Then we started talking about some maximum limits that they put out there, the three per person, and do you put a limit on the boat or that sort of thing, and that would still be open for discussion.

Then I guess the last thing, about the -- We were asked about an action to consider moving the season to coincide with the snowy grouper recreational season, and, for now, I think the AP is coming with don't modify the blueline tilefish season. Keep it where it is, at least for the recreational component, and it's just important to get more knowledgeable on who is doing it and how many fish are being caught, before moving anywhere else on this for the time being, and if it becomes more evident then, once that information becomes available, and, wow, there's a lot of information, and I kind of covered that, for Alternative 2, and that may be covered by Roger, that, again, recreational landings need to be really monitored, in order to do something of a quality management purpose with the blueline tile, particularly with respect to the recreational fishing sector. All right. Thank you very much, and that concludes what we were talking about and discussing. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Bob. Jessica had to step away for a moment, and so we're just going to go ahead and continue through. Does anybody have any questions for Bob relative to the AP's comments? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: For the talk about a bycatch allowance, what kind of numbers were they talking about for the bycatch allowance from the longline component of the fishery, as far as like a trip limit, I guess?

MR. LORENZ: That may be true, Chris, and I do not remember any specific number being given, but just may they have one, and I guess, if they're fishing for these certain kinds of groupers and pick a few up, and that is a dead fish, if it has to be returned to the water, and they stop that. There's probably a need for them to give some information on just what kind of bycatch is coming about, but it was not stated, and no number was given.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Tom and then Dewey.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chair. Bob, a question for you. Regarding the longline bycatch allowance, was there any discussion of where that quota should come from? I saw you mentioned that it should be deducted from the following year's longline quota, and was there any further discussion on that?

MR. LORENZ: No, I didn't hear that, and it's just as printed was what I heard. As I said, a huge amount of this input is basically coming from one person getting it from everybody else down in this area, and, again, read the comments, and they will be in there, and recall the individual.

DR. BELCHER: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Particular to the longline bycatch, was there any talk about what the logbooks show or what the data analysis would be, or did anybody request that, to show what is presently happening now for that, and, also, you know, as to Tom's question, where would that quota come from? Would it come off a percentage, maybe, of set-aside for the longline category, if that was to happen, but it would be interesting for the logbook data, if there is presently discards, and what they show and the amount and the amount of participants, and like the data analysis for that would probably be very helpful to further this out.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Dewey. I can't offer anything there, as far as -- I did not hear anything, or make any notes, with respect to your comments coming from someone on the AP.

DR. BELCHER: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Carolyn. I just wanted to clarify that there is no -- The bycatch allowance for the longline sector, I guess that's the part that I just want to make sure that people understand. The longline season closes, and these folks are continuing to fish and target deepwater species with hook-and-line, and so that's what we're talking about, and so it's an allowance that would allow these folks to retain golden tilefish, as opposed to throwing it back, because they are longline endorsement holders, and so, therefore, they are no longer fishing with the gear that they've been allowed to fish, and they want to be able to retain those fish, instead of throwing them back, and so one of the suggestions the AP had was to deduct that amount from the following year's longline quota.

DR. BELCHER: Dewey and then Laurilee.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Just a follow-up. If that's the case, then the logbook data would show discards, and so that would be a good thing to look at, because that would show what the need for, or if there is a need for it, going forward.

DR. BELCHER: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: There's like a regional difference in this too, because I'm not sure what they catch, as far as bycatch, up in the Carolinas, but, off of the Cape, they don't catch a whole lot of golden tilefish when they're targeting yellowedge and snowy. They might catch one or two a trip, but, the further south you go, the more golden tilefish are being caught when they're targeting the other deepwater grouper species.

There is a concern that, especially at the 250-pound limit, that so many fish could get caught that it could eat up the allocation for the next year, and that would be done by mostly the boats to the south, and so kind of leaving boats from the Cape out, and the boats from North Carolina out, and so you could run into a situation where some of the boats from the south could knock a big hole into the following year's allocation.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Laurilee. Is there other discussion and comments? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Laurilee. That was a really good perspective on the regional differences, and I just want to reiterate Dewey's point that this is going to necessitate probably looking at that logbook data, to see what it shows, as we look at this going forward.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I can appreciate the regional differences and all, but, you know, I don't really think it's fair that, if someone with a longline endorsement, once the longline season is over, if they want to fish for other things, and keep fishing for what they fish for with their longline endorsement, and then take that away from the quota, from other longliners that don't do that, and I don't think that's fair either. I mean, you can't take quota away from a longliner just because some other longliner wants to continue fishing after his season is over, and so I don't -- You know, I don't know where that goes, but I just don't think that's fair at all.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Are there other comments or questions from the group for Bob? Okay. Thank you, Bob, and, if you want, you can stay upfront until we put it to bed.

MR. LORENZ: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will take you up on that.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Thank you, Bob. Good discussion. We'll get into the actual actions and have, I'm sure, some additional highlights of some of the comments you all have made, and I think there's some discussion of effects, et cetera, that we will touch on. Some quick things that I would like to do, in terms of timing, is, right now, we're going to be reviewing the actions in the amendment, and we've been discussing the AP input, and hopefully the opportunity to select preferred alternatives and the consideration for approval for public hearings, and we discussed having a hearing at the September meeting, and there's a potential to have either one before or after, potentially, as a web, is I think what is in the planning.

What the council has already done, to date, was, at the last meeting, we selected the preferred alternatives for Actions 1 and 2, and we clarified that golden tilefish commercial sector allocations

would stay at the 25 percent hook-and-line and 75 percent longline. We provided guidance on alternatives to modify the start of the fishing year, and we have those laid out in the actions and alternatives as is provided in the decision document, and we clarified that there is no change in the commercial accountability measures.

We clarified inclusion of post-season accountability measures for both recreational golden tilefish as well as recreational blueline tilefish and provided guidance on analysis needs to evaluate blueline recreational limits and seasons, and, as I said, we had some limitations, in being able to get some of this information, and we've incorporated everything we could that's been done so far in this decision document, and we've discussed possibly establishing trip limit step-downs, kind of deferring that potentially to the upcoming planned endorsement holder meeting that will be held later on. That brings us to what we're going to be accomplishing at this meeting. Again, reviewing the modifications, and we're looking at the AP input, and selecting the alternatives and looking for approval.

The first matter of action and discussion is the purpose and need for this amendment. The information that was provided at the last meeting, the original purpose has not changed, and the need was modified, and the strikeout is the original need. The following wording is the revised need, and the purpose is the purpose is to revise the acceptable biological catch, annual optimum yield, total annual catch limit, and sector allocations for golden tilefish, based on the most recent stock assessment. Additionally, the purpose is to consider modification of management measures and accountability measures for golden tilefish and blueline tilefish.

The need, as revised, reads: The need is to base conservation and management measures on the best scientific information available and achieve optimum yield consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standards. Those are the purpose and need, as stated, for this amendment, and I do have a draft motion for consideration.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so are there comments from the group? Tim.

MR. GRINER: I mean, I always struggle with these purpose and need statements, and, I mean, if you really look at that need statement right there, I mean, you could just put that into any amendment we have. I mean, that is what we're here for, and so it just seems to me that every amendment should have its own specific need, and to say something like to base conservation and management measures on the best scientific information available, I mean, that's what we're here for, and that's the need for everything we do, and so I don't know, and I just always struggle with things like that.

I mean, it just seems like, you know, everything we do, that's the need for what we do, and so it just seems, to me, that every purpose and need should be tailored to the exact purpose of an amendment and not just some basic statement of why we're here overall, to administer to the Magnuson Act, and I don't know, and maybe it's just me.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Tim. I'm going to go to Chester and then Myra.

MR. BREWER: I think there's a reason for it, Tim, and that is that you kind of keep it generic, where you don't have to go back and amend it all the time. This is quite generic, and you're right, but I think that that's done purposefully.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Chester. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Tim, thank you for that. We try to encourage you guys to give us much rationale as we walk through the amendment action themselves. As Chester said, the purpose and need statement does need to be pretty general, but we do include, in the documents, an entire section that explains why the council is taking action, and then, as we walk you through this amendment, you will see that we have, and in all the other amendments as well that we're putting together, a little section at the top that says, "purpose of action", and that's what we're trying to basically use to gather your rationale, and everything that comes up in discussion, and so I would encourage you, if you see that our purpose for action section needs to be fleshed out a little more, or if you just want to add some bullets for us to include in your rationale in the amendment, that would be really helpful. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. To that point, another thing I would mention is that we've gotten to where everything is ACL setting, and the new assessments and ACLs are driving the bus, and so you have that new information, and you're setting a new ACL, and then bag limits or size limits or whatever management changes that are coming along, they're coming along, and they're initiated -- The genesis of those is the change in ACL, and so I think that generic approach is based sort of on how we've evolved, and we're following the same kind of process with the same kind of actions.

The main reason I raised my hand, and I wanted to mention this now, and it's going to apply to the other three amendments that we're going to discuss in Snapper Grouper Committee today, but, if you look at the purpose and need that we discussed for Amendment 53 that we went over, it includes overfishing limit in the purpose, and I have commented, I know in the drafts that I've sent back, the internal draft comments to the IPT, that it wouldn't hurt for us to add OFL to the purpose for this, and for those other amendments, and I don't think it has to go in there, but we're doing the same things, and we should take a fairly consistent approach to it, and we need to have some statements in them, and it would be say Action 1 for this, and, anytime we're adopting a new ACL and ABC, we need an affirmative statement that the council would be accepting the OFLs that are associated with those.

Perhaps it takes on more importance when the stock is subject to overfishing, such as gag, and then maybe that's justification for including it sometimes in the purpose and not others, but I just wanted to raise that. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Shep. Are there other comments from the group? Okay. As Roger suggested, we have a draft motion on the board to approve the purpose and revised need, as provided here, and do we have anybody who is willing to make that motion? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: **I make a motion to approve the purpose and revised need.**

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do I have a second for that? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I will second it for discussion, because I have a question. If we add OFL into the purpose, are we allowed to change the OFL? Is the council allowed to change the recommendation of the SSC for the OFL? What would be the reason to add it to the purpose?

DR. BELCHER: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Well, you -- The OFL is specified from the assessment, and we accept that, just like we do other terms, and then the SSC reviews it, but the overfishing determinations in the report to Congress are based on the overfishing limits adopted in the FMP. If it hasn't been adopted in the FMP, it can't serve as the basis for determining whether overfishing has occurred, and that's why you may not have discretion to change that overfishing limit, and it still needs to be formally adopted in the plan, or we don't have any record to show that it's there, and we can use it in the future for making overfishing determinations.

DR. BELCHER: Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: What we've just done is added that into the list under purpose.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so the motion has been seconded. Is there further discussion? Okay. **Seeing none, are there any objections to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, the motion carries forward.** Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving forward, that moves us into the ABC and overfishing level, and the only thing I will just touch on in here is that it does track with the most recent information, and so what it's doing is it's starting with 2023, and so you can see that there is actually an increased OFL as well as an increased ABC, which goes now up to 435,000 pounds in 2023, and that moves us into the proposed actions.

With that, Action 1 is to revise the golden tilefish acceptable biological catch, total annual catch, and optimum yield, and the purpose -- As Myra said, we were including these purposes upfront, and the golden tilefish ACL is being revised to incorporate new ABC recommendations of the SSC, based on SEDAR 66, the stock assessment, as well as update the recreational landings from the Marine Recreational Information Program and Fishing Effort Survey. The council, at the last meeting, selected Preferred Alternative 2, which establishes the list, as you see, with the ABC, as I mentioned, in 2023, of 435,000 pounds gutted weight.

To get an idea of what we're talking about, relative to the past, the commercial hook-and-line and longline sectors averages -- What you're seeing is essentially, on the average, an increase of over 32,000 pounds for the commercial longline, and that actually is the no action alternative, and so it's actually -- The increase is approximately 32,562 pounds, on average, and 12,877 for the commercial hook-and-line, on the average, relative to the difference between the average and the proposed 2023 ACL.

In year-one, you're talking about like 90,000 pounds for the overall initial year-one, and so, moving forward with that action, increases in the catch levels really would not have any expected negative biological impacts, and the preferred Alternative 2 would allow the greatest amount of harvest in alternatives considered based on the SSC's recommendations.

The ACLs would allow for more fish to be landed and can result in increased positive economic effects, if harvest increases, with notable long-term effects on a healthy stock, and what it does is the preferred alternative would allow the highest potential economic benefits. The ACL does not directly affect the AMs, unless AMs are triggered, and resulting in significant direct or indirect social effects, and Preferred Alternative 2 would be the most beneficial for fishermen. As noted before, some of the specific comments relative to -- We have already clarified the timeline, in terms of 2023 as being the baseline for this. With that, I will go back to the committee and discussion on anything, and we do have a preferred, and we do have some initial comments and recommendations, et cetera.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Roger. Are there comments or questions from the group relative to Action 1? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just reiterating the OFL incorporation into this action would be good, and I had one question. I don't know that this is a big deal, but it just seems curious to me, and so the OFL recommendations in the table go down through time, right, and so, each year, the OFL is getting less, but the ABC is increasing. Do we know -- Do we have a specific reason for that? I see Chip shaking his head.

DR. BELCHER: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I will have to get back to you on that, but I know it was discussed at the SSC. They noticed that as well, and I will have to dig into the details of exactly why it was occurring, but it's not an error.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Chip. Okay. Is there further discussion from the group or thoughts on any alternatives, or are we good with the alternatives as provided? I know we have a preferred, but is there any other conversation about the other alternatives? Okay. Roger, I guess it's back to you for Action 2.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving forward, Action 2 is to revise allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish, and the purpose of the action is that allocations need to be reviewed, since the recreational landings stream changed in the new assessment. Recreational landings are now estimated using data from the Fishing Effort Survey, rather than the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, and the council, at the last meeting, selected Preferred Alternative 2, which would allocate 96.7 percent of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish to the commercial sector and 3.3 percent of the revised total annual catch limit for the golden tilefish to the recreational sector. With the commercial sector 25 percent is allocated to the hook-and-line and 75 percent to the longline sector.

What that does, in 2023, is you have a total allowable catch for the commercial fishery of 420,645 pounds, and the hook-and-line, at 25 percent, is 105,161 pounds, and the longline is 315,484 pounds, and the recreational ACL goes up to 3,240 fish.

As noted before, the significant jump from the original commercial ACL now is 331,740 pounds, and so it's about a 90,000 increase, and the present ACL for the recreational fishery is 2,316 fish, and so you're seeing increases on both sectors. As noted before, Amendment 18 established a 25 and 75 percent allocation between hook-and-line and longline, and those are retained, and the way

we came up with those allocations applied the same methodology, but used the present recreational estimates to be able to come up with the percentage allocations.

The biological effects are not really expected to be different between the different alternatives, and, when it comes down to the economic and social effects, really what you're talking about is that variation between say the 97 percent commercial and 96.7, and then the 3.3 versus the 3, and so the positive side is going to be an increase, and the commercial sector would have an increase, or it would stay at the present one. As you move to this, there's a slight decrease in the commercial, and a slight increase for the recreational, and so that is what is captured with really the impacts on the effects for both social and economic impacts.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Are there comments? I had one suggestion, just because, as I'm looking between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, I know the difference is because of the Coastal Household Telephone Survey and the FES, but, if you don't look to the top, that's not readily accessible, and they look almost identical, with exception of the numbers, and so, even if there's some just indication that it's FES versus CHTS, I think would be helpful. Are there other comments or questions or discussion from the group? We have a preferred here, and I'm assuming we have no suggested changes, since we're basically just changing our currency. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: One thing we had noted here is if you wouldn't mind providing a little bit more rationale for why you are adopting the preferred alternative for allocations, just so we can flesh out that rationale in the document.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so I'm depending on you all to help with that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do I have to? Is there a better one?

DR. BELCHER: Shep, will that pass the sniff test?

MR. GRIMES: More is better.

DR. BELCHER: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Would the rationale just be because we're going from the Household to the FES, and would that be the rationale?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and, primarily, that's the biggest change that we see.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Does anybody else have any additional thought or want to add more to that, or do you think it's sufficient? Shep, is that sufficient enough?

MR. GRIMES: I guess so. Again, more discussion, and, again, that's pretty bare bones, but, if that's what you have, then that's what you have.

DR. BELCHER: All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, could you add in something about, relative to the change in currencies, that there was not that big of a difference between the two, and, that way -- That's why we kept it so close and didn't make very much of a change.

DR. BELCHER: Do other folks have comments to that? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't typically weigh-in on allocation decisions, but I think the rationale here is what has been mentioned, right, and we have a historical method for setting allocation, and the data has been updated for the recreational sector. Based on those updates, and using the same formula that has been used to set past allocations, the allocation is slightly revised. The harvest is still dominated by the commercial fishery, and the council, at this point, appears to not see a need to shift the allocation more substantially from the commercial sector to the recreational sector, and that's kind of borne out with also the revised recreational landings statistics.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for that, Andy. Trish, did you -- Okay. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Well, one other suggestion I have, and I've mentioned this in the past, relative to allocation, is that allocation is really intended to be justified, at least in part, by accomplishing the objectives of the fishery management plan, and so I suggest that we look perhaps at -- I don't know where to find the current, most recent objectives adopted in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and look at those and see which ones of those might be relevant to the allocation and then incorporate some of that into our rationale, and I recommend that we do that across-the-board, going forward. If we have allocation actions in the amendment, that we try to incorporate the objectives into that, as we frequently will have a statement at the end that we think this allocation best meets the goals and objectives of the FMP, but we never have that substantive discussion of exactly which goals and objectives those might be. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Shep. Dewey and then Laurilee.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you scroll down just a little bit? I need to see the top of Preferred Alternative 2, and I'm reading this table here that says the recreational annual catch limit, in numbers of fish, is based on 4.4 pounds a fish used in Regulatory Amendment 28 in 2012, and so, when I read that, am I supposed to believe that the average size for this conversion for this fish count is 4.4 pounds a fish, and that's from 2012, and so, when you do the math, it's like the recreational limit, just say for 2026, because I couldn't see it, would only be like 13,000 pounds. I don't see many four-pound fish in all the social media posts and fish stories or fish online and different things, and I don't see many 4.4-pound fish.

Basically, they've got a number of fish, and so the annual catch limit just say is 13,000 or 14,000 pounds, and, if you do the amount of fish that you see, something ain't adding up here, and I was wondering if somebody could clarify that, because there's no way this 4.4 pounds a fish -- That's a small, really small, fish, and I would like to hear some more on that, before we go forward, if possible.

DR. BELCHER: Clay or Andy, is that something you all can speak to? I know that this says that it was used in Regulatory Amendment 28, which is 2012, but I know that there's been two sources for the average pounds, and there is the one that is MRIP, with the fish that are actually intercepted

through the APAIS survey, that are fish that the creel interviewers have come up with, and then I know that there's something that you all do through the Southeast Center, and is that correct?

DR. PORCH: Ultimately, we're using that information, the information we get from the anglers, and so the things we do are more when you're missing information for a particular strata, and then what decisions do you make, or if you only had one or two observations, and so I think what we do is consistent with using the data from the intercepts.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Maybe, in the future, the note would reflect all that other stuff, because it's clearly not reflected here, and, if you will scroll back down, so we can see the full table there, if you put -- If you were to take and put the 4.43 pounds a fish into these numbers, it's only like 12,000 or 13,000, or 12,000 to 14,000, pounds of fish, and clearly what's being caught, the size of the fish, is not representative of this table, or this conversion factor here, of what we see in 2022.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I would just like to pile onto what Dewey is saying there, and, I mean, this is glaringly obvious that this is wrong. I mean, it's just -- I understand intercepts, and I understand where the data comes from, but it's obviously not correct.

DR. BELCHER: Chip, did you -- I just saw him walking in this direction, and so I guess that's -- I am looking to Roger and Myra to kind of help us with this. Chester.

MR. BREWER: My thought is be careful what you ask for, because if, historically, the recreational sector has been catching a lot more fish than what we're showing here, then we need to take a look at that 3.3 versus 97 percent allocation ratio, because we're hearing that, number one, this is a -- Recreationally, at least, this is a growing fishery, and there are more and more people that are going out and doing it, as technology progresses, and so, if the number is glaringly wrong, then we need to see what has actually been caught over the past few years, to see whether or not the allocation is set at the right place.

DR. BELCHER: Tim.

MR. GRINER: To that point, I think that's more and more reason to have some real accountability measures for the recreational sector. I mean, everybody else is constrained, and so I don't know that there truly is a lot of data out there to say that the recreational effort is increasing on blue-line tile, other than from the charter industry. I mean, maybe, or maybe not. It's a fish that only lives in a few places, and it's not everywhere, and most recreational anglers have no idea how to go find a blue-line tile. Charter guys do, or golden tile, and so I don't know. I just think that, if we're going to talk about anything, we need to talk about accountability measures. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Tim. Other commentary? Roger. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I just had a request, because, you know, I think Shep's suggestion that we look at the FMPs when we're trying to craft our rationale, and it would be helpful if staff could include the FMPs in the files for us, so that we don't have to try to find them. You know, if was included in the briefing book for the meetings. That way, we would have it at our fingertips. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Laurilee. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just note, right, that, I mean, the way we do it, the FMP is like the original FMP, and, at this point, fifty-some amendments to it, right, and so it isn't like it exists in some document that you can pull off the shelf and easily have at your disposal. I think the last time the goals and objectives would have been changed, then it would be specified in that FMP, and staff could go pull those goals and objectives, or make those available, or some specific portion of the FMP, say, you know, whatever the existing approved MSY is for something, and have that available for each instance, but just having the FMP available at your disposal is -- I mean, it would be everything they've ever done for snapper grouper, and it would be unwieldy.

MS. THOMPSON: So could the applicable language from the existing FMP be added to the decision document, so that we have something to look at? Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: I think that's a question for staff, for sure. Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: I think that discussion earlier on, about including the objectives and how those track, I think that's kind of some of that, at least, what you're getting to, versus like the whole document, because, as Shep said, that's the iterations of a lot of things, and then a lot of the older ones are actually not relevant, or have old information that is not appropriate anymore, and so, to capture at least say the objectives, or key components, that are tied to the different actions, I think that's going to be something that we can make sure we add in as we move these forward.

DR. BELCHER: I will ask one question that maybe would help, and can staff talk to why the average poundage per fish was from the 2012 amendment, as opposed to looking at more current streams under MRIP, and maybe that would help some of that.

MS. BROUWER: That's what we're trying to determine right now, and so I'm not sure if the average weight that was used in Reg Amendment 28 is the same average weight that was utilized in the assessment, and so we're double-checking, to see what the latest assessment used, because that clearly is the most recent information, and it should be used for the conversion, and so we're checking on that.

DR. BELCHER: Why don't we go ahead, and we'll park on this for now, until staff can answer that question, and we'll just move forward to the next action item.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That moves us on to Action 3, which is to modify the fishing year for the commercial golden tile hook-and-line and longline sectors, and, in response to the council's discussion last time, what we created was a set of alternatives that address the various timeframes. The purpose of the action now is the council is responding to industry requests to vary the fishing year for the commercial golden tilefish sectors, which would avoid oversupplying the market and allow commercial longline vessels to remain fishing for golden tilefish during Lent, when prices tend to be relatively high.

What you're seeing is alternatives that have January 15, January 22, and February 1 as sub-alternatives for the commercial hook-and-line, as well as the commercial longline component, and,

after we had some of the information already completed, we did get some preliminary analysis to support discussions here. However, what the preliminary analysis used for the recent commercial landings data to predict future landings to compare to the proposed catch levels -- The key though is the data are limited, due to numerous closures, due to the ACL being met in-season, and so the reality is, for, say the hook-and-line, or the longline component, the analysis predicts the adjusted commercial longline ACL would not be met before February 28, and that's basically because we do not have data that can be extrapolated and expand beyond that point.

In addition, if you look at the hook-and-line sector, you're kind of in the same situation, and, ultimately, what that does show, while we have the information that provides those streams, the analysis shows that no closure is expected, under any of the proposed ACLs, before June 30, and so it's kind of the same situation, in terms of not having the data to be able to track out beyond that point in time.

With that, regardless of the alternative, the action is not anticipated to have any negative biological impacts to the golden tilefish fishery. The alternatives, in this case Sub-Alternative c, would have the highest economic -- Because, essentially, what you're looking at is the timeframe. The closer to Lent that you would be, you would assume that that would have the highest benefits to the industry for the longline sector, and, for the hook-and-line, it's kind of the other way around, and it's kind of a reverse for that, but primarily for the longline sector, and the social effects -- I think a number of those have been highlighted, about the opportunities to be able to, you know, be there for the holiday season for the longline sector, and also the ability to have the resources at the highest time, during Lent season, with expanding to that area.

In addition, it would allow the hook-and-line sector to be able to start early, in advance, and be able to get, as indicated early on, a little bit of an advance to moving forward, and those were kind of tied directly into some of the AP recommendations. Ultimately, the AP, given all those different aspects, recommended that the commercial longline sector open on January 15, and so they only focused on the commercial longline sector, modifying that sector, and moving it so that it could get closer, ultimately, to the Lent season, but allowing -- Taking basically no action on the hook-and-line and retaining the January 1 date for hook-and-line.

They did also make a couple of additional motions relative to the endorsement holders meeting and trying to advance the discussions, and Bob had touched on those, to advance the discussions on the incidental catch, as well as, you know, potentially an endorsement and how to better manage the overall fishery. With that, I will open up discussion on the season.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Roger. Are there questions for Roger, or for Bob, on that matter, since there's a couple of motions there that came forward from the AP? Is there discussion? Where do folks want to go with this? Do we have a preferred that we would like to consider? Are the alternatives an acceptable range? Are there things that we're not thinking about, or do you have other solutions or offered suggestions to add to the list or subtract from the list? Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Just a clarification, or not a clarification, but a point, is that Sub-Alternative 3a is essentially what was recommended by the advisory panel, which would be a start date for the longline fishery of January 15.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you for that. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure, and so the AP, and I've heard some other racket about the endorsement holders wanted to get together and have a meeting, and I believe we discussed, at the last meeting, that we would reach out to those folks and bring them together, so they could gather their thoughts, and has there been any headway made on that, and, if so, please enlighten us.

MS. BROUWER: It is on our list of meetings to plan, and I guess I'm not quite sure about exactly -- It might be something in the fall, or in the summer, but we have not yet reached out to the endorsement holders to figure out the best time to bring them together, but it is being planned for this year.

DR. BELCHER: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Just a refresher on the timeline for this amendment.

MS. BROUWER: This amendment is going to be considered for public hearings at this meeting, and public hearings would happen around September or October, so that, in December, you guys can consider it for final approval.

MR. CONKLIN: The sense of urgency was to get the new quota in place before the January 1, or whatever becomes the opening for next year, and is that right?

MS. BROUWER: Ideally, but, you know, if the council approves this amendment in December, you know, the regulation isn't going to be effective, obviously, on January 1, and so that was one of the things that the advisory panel discussed, and, you know, why we really would like to get this done as soon as possible, to allow those catch levels to go up for those guys.

MR. CONKLIN: With that, I would try to keep this thing moving along as well, and I don't want to add any more options to this alternative. If we take one away, would that keep us in the realm of, what is it, NEPA, or is it too much extra work, or anything like that, for staff, or is it fine how it is?

MS. BROUWER: I think it's fine how it is. We just need to --

MR. CONKLIN: Pick a preferred.

MS. BROUWER: You know, zero-in on a preferred, and, if you guys don't want to consider changing the start of the fishing year for the hook-and-line sector, simply you would just select Alternative 3, Sub-Alternative 3a.

DR. BELCHER: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I would make a motion that we select Sub-Alternative 3a for the commercial longline component and Alternative 1, no action, for the commercial hook-and-line component.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. It's seconded by Kerry. Is there further discussion on that from the group? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So we've had a lot of discussion about this topic, not on this topic, and, basically, it's looking like the longline fishermen are wanting to get a little closer into the Lent, later into Lent, and closer to Easter, to keep the market supplied when the prices are higher. That's really the only thing I've heard.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks for that, Chris. Others?

MS. THOMPSON: If we -- In talking to the fishermen from the Port, like from Port Canaveral, we literally have two fish that we can fish for, golden tilefish and red snapper, and, if we delay the start date any later than January 15, that's going to put a real hardship on our sector, because they don't have anything to fish for, nothing, and so they're okay, and they like the start date of January 15, but they don't want to go any further into the year.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Thank you for that, Laurilee. Okay, and so, again, is there other discussion on this? Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think Laurilee makes a great point there. I mean, going back to the purpose and need, I mean, it was to allow them to have a Christmas and New Year's with their family, and so I really don't -- I couldn't imagine going past January 15, and I think that solves what the issue was, and it allows them to get back to fishing, and so I agree with Laurilee that that seems to be a good date, to me.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so the motion -- **We've already gone through, and we've got the motions on that, and so does anybody object to the motion?** Okay. **Seeing no objection, the motion will carry.** Now Action 4.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving forward, Action 4 is to establish an incidental trip allowance for the golden tile longline sector once the longline quota is caught, and this would be to allow retention of golden tilefish caught incidentally while on trips fishing for other snapper grouper species, to reduce potential golden tilefish discards, and you have a suite of alternatives, from no action to 100, 150, and 200-pound limits, and, at least in the initial discussion, the incidental allowance would be subtracted from the annual allowance to the hook-and-line sector component. If adopted, the allowance would only be available once the longline component was closed, and only until the allocation of the hook-and-line component was available.

Following up on that, regardless of the alternative selected, the action is not anticipated to have any negative biological impacts, and all of the alternatives are likely to result in the commercial ACL being landed, and, given the harvest levels, Alternative 4 would provide the highest potential economic benefits, followed by Alternative 3 and down to no action. Allowing incidental harvest via hook-and-line, the alternatives would increase access for vessels, and the golden tilefish longline endorsement is anticipated to result in direct social benefits to the longline fishery, and, as noted though, the potential is that, if you have an incidental allowance, depending on how much is actually harvested, if there is an increase, you could potentially have conflict, as well as potentially a real issue if you actually close the allocation early because of the allowance.

It was highlighted in some of the specific comments, and, during the AP meeting, we did have a number of hook-and-line individuals that were sending in comments to the members that were

concerned and were recommending not to include this, because of the concern specifically about the opportunities for a potential for a closure, or interaction with them fishing. However, you have the flipside, with the longline fishermen wanting to address this issue of bycatch and being able to land those fish, especially dead, with existing fishing operations.

As noted earlier on, the AP also, again, recommended the longline endorsement holders get together to address overall different issues, including the catch issues, into the future, and, with that, that's the actions and discussion specific to this action.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Roger, and so is there discussion from the group? I know we talked a little bit about this earlier on, but let's continue on that. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would not be in favor of this until there has been some analysis from the data logbooks, or the discards, of the reason needed for this, besides AP discussion. Also, look at the regional differences that we have already between North Carolina and Florida, where the season -- We only have the hook-and-line golden tile fishery, and the golden tile fishery quota gets caught up really before --

Until after the sharks get away from us in June, and so we have very limited access to fish for golden tilefish, but I think there needs to be analysis done to see what the bycatch -- What the data shows, what the logbook show, of the reason, or the need, for this, and that would flesh out just how much of this is needed, the number of participants that are reporting the discards that show the need for it, and so that's something that should be done. I would have thought that the AP, in their discussion, would have requested that, you know, because that's the first thing that you've got to look at, is the data that's present. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Is there other conversation from folks at the table? Chris and then Tom.

MR. CONKLIN: With this, I have a little bit of heartburn with the fish coming off of the hook-and-line quota, and I would like to see an option with like some sort of a set-aside, or a buffer, that would come off of the longline quota and allow these guys to fish at a very small rate for the bycatch, and then, also, I had a question, and I know that, when a commercial fishery is closed, if a commercial fishing vessel crewman has a recreational license, he can keep a recreational bag limit, and not sell it, and so would the longline endorsement holders, if they were bandit fishing for snowy grouper and caught a golden tilefish, would they be allowed to keep their one golden tile, and up to three per vessel, under the recreational bag limit, even though the hook-and-line sector is still operating?

DR. BELCHER: Any thoughts on that? I'm sure it's something we could --

MR. CONKLIN: Which essentially would create a bycatch allowance of one fish per person, and three per boat, and that was my rationale.

DR. BELCHER: I've got Tom, Andy, Kerry, and then Laurilee.

MR. ROLLER: I guess I'm going to ask for a point of clarification. If we're going to allow the recreational limit, where would you want that fish to come from? Would that be the recreational quota or from the longline quota? Can we get some clarification?

DR. BELCHER: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, that's interesting to -- I mean, pretty much with all the fish, right, and, as long as you have your -- At least in South Carolina, and I don't know if there are any states that do it different, but, in South Carolina, if the captain and crew have their saltwater recreational license, and the commercial season is closed, they can keep their bag limit, personal bag limit, and take it home and eat it. They, obviously, cannot sell it.

I have never known, in my time, someone getting like intercepted by, you know, I guess MRIP, or whoever, the recreational port samplers, as far as that fish being counted anyway, and so I have no idea what happens to that fish. It's not a tremendous amount, I can tell you, and there's only so much that we, as a family, and fish that we can eat, but sometimes we do take it home.

I love triggerfish, and so, when triggerfish is closed, if there's one triggerfish that Mark brings home for me to eat, we'll keep that, and so it's not a lot, but I don't know that we've ever talked about sort of what happens to that fish, but, you know, I think it's a good point right now, when we're talking about this set-aside, or whatever you want to call it, and I don't want it to come off commercial hook-and-line, and so I get why they wouldn't want it to come off of recreational, and so I don't know what we do with that to make the point that, if we, you know, have a little bit of the quota set aside for the longline to then go hook-and-line fish, what happens to the guys that don't do that, and they're penalized.

I think we're really in a quandary, because the downside of -- The biological downside of it is there's dead fish getting thrown back, which no one wants, and so I don't know how we get out of that. I love Chris's idea, but I just don't know what we do with those numbers of fish.

DR. BELCHER: I have -- To that point, Chris, and then I've got Andy, Laurilee, and then Tim.

MR. CONKLIN: If we take this action out of the amendment, we could bring it up after the meeting of the endorsement holders?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and it could be brought up -- I mean, this could be something that could be addressed in a subsequent amendment or however. I mean, if it's -- Again, it just depends on how you want to deal with it now.

MR. CONKLIN: I would like to make a motion to table this until -- Just this action, or remove it from the amendment, whatever you need to do, all you smart people, and bring it back up at a later time.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I've got a second from Laurilee, and so we'll continue discussion, and, like I said, I will pick up the queue, and so I have Andy, Laurilee, and then back to Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have similar concerns as to what have been stated. I mean, this I would view as kind of a reallocation amongst the sectors, if we authorize some trip limit allowance for longline endorsement holders to then harvest and land, you know, the trip limit with the hook-and-line gear. To me, if we went with an alternative like this, I think you would want to then carve out a portion of the longline quota that would go directly for this allowance, or shift some of the

allocation from the longline sector to the hook-and-line sector, to accommodate additional longline endorsement holder harvest.

I think it gets complicated, and we have to have ways of, obviously, tracking the landings by gear type, and so, at this point, I'm comfortable with pulling it out of the document and maybe giving some more discussion and thought as to how it would work, and I like the idea, in principle, because it reduces bycatch, right, and that should be a good, strong goal of ours, given the discussions about discards.

DR. BELCHER: Thanks, Andy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with all of that. My only concern is, for me, it's bigger than just the longline endorsement holders to talk about, because it affects the people hook-and-line fishing, and so how do we ensure that everyone is heard? Of course the longline endorsement holders are going to, for the most part, I would think be supportive of this, but we need to make sure that we hear from the other people that would be affected, and so I'm just not quite sure, unless we do it, the rest of that, through our normal process with the advisory panel and public comment, which is fine too.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and I guess some of it has to do also with the way that they address it. If it gets addressed as being something that's dealt with within the longline allocation, such as they did have discussions, but didn't have specific recommendations, other than potentially removing it from the following year, or even having a like 90 percent and potentially 10 percent, but there was no really kind of full recommendation. If they did that within their own sector, then that may address some of the concern, because then it wouldn't necessarily be impacting the hook-and-line sector. However, if the recommendations went beyond that, then we would have to make sure that the hook-and-line sector did get representation and discussion about what the implications would be for that sector.

DR. BELCHER: So is there further discussion? Okay. **The motion that has been approved is to remove Action 4 from Amendment 52 to consider at a later time. Is anyone opposed to that action?** Okay. **Seeing no opposition, that motion will carry.** Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Moving on to Action 5, it's to modify the post-season recreational accountability measures for golden tilefish, and the purpose of this action is the modifications to recreational accountability measures for golden tilefish are being considered to prevent recreational landings from exceeding the ACL and correcting for the overages, if they occur.

What we do is have the tables, simplified tables, that basically lay out the three alternatives, the one that is the present, where you have to have the triggers, including that the ACL is exceeded, the recreational ACL is exceeded, the golden tilefish is overfished, and the total ACL is exceeded, and then you move to Alternative 2, which really limits it to just the recreational ACL is exceeded, so that you can have the trigger. Alternative 3 provides the ability to -- That National Marine Fisheries Service would, as they do with other species, would basically announce the start and closures of the fishery.

However, as noted, I think there may be implications with regard to that, and it may be difficult, due to the limited recreational landings, and it's more of a rare-event species, and so being able to

project the landings is probably not likely in very accurate monthly landings, but, given those, the biological benefits would be expected to be greater for the alternatives that provide the most timely and realistic options to choose to trigger and implement in the AM, and the biological benefits would be greatest with Alternative 3, followed by 2 and then no action, but that's given the ability to actually track the fishery.

From an economic standpoint, the alternatives could result, say the no action, in short-term economic benefits to the recreational sector, due to increased harvest and long-term potential economic costs for fishery participants. Now, this -- As you move forward with these different ones, Alternative 2 would likely be similar, but the AM would occur regardless of the stock status and has a higher likelihood of occurring, and so, essentially, what this comes down to is some of the economic impacts are really tied to the likelihood that you are going to trigger the AMs and what would be the response relative to that, as well as the social AMs could have direct and indirect social effects, because, when triggered, they are going to restrict harvest in the current season, or the subsequent season, and so, again, those are tied to if the actual AMs ultimately are triggered. With that, that's the action, and we can have discussion relative to what the council would like to do as a preferred.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Is there conversation? Go ahead.

MR. PUGLIESE: One last quick comment is the AP did recommend Alternative 2 as preferred.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So, Roger, I have a question, because I -- In Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, there is a consequence if the ACL is exceeded, but, in Alternative 3, is there an expectation that the ACL would not be exceeded, and, therefore, there is no punishment, or reparation, if it is exceeded, by NMFS setting the start and end date of the season, and what is the difference? In Alternative 3, why is there no payback?

MR. PUGLIESE: I may bounce it to Andy on this one, but I think what you're trying to do there is you would establish the season, and then, if you did have some change, you would have the ability to -- In the subsequent year, you establish the season, and that would be taken into account, and, if I'm mistaken, if you could clarify that, Andy, what the intent of that type of provision is.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, mechanically, given we have very low ACLs for recreational tilefish, and there's a lot of variability in the landings estimates, and so Alternative 2 would essentially be more of like a payback provision, if there's an overage, but you could be paying back based on just sampling uncertainty, right, and so that's the concern I have with Alternative 2, is that you potentially have a large overage estimated, just because there is low sampling of the catch, whereas Alternative 3 doesn't pay it back, but it does account for the fact that landings overran the catch limit in the prior year, and you would shorten the season accordingly, to account for that, and that's similar to what we've done for blueline tilefish this year.

MS. THOMPSON: That helps, and that's not clarified in the language, and so that's why I was confused, and so the payback then is to shorten the season the following year then.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and it's not truly a payback at this point, because you're not deducting the overage from the prior year, but you are at least accounting for that higher level of landings and shortening the season relative to a fixed season length that's been specified in the regulations.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Andy. Is there further discussion? Andy and then Shep.

MR. STRELCHECK: Go ahead, Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. We can credit Jack for this, but he just noted to me, and I think he's right, that these are all post-season recreational accountability measures, and Alternative 3, at the beginning of the season, is not really a post-season action, and so maybe we drop a note in there or something, to kind of make a little more sense of that. Thanks.

DR. BELCHER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Given the comments that I just made, and the nature of the fishery, my recommendation, and I will make a motion, is to select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. Do I have a second? Chris. Discussion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So I guess you're going to be looking at the waves then, to try to estimate how many fish have been caught. If NMFS has announced the recreational fishing season start and end, and it becomes obvious that overfishing is imminent, can you change the end date of the season, or do you just shorten the season next year? I mean, can you stop it, when the overfishing is happening?

MR. STRELCHECK: So we would be projecting this, given the short nature of the season, and we would be using landings from prior fishing seasons, in order to project the start and end date. We would not have any landings data in-season to be able to make an adjustment, or change the season, and the other comment I will note is you used the term "overfishing", and I think that we need to be careful about using that terminology, and so I would say an exceedance of the catch limit would be more appropriate, because there's a buffer between the catch limit and the overfishing limit.

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, you're right. Thank you.

DR. BELCHER: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and the flip side of that is not being able to reopen if you learn, after the season, that you didn't harvest the catch limit, and so, if you want to build that flexibility in, I would say this language doesn't do it. It just says you set it at the beginning of the season, and the chips come out where they come out at the end of the year.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica, I'm handing the reins to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Sorry about that, folks. So then do we need to add something that would indicate that the council wants to open it back up if there's available quota? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Well, I would say that's a question for the council, and I don't know. It seems a little weird to me. I mean, operationally, I don't know how much different this is going to be, if you add that flexibility, than an in-season accountability measure, right, because, in our in-season accountability measures, the agency projects, or can project, right, and they're monitoring, or they can project that this is when we estimate the ACL will be harvested, and, therefore, we're going to close it down. We get to that date, and we get new information, and the agency learns that you didn't harvest the ACL, and then there's the potential ability to reopen and allow that ACL to be harvested. The more you build in flexibility to announcing this date in advance, the more it seems to me to be the equivalent of an in-season accountability measure, or at least how NMFS is going to do it, as I understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: One thing I want to point out for this is this is a data-limited species, recreationally, and the PSEs are quite often over 50, over the past ten years. Only two years have they had an estimate of PSE less than 50, and so that's indicating that it's not statistically different than zero, and so just keep that in mind as you're looking at these and tracking this in a pretty quick time.

Also, remember that the data collection is on a wave basis, and so, as you begin to shorten from a wave, you're actually breaking your data collection system, and so keep that in mind as you're developing these accountability measures. MRIP is the way that you collect data for golden tilefish, and we need to make sure that we're trying to keep this as consistent as possible with the way that the data collection is set up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I thought that there was a motion made, but I don't see it on the screen. Now I see it. Thank you. All right, and so then select Alternative 3 as preferred for Action 5. Are we good with that, based on this discussion? Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I just want to clarify that the recreational fishing year is -- It's a on a calendar year, and so we would change, where it says, "start on", and it has parentheses, and that would be January 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions or discussion on this? **Any objection? All right and that motion is approved.**

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving forward, Action 6 is to modify the blueline tilefish recreational bag limit, and the purpose is the council is considering lowering the recreational bag limit, to lower the chance of the sector having overages and exceeding the ACL. In the last six years, landings of blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic region have often exceeded the sector and total ACL, and it was noted that the council could select more than one, because, the way it's laid out, you do have a reduction to two fish, a reduction to one fish, and then Alternative 4 is actually to not allow retention of blueline tilefish by the captain and crew.

The allowance for captain and crew was effective back in 2014, when it provided that mechanism for this, and the council also had addressed considerations of modifications in Amendment 26 and were really looking at potentially looking at like an aggregate limit, and, essentially, consequently, the management measures, such as the recreational season, were just difficult to implement within the same level region-wide, and some of the discussions we had before about the regional differences here, and so no action was taken at that time.

We do have some initial preliminary analysis that came later into the discussions, and what we have is two different figures that provide percentages for a range of South Atlantic blueline tilefish harvested per person by dataset and by mode, and what it does show capture with captain and crew contributing to the harvest and then capture with captain and crew excluded from the harvest, and it does provide headboat, MRIP charter, and MRIP private trips, and the key thing, I think, that stands out to me is that, if you look at the Figure 4, with the captain and crew excluded, you actually have more of the headboats actually harvesting the bag limit within those trips, which do not show up when you do have the captain and crew.

In addition to that, it does have a projection that provides some projections based on three different scenarios, a three-year average catch, a five-year average catch, and then max landings, and you do have the variations through the different seasons that had been considered, and, basically, the longest seasons somewhat are tied to either the two-fish or to the no retention of captain and crew that provide the various closure dates, and a number of those, throughout the season, at least the ones being proposed at this time, have no closure dates.

The reduction in recreational bag limits under the Alternatives 2 and 3 are expected to have positive biological benefits, and all of them could -- It gets to the fact that, if you're able to extend the recreational season, there may be benefits, and so, in addition, the setting the limit at two and one would have greater negative economic effects, and you're looking at reducing access to those, and removing the captain and crew may also constrain harvest, leading to similar effects as the no action.

In general, the reduction in the recreational limit for the different alternatives, including prohibition of captain and crew, would help slow the rate of harvest and lengthen the season, prevent the ACL from being exceeded, and that potentially could be somewhat of a social benefit, to be able to have a longer season for the fishery to operate.

The AP, as highlighted earlier on, had comments on the importance of the fishery operating in the northern area, but, relative to this, eliminating the possession of captain and crew would be appropriate, if needed. However, they did say that the council consider waiting until after the assessment, potentially. With that, we do have this for consideration and potential selection of a preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. What is the pleasure of the committee here? We can choose multiple preferreds for this particular action. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: **Just to throw out, for discussion purposes, to consider Alternative 2 and 4.** That way, hopefully you won't have to constrain the season, is my thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so is that a motion? Okay. So a motion to select Alternatives 2 and 4 as preferred under Action 6. Is there a second? It's seconded by Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Second for discussion, and would it be cleaner if we created a fifth alternative and we combined Alternatives 2 and 4 into one alternative?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that I would do that. The analysis might be a little bit cleaner if they're separate, and it looks like that is what staff is suggesting. Is there more discussion on this preferred? This would be a recreational bag limit for blueline to two fish per person and no retention of blueline by captain and crew. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. A little bit of a point of clarification here, and, if we didn't do -- If we prohibited the retention for captain and crew, that doesn't really benefit us, in fishing days, very much, correct, going by the table?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was just asking Rick the same question, and so, if I'm interpreting the table correctly, it would gain you just a couple of days, one to two days.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess part of my rationale also was just that was some input from the AP as well, and so, yes, I see that it was only a couple of days, and you're right, but that was, I guess, my additional rationale, was that the AP had made that suggestion as well, to consider that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Based off of that -- I mean, one of my concerns with this is, when we discuss these species, it becomes kind of confusing for fishermen, when we have this species you can retain a captain and crew limit, and this species you can't, and this species you can, and I just think it leads to some confusion. I am hesitant to support it, not because I'm opposed to it, but just because I just don't see the data benefit from it. You know, if it gave us some timing in the summer fishing season, and a week can be a long time, but a day doesn't really do you much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you go back to your slide? I thought that two days, or two fish per day, would get you to August 6, with no -- When you scroll down there, it gets you a week, and is that right, from the 26th of July to August 6, if you have two fish per person, with no captain and crew, and am I reading that wrong?

MS. BROUWER: I'm not sure where you're looking, Dewey, and so the top panel is the no action, three fish per person per day, and, currently, the season is May through August. If you go down to that second panel section, and so, under the various scenarios, you have three different closures, sometime between the 30th of July and the 10th of August, at two fish per person per day. We currently don't have a way to combine the effects, and we don't have a little tool, like what Allie showed you guys yesterday for gag, where you can just do the combinations, and hopefully we

will for the next go-round, if you choose to retain these alternatives and keep considering them further.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there other questions here? We have a motion on the table. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So a clarification then would be, in looking at this table, the bottom category, that's simply no retention for the captain and crew, and that has nothing to do with two fish per person per day, and so you're not -- You're not gaining four days, and I'm not sure how many days you would get if you combine no retention for captain and crew and a reduction to two fish per person per day, and so, Tom, I think there could be a significant difference, but we just don't know what that is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: It's -- The difference in days is likely just the difference in the intercept values, and these really should be done on a wave-by-wave basis, because that's how MRIP is done. You should be rounding to your significant digit, which is a wave. To look at two days and say that there's a difference, it's not really there, and I think you can use intuitive knowledge to say that, if you have fewer fish on a trip, then you're going to have fewer fish coming in, but the difference in these estimates are minor, and, remember, the PSEs are very high for this species.

In looking at the data, very specifically at the data, 5 percent of the intercepts for golden tilefish actually exceed the expansion factor of the trips, or 5 percent of the trips are exceeding the ACL, and so just having those intercepts in the system will make you exceed your ACL, and then there is -- If you look at -- If they get over 50 percent of the ACL, that's 10 percent of the trips that are observed, and so you're dealing with probabilities of expansion factors on intercepts, more than you're actually looking at landings, and so just be careful in trying to interpret the length of the season. Try to keep it, in your mind, as a wave.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Are there more thoughts here? Can we see the motion again? All right, and so the motion is to select those two preferreds. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I have a little variance of differences with Chip's thought here on the PSEs. The majority of these landings of fish come north of Cape Hatteras, and, when you look at north of Cape Hatteras and the PSEs, there's a majority of it that's under 50 percent, and most of it is coming from the charter boat industry, and so I think we saw data somewhere of 35 percent, when it's grouped together.

Now, when you go down further down the coast, you've got PSEs of 50, 60, and 70 percent, but the majority of these landings are coming north of Cape Hatteras, recreationally, a little bit, because you have the MRIP process, but you've also got the charter boats that don't have a PSE above 50, and so the majority of the landings are not above 50, is my recollection of looking at the stuff.

DR. COLLIER: Sorry, and that information that I was speaking about was golden tilefish, and I got mixed up on the species that we were talking about, but Dewey is right that a lot of the landings

are coming from north of Hatteras, and there's a pretty good split between charter boat and recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So I'm just curious. With charter reporting in place now, does MRIP intercept that just randomly, and is that how they -- Do they go pick a report randomly, or where does that come into play? It seems like we should have a lot better idea on when things will be closing or opening or whatnot with real-time charter boat reporting, and are we not -- I mean, is it not going to be validated, and has it been --

Is it being used yet, or are we just collecting the information, to see when compliance comes up, and I'm not up-to-speed on that, but this kind of just screams, to me, that, if I was a charter boat captain, I would not want to be grouped in with the recreational sector, and, if I'm reporting, and being accountable, and I'm forced to do it, then I would want to, you know, be able to continue my business and market it to people a lot longer than -- You know, to have a real sure thing of what's going on, and not like, oh, well, we can book you a trip, and it may close now, and, when you're in town, we might be able to get you out there kind of a thing. I think this is pretty silly, that we're still doing this, and that's all. I mean, I don't really have much to say, other than it should be a lot more deliberate and finite.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think there's some mixing and matching of MRIP versus the for-hire logbook program, the SEFHIER program, and so both are operating simultaneously. We are collecting logbook data, and we started that program in January of last year, and we are continuing to try to improve compliance, and you've seen reports of that program over time, but, at this point, we're not generating landings and discard estimates to inform management, or science, from that program. We have to have a phase-in period and side-by-side comparisons, to determine the utility of it, before it could be used. Now, that doesn't mean that it couldn't be used for alternative purposes, besides generating landings and discard data, but, at this point, it's not being used to open or close seasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? Any more discussion? **Once again, the motion is to select Alternatives 2 and 4 as preferreds under Action 6. Is there any objection?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.** Why don't we go ahead and take a fifteen-minute break, and, when we come back, we're going to be talking about the recreational season.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Come on back to the table. We're going to get going again. Go ahead, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving into Action 7, we're looking at modifying the blueline tilefish recreational season, and the purpose is the council is modifying the recreational season to reduce recreational harvest and reduce the chance of the sector having overages and exceeding the ACL. In the last six years, landings of blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic region have often exceeded the sector and total ACL, and what we have is alternatives from no action, and the current season

of May 1 through August 31, a reduction of a month from the backend, to through July 30, and one from the frontend, starting in June and going through August 31, and then removing two, May 1 through June 30, and the final alternative, Alternative 5, is July 1 through August 31.

We did have some preliminary analysis, and, if you look at the Table 4, we have season lengths that were projected by cumulatively summing the open season recreational landings for three landings scenarios, and the recreational ACL is 116,820 whole weight.

What we see is, under Table 4, you have the actual landings by month for 2017 through 2021, and, for the first two years, it's fairly consistent across the individual months, and then you have significant jumps in 2020, for July and August, and not as significant, but higher, for July and August of 2021, and then, if you look at the three-year average, five-year average, and max landings, you have the variations amongst those, and so, if you move to the actual -- This provides the overall snapshot, with 2020 being the highest in the timeframe, and then what you go to then is the predicted closure dates, and that's Table 5, open season alternatives, as indicated from 1 through 5, and then the three different variations of three-year, five-year, and max landings.

With these, say if you go to the five-year, you're looking at extending through August 4. No closure if you have a May through July, through August 15 with a June through August season, and no closure if you have a May through June season, and then extending all the way through August 26 if you have a July through August.

What I will do is jump right directly to the AP recommendations with regard to this, and they considered a May 1 through June 30, but they recommended no action at this time, to stay with the original season of May 1 through August 31, and, with that, I will bump it to the committee for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I mean, to me, this whole action is probably a little questionable, or unnecessary, and I think we should probably just skip it and go straight to Action 8, I mean, because, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter when you start the season. If you have no accountability measure, it doesn't matter, and so, if you look at Action 8, and you go down to Alternative 3, well, that's really the only way to go. Just let Marine Fisheries pick the start of the season, and pick the end of the season, and be done with it. I mean, other than that, there is no accountability, and it doesn't matter when you start, and it doesn't matter when you end. Without some kind of accountability, it doesn't matter, and so, you know, in my mind, I think picking a start date is unnecessary, other than NMFS picking a start and an end date, and call it a season, and be done with it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion here? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: This is kind of a highly variable season of landings, because, if you'll look at the data over the years, tilefish landings are up when the tuna and mahi are down, and, most of the time, all your landings recreationally, north of Cape Hatteras, are going to come in July and August, and that's when you don't have access to other fisheries, and the data shows that, and so, you know, just keep that in mind, and it might be good for SERO to look at doing a start date and end date, as Tim said, based on the data from the previous year, but most of your landings come

from July and August, when they don't have access to other fisheries, and that's what the data shows.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I tend to agree with Tim. I mean, depending on what we do with the accountability measures, you potentially provide me, the Fisheries Service, with authority to close the fishery. Thinking through this, to be clear, we don't have authority to decide when the season opens, right, and that would be based on whatever fixed season that you would decide, but we would close it, obviously, if we estimate the catch limit to be caught before the end of the season.

Shep had made a comment about, you know, reopening the fishery if we project incorrectly, or maybe landings change or something like that, and we could only do that if we also had authority to set the season later than whatever your end date is that you would specify as a fixed timeframe, but allowing for the longest season of May through August at least provides the most flexibility for the Fisheries Service to then set the season based on historical landings and trends in information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To respond to that, I mean, part of this is do we want to start on May 1, or do we want to start on June 1, or July 1, because you're partly picking the start date, even if you're letting the data indicate when it should be closed, and so one of the things from visioning was trying to give recreational fishermen more of a time certain, so that they could make plans, and so I think that's one of the reasons that we have this action in here. What do we want to do? Do we want to pick a preferred, or do we want to stick with the current season? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Is it worth going to discussing the AM and then coming back?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. We can do it that way. Roger, do you mind talking to us about the next action?

MR. PUGLIESE: No, and especially since that is very relevant to what we're talking about. If you accomplish what you need to with Action 8, that may guide how you want to deal with Action 7. Okay. Action 8 is to modify the post-season recreational accountability measure for blueline tilefish, and we're considering modifying the post-season recreational accountability measure to increase the ability to ensure the sector stays within the recreational ACL and the ability to address overages, regardless of whether the stock is overfished or a total ACL was exceeded. In the last six years, landings of blueline tilefish have often exceeded the sector and total ACL. However, because all triggers were not met, post-season AMs were not implemented.

What we have is essentially the exact same table that we had for golden tilefish for blueline, with the present alternative having the three different triggers that are already in place, where you have to achieve overfishing, and you have to identify overfishing exceeding the ACL, recreational ACL, and the total ACL for the measure to go in place, and Alternative 2, with regard to only exceeding the ACL, and then Alternative 3, that we addressed under golden tilefish, that would provide the flexibility for National Marine Fisheries Service to determine the start and end date of the fishing season, and that is the way it's laid out, and I think Andy has made some pretty significant justifications for why it was done under golden tilefish, which I would think would apply in the same discussions we had relative to blueline.

With that, the AP recommendation was to select Alternative 2 as the preferred. One quick comment I will have is that a lot of the focus, before we had discussion, was eliminating these triggers and everything before, and it really didn't have that clarification of the Alternative 3 that is now within the document, for both golden as well as blueline, and so I think that's a pretty significant issue, now that that's actually on the table and has been identified. With that, I will pass it to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Roger. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I would be in support of Alternative 3. I think that kind of makes the most sense here. I mean, I don't really even understand what "monitor for persistence" means. **I mean, if you look at the fishery, as it currently stands, I mean, it's pretty persistent that it runs over its quota, and so, I mean, to me, Alternative 3 makes the most sense, and I would be in support of that.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is that a motion?

MR. GRINER: **Yes, I will make that as a motion.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion to select Alternative 3 as the preferred. Do we have a second? All right. It's seconded by Chris. It's under discussion. Chester.

MR. BREWER: It's interesting that this alternative, which I agree is the way to go, is fairly similar to the suggestion that I made earlier, I guess the day before yesterday maybe, where you set something, and, in this case, we're setting the length of a season, and you see what happens, and, if you run over, then you change the season, and, to me, that's a very valid way to manage a fishery. Now, you could be talking about this, or you could be talking about, okay, well, let's try one fish per person, and see what that does, and that then we'll modify it, based upon that, if necessary, and I just wanted to point that out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would just like to caveat that the suggested changes that we had for Alternative 3 for the other species is also captured in on the changes for this Alternative 3, since they're doing the same function.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Okay. Is there more discussion here? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just note, the same as I did for golden tilefish in the prior discussion, and so we have in-season accountability measures already, and this is just a post-season accountability measure, and I'm sure the IPT will discuss this, and maybe you will get some guidance back, but announcing the season in advance, while also having the in-season closure authority and the ability to reopen, and, functionally, how much difference is there between those, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Along those lines, Shep, I think it's important to keep our arms around the fact that in-season accountability measures for the recreational fishery do not work. MRIP doesn't allow that to work. They have to be post-season. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I would just sort of point out that there are in-season accountability measures for a lot of recreationally-managed species, and it's just generally done on projections, rather than trying to truly do it in-season, but I think where this will get complicated is if you come in and have a post-season, or your post-season accountability measure is to announce the season dates in advance, right, and you're going to also have the in-season accountability measure on the books that allows you to close when you project that the ACL is being reached, and so I'm not sure how all those are going to mesh, but, if you predict the date in advance, and then get some new information that indicates it's going to be caught before that date, or after that date, right, and what's your ability to change, and that's why I think we just need some IPT-level discussion to try and figure it out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Shep, I believe that the intent, if this alternative ends up being selected, is it would get rid of the current in-season accountability measure, because, by NMFS projecting the length of the season ahead of time, the expectation is that landings aren't going to go above, you know, in that timeframe, right, and so there wouldn't be an existing in-season, if Alternative 3 ends up being put in the books, is my understanding, and I believe that's the way we have it for black sea bass, where, you know, NMFS announces the length of the season, based on their projections, based on the previous year's catch rates, and there is no in-season closure, and am I misunderstanding?

MR. GRIMES: Well, I would not interpret it that way, as written, particularly since the title of it is "post-season accountability measures", and that's all we're changing, and so we've given no indication, in the text, that we're adjusting in-season accountability measures. If that's the council's desire, and intent, then, yes, absolutely, the document can be restructured to accommodate that, but I wouldn't read that the way it's currently written.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so Myra is taking some notes that that needs to be clarified. Okay. Any more discussion here? **Any objection to this motion to select Alternative 3 as the preferred for Action 8?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.** After we get all that typed in, can we back up to the season? Go ahead, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: We're back to modifying the recreational season and discussions relative to that and what you have identified and selected as the accountability measure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We were trying, I think, to also keep the blueline and snowy seasons the same, and they are, but blueline tilefish closed early this year, and so it ended in July. Do we want to change the season, and, if we do, then, in the snowy document, we probably need to think about the recreational season for snowy, and so I don't know if that helps people make a decision here, thinking about what season they would like to see for snowy. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The difficulty with this is the cooccurrence in certain places. The majority of the biomass, of where you catch blueline tilefish and landings are coming from, don't have that cooccurrence. When you get at Hatteras south, and I'm not familiar with further on down the coast, but you have the cooccurrence of snowy grouper and blueline tilefish, and, also, your survey data will show you catch some bluelines and snowies in the surveys, the same set, as you do, and so that's the conundrum that you have here, and, as further data, or surveys, are shown, it will continue to show that, and so it can sometimes be five or six snowy grouper to one blueline tilefish, at certain times, in Hatteras and south.

I don't know how to -- That part, I don't know how to fix, because it's going to take a lot more, but it needs to be, because I think that's reflecting on some of the problems we have with snowy grouper and the stock assessment, but that's kind of a little layout of the cooccurrence in the different seasons with that. I don't know if you can -- I am not even going to go there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anybody else? Do we want to select a preferred here? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I thought the reason we -- I guess it was my suggestion, but that we went to AMs was, first, so that, when we selected the one we selected, that gives NMFS the -- If we went with no action, Alternative 1, that gives NMFS the flexibility to close the season within that timeframe, whereas, if we shortened it, then they'll have to close it, and so that's what I thought we were trying to do, and I don't know if now the snowy complicates that, but that's where I thought we were heading, was then we would have the Alternative 1 as the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: When you look at it, I don't even know if it matters, because you can only have one snowy per vessel, and, with blueline tilefish, you can have eighteen, three a person, and so I just don't know how to do one without the other, or just continue discarding the snowies and go catch your bluelines, as has been done, and so that's kind of a part, but I'm in favor of also the Regional Administrator of SERO setting the season ahead of time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for the vote of confidence, Dewey. A couple of points, really good points, here. One, we have to be thinking of this not just in terms of tilefish, but other species, right, and so there's kind of those unintended consequences, or cumulative effects, obviously, if you close one without the other.

As much as I appreciate the authority to, obviously, determine the end date, and try to avoid overages, that can create confusion for anglers, as brought up with regard to the vision about the stability of a season, right, and so we then will have to rely heavily, if we're not going to be having a four-month season, which is status quo, on the council, the states, and others to help get the word out, once we make a determination on the end date.

If we shrink the season, and I don't have a preference as to what that looks like, that potentially at least increases the stability, or the certainty, around what the season might be, and it may avoid some of the potential closures that will be announced by the Fisheries Service, and so there's

certainly an advantage to that, but I think we would also need to keep that context in mind of then, if we do it here, we need to be thinking about it for snowy grouper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I wonder, if we revisit this action in Full Council, after we have the discussion on snowy, and I can tell you, from a state perspective, that just the end date kind of floating around, and we waiting on an announcement for the service to announce the end date, and then we would have to do an executive order for state waters, to match that, to shut down state waters, and it is not a simple process. It does not happen automatically, and so I guess I would be advocating for selecting the end date with this action, but we can also come back and talk about this after we talk about snowy, but it's not simple, and it's not automatic, like it is in other states, and so then that could contribute to an overage, again. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I appreciate your comment, Jessica, and I appreciate your comment, Andy, and I think that's a good point about the consistency of seasons, even if we shorten it up. An open question that I have is, from a North Carolina perspective, what would be the best economic benefit for our fishing fleet? Just kind of anecdotally, from what I heard, I would kind of assume that it would be something like a June 1 opening, being that it seems to be more interest in the fishery in the summer months that aren't as productive as say May.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That would be helpful, and so you're thinking -- You're partially selecting the June 1, thinking about snowy as well?

MR. ROLLER: I hesitate to say yes to that, but, yes, going in that direction.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What's the pleasure of the committee? Do we want to come back to this action? I see heads nodding yes, to come back to this action, either later in the committee, after we look at the snowy amendment, or at Full Council, and so then I will look over to staff. I think that maybe it was Action 2, Carolyn, that there was a question that we wanted to come back to?

DR. BELCHER: That's correct.

DR. COLLIER: There was a question on average weight. I guess, in the amendment, in the decision document, it was indicating an average weight of golden tilefish was 4.43 pounds. Looking at the assessment, which was SEDAR 66, in Tables 16 and 17, they have total estimates of removals by both numbers and weights of fish. If you divide those two together and look at the last three years, it was 5.6 pounds, and so that is a bit heavier than what's in the amendment right now, and what leads to is a drop, by about 600 or 700 fish, depending on the alternatives, and so it is going to be fewer fish for the recreational sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are there questions for Chip? All right. We're just taking some notes there on this. Thanks for that clarification. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I guess, at this point, since we're hearing that this is the most up-to-date average weight for the recreational sector, then what we would go back and do is recalculate the sector allocations, if that is the direction that you would like to give us, and bring that back to you in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so. I will look to the committee, but I think we're wanting a recalculation. Carolyn is nodding yes. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The allocation was based on weight, and so that shouldn't change. That should stay the same, and it would just be the ACL for the recreational sector is going to go down.

MR. GRIMES: The ACL and numbers of fish, right, because we have pounds and numbers of fish in there, and only the numbers of fish would change.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and we had discussions earlier on, and this was kind of tied directly to when we were looking at some of the original allocation numbers and how that was done, because I think, back when that original amendment, and that's where this was tied to, and one of the discussions was trying to standardize the process and what we begin to use for these average weights across all the different amendments, and we just haven't had a chance to really go down that road further, and I think that's something that still is to come, so that we get some kind of standard methodology, whether it's three years running or whatever it ends up being, but this is all an evolution process that we're trying to continue moving forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that. Okay, and so then do we want to approve this for public hearing? Myra, the public hearings, and remind me, but would occur between now and the next council meeting or at the next council meeting?

MS. BROUWER: We had initially suggested, and we're going to continue to suggest, that September be a time to obtain public comment, but, also, we would like to get some guidance, and maybe this is a conversation for Friday morning, when we're looking at all the meetings that we have coming up, when you would want to hold online webinars for public hearings for these various amendments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. That was helpful. I like the idea of waiting to figure out how we want to do that., and so then we want to hold on this motion, and I see people nodding yes, to hold on this motion until we get to Full Council. All right. I think that concludes the discussion on this amendment. Thank you, Roger, and thank you, Myra. Next up, we're going to dive into snowy grouper. While we're getting it queued up, the first thing that we're going to do is we're going to hear from Bob on the AP comments on snowy.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Allie. The Amendment 51, snowy grouper, discussed by the AP, and we chat on this a lot, from time to time, and I think it is certainly -- It is a growing species with recreational interest, and a lot of commercial interest, particularly, you know, down here in the south, but I guess all over, because I guess it's typically found all year, all year round.

I guess I'll go with it, and I'll start with Action 3, and there's probably some other things we can state, but the Action 3 on the commercial trip limit was that they will be preferring the no action, what is currently in as the 200 pounds, and, in fact, they suggested could you consider a higher trip limit, and so, what to do to validate that, I'll leave that up to you, but that's coming from the AP.

With respect to -- I guess one of the things is that the commercial season -- I mean, they always feel that snowy grouper and the golden tile season, I guess from the commercial side, be together, and I guess that's all rooted around things like bycatch issues. If you fish for one, you're likely to catch some of the other. As you target snowy, you may catch golden tile, and then vice versa, and so consider -- Have that considered in the mix.

We've already mentioned about the -- Yes, that's been already -- The recreational season on Action 4, we've talked a bit about a lot of this, and that was discussed with the blueline tilefish and the golden tilefish, that the habitat overlaps, and they are found together. Again, stating that the snowy grouper preferred is to be open during the entire time of the recreational golden tilefish season.

There was discussion of a 250-foot depth closure. Whenever you mention a closure to an AP, and so we always start with really no and then walk our way back, usually, a little bit, in the discussion, and, though that sort of a thing is not highly endorsed, there was a little chatter that, apparently, from those at the time, that wasn't -- If you needed an extreme measure, maybe that wasn't the worst thing that happened back then, and that I think, for some folks, they managed to work with it, and so just bringing that up from my memory, and it's not really preferred, but, if you want to discuss it, and I don't know what the experience of the various council members were, and that, if you need something more draconian, and, you know, you go with total closures, that, okay, that seemed to maybe have worked a bit, or was tolerable, which is often what comes up, what is tolerable, versus what is preferred. A lot of what is coming through as recommendations is just, well, we'll take that if we have to.

Getting into something you all discussed, there is definitely, from some members, feeling that 100 percent mortality rate in the assessment would have to be inaccurate, and not necessarily apply today, and I know there are a number of you on the council, and I've heard, gosh, Dewey and Tom, and I've seen Tim, discussing things about the validity of something that happened.

I mean, if you're making a measure, and saying it affects the fishing, how you do validate that that's truly what happened, and then leaning over to things like what Chester said, that here is one to look at. When you ask for things like descending devices, which people are bringing up, and we're using descending devices, and there are ways to use these, and there's a feeling that more of these fish are surviving, and this is an area that will need some study, and some validation, and it's an area where you can possibly have a little giveback and show the anglers what their efforts are actually starting to obtain, and so having that flat 100 percent mortality rate in the assessment -- I think a lot of people aren't going to buy it as totally accurate today, but, again, it needs to be proven, and that just goes in with the second, like just increase deepwater best fishing practices education and prove that all these things are working, or the data, and to what degree are they really working, and how much are we really reducing the mortality for these deepwater species. The feeling of a lot of AP members is it's, you know, better than you might estimate, and we'll see.

Then the accountability measures, and retain the in-season accountability measure, while removing the stock status trigger from the post-season accountability measure, and this sounds a lot like what you all have just discussed just previous to this, with the tilefish, and I know these species are kind of interconnected, as far as where they are and within habitat and the experiences that the various

fishers get when fishing for one, or targeting one, of the species or the other, and so that concludes what I have on this. Thank you very much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. Any questions for Bob? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: This is sort of jumping ahead, I guess, to our discussions about permitting and all, but I'm just curious, and was there any discussion in the AP about sort of specifically permitting deepwater snapper grouper fisheries, you know, as sort of a specialized fishery, with a smaller group of participants, and using -- Having some sort of specific permit for that, versus a general snapper grouper permit, and did you all talk about that at all?

MR. LORENZ: Yes, Spud. Absolutely. Sorry I didn't mention that, but, to me, on this type of a species, it would be redundant, and this is another one of those, is snowy grouper, and there's a lot of recreational interest, and, yes, it keeps coming back, and like, if you're going to start with a permit, you can't work on everything, and here's a species to identify who participates in this fishery, when you're speaking of the recreational fishermen, because, for a lot of us, this is an expensive, long-distance pursuit, and so, yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: My recollection was that it was for snowy, blueline, and golden, a permitting thing that needed to be done, as fast as possible, and it could probably be done quicker than the overall other things that would go on, as far as permitting of the snapper grouper recreational, total.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just to follow-up, was there any discussion about mandatory reporting under such a permit?

MR. LORENZ: (Mr. Lorenz's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: It sounds like something is up with the microphone over here, Kelly.

MR. LORENZ: It always comes up, about -- The discussion of the accountability, and there's two things that always come up. One is learning the population, who is doing this, and how many of them are there, and then, yes, and it comes from both sides, those that defend more fish for recreational fishermen and those that think we catch too many, and it would be, yes, how many are we really catching, and then, you know, a lot of us feel that, when you go to this large permit, that, maybe if it's easier to implement, or have almost like a pilot-type of thing, on some of these more critical species, try it out there, and let's see where it goes, and you're not affecting as many anglers, and it's probably a lot easier for the Fisheries Service to follow-up and find out the anglers that are out there and learn from one of these important species targeted on how to start rolling this out to all the rest of the snapper grouper species, as there are species that are very important to manage more closely under an exploding recreational fishing population.

MS. MCCAWLEY: While we're working on these microphones, any more questions for Bob? All right. I don't see any hands. All right. Allie is going to start walking us through the amendment, and maybe we can get through a few actions here before we break for lunch.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so let me go ahead and start here, and so, for the sake of time, I'm going to use this background overview table, and so your most recent assessment was the SEDAR 36 update, which indicated the stock was overfished and undergoing overfishing, and snowy currently has a thirty-four-year rebuilding timeframe that will end in 2042. You guys received the assessment results in March of 2021, and you directed us to start this amendment, and then you received your overfishing letter on June 10 of 2021, and so kind of a little snapshot of where you are.

In this amendment, we're adjusting catch levels, allocations, and then some management modifications to achieve new catch levels. For this meeting, and I will go through this quick, because we're not going to get through all of this, but we're going to pick, hopefully, the rest of the preferreds and approve this amendment for public hearing, and review the AP feedback as well, which we just did.

To review the timing, there is a draft amendment in your briefing book, and we'll be going over some of Chapter 4 that is summarized in this document, and so we'll review this decision document and the AP feedback, and we'll select any remaining preferred alternatives that you haven't and approve for public hearings. We'll talk a little bit more about public hearings after lunch.

What did you guys do in March? You reviewed the scoping comments, and there was discussion, in March, about a citizen science project, and I look forward to that. In the Cit Sci Committee, we're going to have Julia Byrd cover that there. For Action 1, which is your ABC, ACL, and OY action, you removed the 20 percent buffer and selected ACL and OY equal to ABC as your preferred.

For Action 2, allocations, you selected Option 2, and you can see the percentages there, and I will go through that in a little bit more detail in a second, as your preferred. You also directed staff to consider weekly trip limits, but you decided that snowy might not be the best species to start with on that one. For Action 3, which is the commercial trip limit, you selected Option 1, no action, as the preferred, and then you, obviously, asked for specific AP feedback on that, and then, for Action 4, which was the commercial spawning season closure, you removed the action, based on the following rationale, and I'm not going to read that verbatim, because you guys discussed it, and then, finally, for Action 5, for the modifying the recreational season, you requested two single-wave options, Wave 3 and Wave 4, and then you asked the Snapper Grouper AP to review those options.

The purpose and need, I'll be quick with this one, and, just like with gag, I slipped, or the IPT slipped, "overfishing limit" in here, and so the purpose of the fishery management plan is to set an overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, revise the annual catch limits, annual optimum yield, and sector allocations for South Atlantic snowy grouper, based on the results of the most recent stock assessment, and modify management and accountability measures, and the need for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic snowy grouper, continue to rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

I will pause here, really quick, for any modifications to this purpose and need. Even though you do have an amendment in your briefing book, it is a draft amendment, and so we still have time to modify this, as we move through the process, and so I will pause here, quick.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. I think the purpose and need looks okay. Any other thoughts? I see people nodding, yes, that it looks okay. Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 1 revises the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual OY for snowy. I am going to go over the purpose of action here, and this is going to help us build the rationale for each of your actions, and so the snowy grouper total ACL is being revised to incorporate the best available science via the new ABC recommendations of the SSC, based on that most recent assessment, and it also will incorporate the MRIP-FES recreational landings.

I am going to use the summary tables here, and so your alternatives were no action, and so retaining the current ACL, and your preferred Alternative 2 was setting the ACL and the OY equal to the updated ABC that includes MRIP-FES recreational landings. Alternatives 3 and 4 give you a 5 and 10 percent buffer between OY, ACL, and the ABC, respectively. Table 3 shows you your pounds gutted weight, total ACLs, for this. A little bit of a caveat here, and so this is the total ACL, which is expressed in pounds gutted weight. However, the recreational sector is expressed in numbers of fish, which you will see when we look at sector allocations.

Just like for gag, I took a look, or the IPT took a look, at the average total landings from 2015 to 2019 and how that fishery has been operating compared to your proposed ACLs for 2023 through 2027, and so you can see here that there's a little bit of a gap, and so roughly 60,000 pounds gutted weight below that average landings for 2015 to 2019, and then this gives you a little bit wider of a snapshot of the fishery, and so you've got the commercial landings in green and the recreational MRIP-FES landings in gray, and both of these are in pounds whole weight, so we were comparing apples to apples in this figure, just to show you how the fishery has been operating.

Looking at the amendment summary sections, and so this is Chapter 4 of your draft amendment, for the biological effects, Alternative 1 is not a viable option, because it doesn't update those catch levels, and then Alternative 2 would be expected to result in the least biological benefits, and it may increase discards, and then, for Alternatives 3 and 4, the biological benefits increase as, obviously, the buffer increases between ACL and ABC.

The economic effects, in general, ACLs that allow for more fish to be landed can result in increased economic benefits, and so short-term economic benefits are expected to be highest under Alternative 1, followed by Preferred Alternative 2 and then 3 and 4, and, finally, social effects for this action, and so Alternative 1 would not be based on the best science, and so would not provide social benefits. Preferred Alternative 2 would be the most socially beneficial for the fishermen, because it would provide the highest ACL, and it would be the least likely to trigger an AM, and then Alternative 3 and 4 would provide less social benefit, because you have a lower ACL and a higher chance of triggering the AM. No specific AP recommendations or comments pertaining to Action 1, and so, at this point, I will hand it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we've gone through Action 1. Anything we want to change or do here? I'm looking around the room. No hands, and it doesn't look like we're wanting to change anything, and I'm going to pass it back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 2 will revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for snowy, and so allocations are being revised to incorporate new catch level recommendations from the SSC, based on, again, that new assessment, and then we're also incorporating MRIP-FES recreational landings as well.

I'm going to use Table 5, the summary table of your actions, and so Alternative 1 retains the current 83/17 split for commercial and recreational, respectively, and that was determined using average landings from 1986 to 2005, and was put in place through Reg Amendment 20. However, the recreational landings used in that calculation were CHTS landings, and so Preferred Alternative 2 takes that same method, and so average landings from 1986 to 2005, but, instead of using the CHTS landings, it recalculates it with MRIP-FES landings, and that results in an 87.55 percent commercial allocation and a 12.45 recreational allocation.

Then, finally, you have an alternative using the Comp ACL Amendment allocation formula, and that uses years from 1986 to 2008, or average landings from 1986 to 2008, and 2006 to 2008, and that results in the 73.36/26.64 commercial/recreational allocation.

Table 6 gives you your actual sector ACLs, and so this table has a lot of columns, and so you start off with your total ACL, and this table is based off of your preferred total ACL from Action 1, and then it gives you the total ACL in numbers of fish, and so remember I said the recreational sector is based on numbers of fish, and so we're trying to be able to compare apples-to-apples for the units here.

The next column is your recreational ACL underneath each allocation scenario, or allocation alternative, and then, for commercial, you have a total commercial ACL, in pounds gutted weight, but the commercial season is split into two, and Season 1 runs from January to the end of June, and then Season 2 is July through December, and you have a 70/30 allocation to Season 1 and Season 2, respectively, and so you can see the breakdown there.

Again, you have your preferred, and, just like with gag, I showed you kind of a look at your proposed commercial ACLs and how the commercial sector has been operating here, and so you have average commercial landings from 2015 to 2019, and then the bars are going to be your proposed commercial ACLs, and you can see the gap there. When you're looking at this for the recreational sector, remember that these are in numbers of fish, and so the average recreational landings are in numbers of fish, and your proposed recreational ACLs are in numbers of fish, and so I think the gap is a little bit bigger here.

To summarize Chapter 4 in your amendment document, for biological effects, the biological effects are not expected to be significantly different across all alternatives, since the allocation percentages are fairly similar, and there are no expected effort shifts for any alternative.

For econ effects, the alternatives in Action 2 can be ranked, for the commercial sector, from a short-term economic perspective, with Preferred Alternative 2 having the highest, followed by 1 and then 3. For the recreational sector, the ranking would be opposite, and so you're just looking

at who has the highest allocation percentage would have the highest economic benefit, pretty much is how that plays out. In terms of total estimated net economic benefits for the action, the same ranking would apply as stated for the recreational sector.

For social effects, Alternative 1 would have no significant changes to social effects, as it would retain the current allocation percentage, and then Preferred Alternative 2 would increase the commercial allocation, which could lead to negative social effects for the recreational sector, while Alternative 3 would increase the recreational allocation and could have negative social effects for the commercial. There was no specific feedback here from the AP, and, again, you have a preferred selected, and so we're just looking for any modifications for this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. As mentioned, we do have a preferred here. Are we wanting to change it, or stay with the same preferred? It looks like we're okay with staying with the same preferred. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would make the same statement that I made earlier, relative to the objectives of the FMP, if we could get some of that information, so that we could incorporate it into the rationale and decision-making before we go final. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Maybe we can get through one more action, and then we'll break for lunch.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so this is the last action that you have selected a preferred for, and so we should be able to get through this one. Action 3 reduces the snowy grouper commercial trip limit, and so an approximately 43 percent reduction in harvest is needed to achieve the updated catch levels for snowy grouper.

The commercial trip limit reduction was being considered to achieve these reductions in catch, while helping to ensure the longest period of access for the commercial sector, and so your alternatives were no action, which retained the 200-pound gutted weight trip limit, and then a 150-pound and 100-pound gutted weight trip limit.

We have looked at this preliminary analysis before, and Figure 6 is a breakdown of snowy grouper harvested per trip, and so you can see we have the highest amount in the 151 to 200 bin, and then the predicted change in decreasing that trip limit. Table 8 shows you the predicted length for each trip limit, and this table is tiered, and so it's based off of the Preferred Alternative 2 for Action 2, and so it's based off of your preferred ACL and then the preferred for Action 2, and so everything is tiering. Again, closure date, this is -- I like to think of this more as when you're going to be meeting the ACL. However, this species does currently have an in-season AM, and so keep that in mind as you're looking at this date, and it's not going to be an exact closure date.

We have an IPT recommendation, and the IPT recommends that the council should discuss whether Action 3 should be moved to Appendix E, Considered but Rejected, if you guys retain Alternative 1 as your preferred. Currently, it is an action within the amendment, and so we're just looking for guidance on whether or not this action gets formally moved over.

I will remind you that we did hear, from scoping, that any trip below 200 pounds wouldn't be worth the depths to which snowy are caught, and we've been hearing that from the Snapper

Grouper AP as well, and so, summarizing Chapter 4, the biological effects are not expected to differ between Preferred Alternative 1, 2, and 3, because the current split season and commercial AMs are in place. Reducing the commercial trip limit may extend the season, comparative to Alternative 1, and so keep that in mind.

For econ effects, lower trip limits would allow for lower levels of revenue and more trips, thus potentially decreasing net economic benefits through decreased net revenue, and so, in terms of potential net economic benefits, Preferred Alternative 1 would provide the highest benefits, followed by Alternative 2 and 3.

Then, for social effects, reducing the commercial trip limit may extend the length of the season and avoid negative social effects of triggering an AM, in which case all three, or Alternative 3, would provide the longest season, followed by Alternative 2, and then Preferred Alternative 1, and so 51 percent of the trips are harvesting 150 pounds gutted weight, or less, of snowy grouper, and so Alternative 2 is predicted to have the least amount of negative social effects, based on how the fishery is operating, followed by Alternative 3 and Preferred Alternative 1.

I'm not going to go through each one of these bullets, because Bob summed it up really well, but the AP does prefer the 200-pound gutted weight trip limit, and the AP did discuss the possibility of increasing the trip limit, and I will let you guys kind of review those last bullets, and it's just more discussion, and I think Bob covered it really well, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie, and so what do we want to do here? I am wondering -- Let me look over here at Kerry, and I'm wondering if this is one of those species that we want to have some options that, as it goes back up, maybe we consider an increased trip limit, and so do we want to do something like that here as well?

MS. MARHEFKA: That's funny, because we were struggling with the whole like AP wanting to go up, and so that's an interesting thought. I think that it would be a good idea just to get rid of the 100. That's not going to happen, but that's interesting, and I would be curious to hear from other people, or anyone else, what they thought about having a trigger to increase it at some point though.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sounds good. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, I agree with that, to have a trigger to increase it as we get deeper into the time, but I want to read you a text that I got from Jimmy Hull this morning, and, you know, the fuel -- The cost of fuel is now catastrophic to the industry, and so Jimmy says, "Good morning. Diesel fuel at my dock is now \$6.30 a gallon, and it's like gold. The commercial fishing sector is under ever more pressure. We abide by dozens of requirements and restrictions, and we are totally accountable. Please recommend letting us fish to MSY efficiently. If the science gives us fish, let us catch them efficiently."

Then we talked about, and we instructed staff to come back with some guidance on the potential of doing a weekly trip limit, instead of like one trip at a time, and we talked about it for red snapper, and I think that we decided that the snowy grouper maybe wasn't the best choice to do that, but I think it is. I think it's time that we look at ways to help the commercial fishermen survive, and so, for 200 pounds -- Like Josh says, and, on the last trip, they went out, and they got 200 pounds of

snowy grouper in one hour on one bandit reel, all fifteen to twenty-five-pound fish, and so why not let them -- I mean, if they're catching fish like that, why not let them catch more fish and have like a weekly trip limit and come back.

Catch their fish and come back and tie their boat to the dock for five days, but let them operate efficiently and not burn the fuel going all the way out there and all the way back every day, and you would still be catching the same amount of fish, and you would have the trip limit, but you would apply it to a week, a weekly trip limit, instead of daily trip limit. I would like to hear more discussion on that, because the fuel is making it where people can't afford to fish now. They cannot afford to leave the dock, and they can't keep a crew, and it's decimating the industry. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I understand, and I can appreciate the cost of fuel, because it is a killer, but, at the same time, that's why this commercial fishery in the South Atlantic has to operate over a broad range of species, and we can't go out and target just one species. It doesn't work, no matter what the cost of fuel is.

The importance of the snowy grouper fishery, at least for us, is January, February, March, and April, and, although 200 pounds is not really all that palatable to any of us, if you start increasing this dramatically, then we're not going to have any grouper when we need grouper the most, and so I'm very hesitant to go above the 200 pounds and go to any kind of other limit, although I would like to see something increase as ACLs increase, but, right now, I think we certainly cannot go below 200.

As Josh said, I mean, 200 pounds of snowy grouper is about thirty or forty minutes, and it's a couple of drops. I mean, it takes us -- You've got to put your hooks in the water a quarter-mile from where you're going to start fishing, for us, and it's a couple of drops, and you've got your fish, and you move on, and so you certainly can't go below that, but, with ACLs the way they are right now, we've got to be very, very careful that we don't get ourselves into a situation where we can't even make it to Lent, to Easter, without grouper. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Laurilee, I think what we have here is also a regional difference. I mean, for my boat, 200 pounds is a weekly trip limit, because that's how long it takes my boat to get offshore and put a trip together, and we couldn't come and go, no matter what the limit was, and so, you know, sort of the way we operate is, you know, we head offshore, and we catch our deepwater fish, and we work our way inshore. Like Tim, my concern is the importance of that fish being available for a longer period of time before the shallow-water grouper open, and I say that as a market owner, too.

What I think would be interesting is, one, looking at this step-up, and, two, this regional difference we have is exactly the thing that we need to discuss when we look at, you know, our longer-term planning for the snapper grouper fishery, because I'm not not sympathetic to the needs of people who fish differently, but I just don't think this is the amendment to do that in right now, and so, you know, I think it's a conversation that I would love to continue to have, but I would not support

sort of anything immediately over 200, with the exception of as, you know, the fishery rebuilds, we automatically get it back.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I heard from a person down here in the Keys that said that they were okay with 200 for right now, and so -- Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Well, the person in the Keys, they're only running a short distance to go out and get that 200 pounds. We've got to run a long way, just like Kerry, and so, you know, maybe figure two trips a week, and, I mean, we don't have the amount of fish that you guys have to fish for up in North Carolina, and so that would help us, even if you could combine and make two trips a week, and so 400 pounds, and then you're done for the week, but I'm just trying to -- I'm trying to -- The fuel is killing us. We can't afford to go fishing, and we can't keep a crew, and so I had to try.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, I think it's a good point, but I think I go back to what Kerry said, and I think that we need to have a broader discussion here, and that just trying to fix it in the snowy amendment might not be the right place. I think we want to get to a way to account for regional differences in the fishery overall, but I'm just not sure how to do that yet, and I don't know that I would start right here, I guess.

Then let me ask the committee, since this is what is standing between us and lunch, and we have a preferred alternative of no action, which is the 200 pounds, and are we okay with sticking with that preferred? I see heads nodding yes, and I'm looking at this side of the table, and it looks like heads nodding yes over here as well.

MS. IBERLE: I think my only clarification would be, if we keep the preferred, then the action essentially will migrate to Considered but Rejected, and this is probably discussion for after lunch, but, if we are considering an increase in trip limit, then the same thing with gag, and are we wanting to incorporate alternatives, because, in that case, we would retain the action, but, again, that might be a discussion for after lunch.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree. Let's talk about that after lunch, and so people think about that. Are we going to add in some sort of step-up option, as the fishery rebuilds, or just mentally tell ourselves we're going to come back to this, but think about that over lunch, and, Carolyn, I'm going to turn it back to you to tell us when to come back.

DR. BELCHER: Well, as much as it probably will pain Mel, just because of the lunch restrictions, we have to kind of stick to the hour-and-a-half, and the weather was showing that it was actually raining at this moment, and so I think that kind of throws a little bit of a monkey-wrench on that as well, and so it's 12:20, and so that's 1:50 that we would be back.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so the first thing that we're going to do is we're going to turn it over to Bob, who is going to give us the AP comments on amberjack, and then we're going to go into the decision document, and so over to you, Bob.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Amendment 49, based on the things that I was listening to -- This is interesting, being able to do this live, because you prepare to say something, and then something else comes up, but the discussions and all about fuel prices, and can we do something for certain fishermen in an area that do not have an opportunity -- Maybe there is something here that will exist in greater amberjack, and it's interesting, at the time that we held this AP -- Bring your eyes to that last dot on the Amendment 49 slide, and I will explain that and work backwards, rather than the other way.

It's saying there was a general consensus among the AP that the stock is not as healthy as the assessment indicates and maintain sustainability, rather than increase harvest. Well, it wasn't that clean, and there was a discussion of, gee, there's these other fisheries that get in trouble, and amberjack is pretty good, and maybe we're seeing a few less fish, last year or the year before, and so should we get out ahead of things and start conservation now, and that conversation was led more by representatives say on the commercial side and in North Carolina.

That was in sort of a stark difference to the fishermen that would be from Florida, particularly the central coast of the state and into the northern part of the state, and, you know, some disagreement on, well, we're hurting a little now, and I will explain why, what came up. It's interesting, at that time, the discussion with fuel prices, and Laurilee stating that, today, up near Daytona, it was \$6.30 a gallon for diesel, and that didn't exist when we had this AP meeting, and so it may have been a lot easier to, as a group of fishermen, start thinking way out ahead of trimming yourself back, and I kind of wonder, personally, what would be said, or if this would have maybe even come up, if this was today, with fuel at two-dollars a gallon more, at least.

I just want to let it be known, for those of you on the council, that the AP really was a little split on this at the time, leaning towards conservation, and North Carolina was leaning a little more towards hopefully save the fish for another day, and Florida saying, you know, we need access to fish. There were some nuances included in that, and there wasn't much of a statement from South Carolina or Georgia, and we don't have as many reps doing this, but we did have a lot of comment between Florida, and a lot of banter back and forth, between Florida and North Carolina.

One issue to bring to your attention, and it's not on here, is that, in fairness, in North Carolina, the fish, for some odd reason, are a little easier to get, and the thirty-six-inch limit for the commercial is fairly easy, and, you know, there's a possibility of a trip or more, even a day, and so possibly a little easier to conserve.

In Florida, we were hearing that, to get fish that size, from the central coast, people are going at least twenty-five miles, or maybe forty or forty-five, to pursue that size amberjack, and they are also running into apparently other issues in Florida of shark predation, and larger fish is -- You know, if they're just a little under and thrown back, they're eaten, and there is some predation on the fish at the thirty-six-inch limit, and so, you know, I would kind of like to set that, that you do have -- I know, because I've gotten plenty of calls, but there is a lot of interest in Florida to loosen up a bit on this, and one of the reasons being that nobody is really catching their ACL.

That may just be due to what the fish were doing, and I guess I would like to liken it a little bit to there was some concern with dolphin last year, and that doesn't exist this year, and maybe you're going to see it with amberjack, the same way, and it will be back again another year, and maybe it

wasn't what people originally anticipated, and nobody anticipated the fuel prices of today, as Laurilee brought up.

With that, the Action 1, what we were asked to look at is the total ACL of -- As listed there, and, you know, we're really not taking it, and so you have a lot of fishermen that are thinking, hey, we're being told enough on enough species and that, perhaps under the rules, or the guidance from the SSC, that we've gotten to fish less, and here's one where we're saying there might actually be fish available, and so there are people that would like that to be considered. The AP, as discussed, is keeping the current sector allocation at what it is, and there was not a tremendous amount of discussion, at this time, to change that.

Action 3, you would think that could be an area for negotiation, because there has been -- There is talk, often, in the AP of -- I call it rationalizing, or normalizing, the possession limit. Just make it equal across both sectors. The issue you have right now is the recreational sector loves that twenty-eight-inch limit, and that's just a beautiful fish for us to take home after a day of fishing, and so we love that.

What you find is the commercials would like to be able to drop it a little, thirty-four, or probably, if we're talking of the fuel now, maybe a little less, and they're having more of an issue with the thirty-six-inch limit, and we're wondering why. If the recreational sector is at twenty-eight, and they're at thirty-six, is there room in the middle, or why can't they come down, especially within the parameters that there seem to be fish available and that we're not meeting the ACL, and, according to the SSC, we're not really having a problem at this point.

Then that goes to the Action 5, where we'll keep the commercial trip limits for both commercial seasons and then go with the April spawning closure and continue that as it is, and so it's a wonderful species, and, I mean, in closing, some of your discussions that went under snowy grouper, they're probably going to apply here, and maybe be a little more comfortable with that, and so thank you very much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. Any questions for Bob? All right. I don't see any hands up. Mike, do you want to start working through the decision document?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm going to be going through this decision document. What I'm talking through today is also going to be doubling up as kind of the public hearing presentation for greater amberjack, and so, for members of the public that are here that are preparing to comment on greater amberjack later on, when we open the public comment session, this can help inform some of those comments as well.

Amendment 49 was initiated after an assessment of South Atlantic greater amberjack. The assessment determined that the stock was not overfished, and overfishing was not occurring. This assessment did incorporate the new recreational FES estimates, and that kind of motivated the new OFLs and ABC recommendations that came from the SSC, and so that's being considered here.

As we went through the initial scoping phase, there were some comments from the public that added some additional actions, and that has led us to now we have seven actions that are contained in this amendment, looking at revising the ABC, ACL, and optimum yield, and also considering changes to sector allocations, minimum size limits, the commercial trip limits, the April spawning

closure, and then one additional action, and this isn't greater-amberjack-specific, but it pertains to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and this has to do with the recreational annual catch targets, and I'll talk a little bit more about that when I get to that specific action, but that is in this amendment as well.

Our objectives for this meeting are to kind of review the actions and alternatives that have been brought forward to-date, and also taking some look at the updated analyses. As I go through pieces of the decision document, there is some analysis that is included there, and there is more extensive analysis that is included in the draft amendment. That is in your briefing book, and so I would encourage you to kind of cross-reference and look. If you want to look at something in a bit more depth, please reference the draft amendment, because there's a lot more detail contained there, and this is more of a summary of that information.

We are in the later stages of this amendment, and it's scheduled to go for final approval in September, and so that means, at this meeting, one of the objectives here would be to have some more preferreds selected before we get to that September meeting and it's considered for final approval.

With the scheduling of the public comment occurring this afternoon, what the committee may want to do is just hear the options, and maybe have some brief discussion right now, but then hear the public comment and come back to this in Full Council, as far as selecting any additional preferreds beyond those that you've already looked at so far, and so that may be a path forward, but, if you have a desire to select preferreds before the public comments, then you are able to do that.

Moving down, we have our purpose and need statement, and that's been kind of included and reviewed all along. A couple of minor wording edits are included there, but it really hasn't changed from its initial draft, or at least the last draft, outside of those minor edits, and so, if you have any additional edits, please just email those to me, and I can incorporate those, or, if there any questions or concerns with that, then feel free to -- I guess I can pause and see if there are any questions about the purpose and need.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions or comments about the purpose and need statement? I don't see any hands. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so now we can go ahead and move into the proposed actions at this point, and Action 1 is looking at revising the ABC, total ACL, and optimum yield. Given Shep's comments earlier on another amendment, this can be amended, and so we are including the OFL in these actions, in this language, as well, and the OFL is listed in the draft amendment that's there, but it wouldn't necessarily affect the catch levels, and the catch levels considered here would be the same among these alternatives.

The alternatives that are here, the current ABC and total ACL are 1.968 million pounds. Preferred Alternative 2 has the catch levels that are shown here on the screen, and you all have selected this as preferred, and that's setting the total ACL to be equal to the recommended ABC that the SSC has provided. Alternative 3 is based on 90 percent of the recommended ABC, and Alternative 4 is based on 80 percent of the recommended ABC.

Given the AP's comment, I just wanted to address that a little bit in more detail here, relative to this, and so what they've recommended, in their comments, was that this catch level, which is the 2026-2027 and beyond ABC, that that would be set as a constant total ACL for the entire timeframe. That is something that we can incorporate, and we have the analysis, because, really, the analysis for the season length is based on this total ACL number, and so, if we just move it into all of the years, we would have the same season length projections for all of those years, instead of it only being in the last year, but we are able to accommodate that, if that's the will of the council, to add that as an additional alternative.

There has been -- As we've gone through the course of this amendment, there has been an alternative that was proposed, and later removed, that was kind of along the lines of that constant ACL type of thing. What that previous one did was it set the 2024-2025 ABC and made that constant for the first years of management, the first three years, and then it set ACL equal to ABC in the last two and beyond, and so that's something that you all have looked at previously, and it was taken into Considered but Rejected, a couple of meetings ago, but that is something that has come -- That's an idea that the AP has put forward. The idea of a constant ACL has been put forward, a couple of times now, by the AP.

There are some brief descriptions of effects that I encourage you to look at you consider your decision on the preferred, and they're summarized here, and I'm not going to read through all of them, but I just wanted to point out that they are there, for your reference, and, as we go through this action, and then the next action, there are tables that kind of outline the percent difference between the ACL that's being proposed and the five-year average annual landings, and so what we're looking at are the different preferreds here and the fishing year.

Under Preferred Alternative 2, the difference between the five-year average annual landings and those limits that are proposed under Preferred Alternative 2, you see the difference here, the initial year being 18 percent higher than the average annual landings over the last five years, and you can read that table kind of in sequence, as you go through.

Scrolling down here, the action related to -- I guess the committee's action related to this action would be to make sure that there are no disagreements with the modifications the IPT has made to this action, and they're mostly just minor wording edits, and it's not really changing any numbers, and then confirming whether you want to keep your current preferred or change it to something else, and so I'll pause here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. All right, and so would someone like to make a motion to approve the IPT's edits to Action 1?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: You don't need a specific motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sorry. We don't need a motion, and just are we good with the IPT edits? I see heads nodding yes. Okay. How do we feel about our preferred? Right now, our preferred is Alternative 2. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess a question. First, when would the next stock assessment be for amberjack? I know we have the great amberjack count going on as well.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to look at the science folks for that. 2026 is what I'm being told. There's a research track in 2026.

MR. STRELCHECK: So the reason I'm asking is, I mean, I certainly commend the AP and the comments, and at least the suggestion of having a constant catch, and my initial concern is that we are adjusting the recreational landings up substantially, and, if we start with the end year, that's essentially less than what the average landings were under FES during the time series, and so we would guarantee that we're going -- I won't say guarantee, but we would likely run into a closure at that point, because of the allocation in the recreational sector harvesting amberjack. In terms of setting the catch levels and being potentially more conservative, based on the AP recommendations, not carrying it out to 2027, in terms of catch levels with the next assessment, could be a way to address that.

The other point is, you know, we're too late in the process, but, you know, if you think of this as a bank account, the more you save upfront, the more money you're going to have on the backend of your projections, and, so, in this instance, we can't go back to the SSC and rerun it and say, well, you know, we want to lower the catch limit in the beginning, and then see how much that gets it, in terms of future yield along the way, but I would suggest that we consider that with future amendments, if we want to take a constant catch approach like that going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With relation to the potential of running into a closure, the closures are shown, and I will kind of talk through this when we get to Action 2, but you can look down ahead, and the closures are shown underneath Action 2, related to the sector allocations, and one thing that has popped up related to this is that -- If you consider the maximum landings for the last five years, then, yes, there are some closures that are there, but, if you think that the fishery is going to look, in the future, more like the average of the last five, or even the average of the last three, then there are much fewer -- There are much fewer years that end up with closures for those sectors, and so it depends on what your impression is of whether the fishery will look like the average, the maximum, and the average over what timeframe.

One other consideration is that there have been measures put in, more recently than the data that are included in this amendment, that have been meant to slow down the ability to hit the ACL, specifically on the commercial side. The data that are included here do not include the split season that is currently in place, just because it hasn't been in place for very long, and so that was something that was put in place to prolong the commercial season and keep it from running into the ACL so quickly, and so just a couple of additional considerations related to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am struggling with this, especially based on Andy's comment, because what I'm hearing, from many of our AP members, and certainly people -- There is few among them that feel strongly that this fishery is not as rosy as the assessment showed, and, you know, when fishermen are wanting to be more conservative, it behooves us, a lot of times, to listen to them, and then, of course, we have to think about the implications of the shifting effort off of gag, and that worries me, and going from this, you know, 1.9 million pounds to this 4.3 million pounds, when we're a little worried that might not be rosy.

I don't know what to do. I mean, I guess the implications of going back to the SSC, to ask them for that approach to projections -- I'm guessing the problem with that is that it just throws off our timing of everything, and that's why that's not an option, and it's a timing thing, and is that correct, because we're not under a statutory mandate right now, but I do realize that we have a jigsaw puzzle of things that we've scheduled in.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, there's the timing issue of, you know, just kind of the staff workload, and that's one aspect of it. The other issue is that, if you go back to the SSC, and there is more time put in, then the question comes up of is this going to end up being another yellowtail situation, where you get so far removed from the terminal year of the assessment that you're uncomfortable setting the projections based on data that are from that far back, and so there is that concern with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess I do want to make it clear, because this whole shift from CHTS to FES can really confuse matters, but the current ABC of almost two-million pounds is not equivalent to the doubling of the catch level, right, to 4.3. On paper, it looks that way, but you have to then adjust the recreational landings upward, to account for a substantial portion of that increase.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, based on that information, is there any desire to change the preferred? It looks like heads shaking no.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. We'll keep going then to Action 2. This is where there is consideration of changing the sector allocations and sector annual catch limits. The alternatives that are being considered, and so the current allocation is 59.34 percent to the recreational sector and 40.66 percent to the commercial sector. This is based on the formula used in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, where it takes into account kind of the long-term landings, along with the short-term landings, and does a weighted average of those percentages.

Plugging in the new FES recreational data into the same formula, it gives the allocation percentages that are included in Alternative 2, which are 70.16 percent recreational and 29.84 percent commercial. Basically, the other alternatives were built off of these two, and so, initially, this only included three alternatives, and there was kind of a midpoint selected at 65 percent recreational and 35 percent commercial. That was originally derived as a midpoint between the other two, but it does also coincide with the average percent landings, how they kind of have been caught by the fishery over the last ten years, and so that's how that came about.

Then, at the last meeting, there were additional alternatives that the council requested for a 55 percent recreational and 45 percent commercial, as well as a 50/50 allocation, and so those two alternatives have been added, and we have analysis, similar to the initial three, that has been added for those two.

As you scroll down here, you can see how that plays out into a recreational and commercial ACL for each of these alternatives. These numbers that are included here are based on the preferred alternative from Action 1, and so we take the preferred total ACL number and then divide it out

among these different portions of the fishery, the recreational, the commercial, and then dividing up the commercial into its seasonal quotas.

The commercial ACL is divided into a Season 1 quota that gets 60 percent, and that operates in the beginning of the fishing year. Remember this is not a calendar fishing year, and so Season 1 lasts from March through August. Season 2 gets 40 percent of the commercial ACL, and that lasts from September through February, and you see how those numbers kind of break out into these different options, looking through Tables -- Looking here, initially, at Table 3, and that has both of the preferred alternatives, but you can also see, looking in the draft amendment, more detail on the other alternatives that are included there. Right now, if you maintained your preferred alternatives from both Action 1 and Action 2, this is what the ACLs and seasonal quotas would look like.

Scrolling down into the analyses, and I kind of alluded to this before, but just pointing out what's been shown from these, and Table 4 looked at Season 1 under the different section allocation alternatives, and using the preferred total ACL from Action 1, and what you see here is there are three scenarios in these tables, and so Scenario 1 is a three-year, the most recent three-year, average, this being data from the 2017-2018 season through 2019-2020. Scenario 2 is a five-year average, going from the 2015-2016 through 2019-2020, and Scenario 3 is the maximum annual landings during the 2015-2016 through 2019-2020 seasons, and, when you apply the landings that are in each of those respective scenarios to the ACLs that come from these allocations and that are pulled out of the table there, you get the closure dates, the estimated closure dates, that are shown in that table.

For example, if you look at the last year, and remember we have a changing ACL as we go through the course of time here, and so, if we look at Alternative 2, in the final year, it would have a commercial ACL of 459,479, and, based on the recent three-year average, there would be no closure expected for that allocation. There would be a closure expected under the five-year average of August 25, and, under the maximum landings applied to that ACL, there would be a closure on June 12 expected, and so that's how you can kind of evaluate and weigh that information.

Looking at Table 5, this shows Season 2 for the commercial fishery, and, as a reminder, the way these seasons work, there is intra-annual carryover, and so anything that's not caught in Season 1 carries over into Season 2, but what is not caught in Season 2 does not carry forward. It ends there, and then it restarts in Season 1, and, keeping that in mind, looking at the scenarios that were here, Scenario 1 includes that three-year average, similar to the previous table.

We don't have the five-year average, because remember the split season that are in place now to extend the fishing year for the commercial fishery -- They weren't in place going back into these data, and one of the reasons why they were put in place was because there were closures that were occurring, and they were occurring -- They tended to occur later in the year, in that second-half of the fishing year, and so we had several years where the fishery was closed, and we don't want to pull data and try to evaluate the length of the season based on a year when the fishery was closed, and so we only have the three-year scenario, having three years' worth of data, but going five years, trying to get five years of complete, late-in-the-year data, would have us going much further back in time, and that may not be as relevant to the current fishery.

We only have the three-year average, and then we have the maximum over the last five-year span, but noting that there would be some closures within that time, and so there are some years that wouldn't be as contributory, but this is what we ended up with. From a results standpoint, very few of these scenarios would be estimated to have a closure in the second-half of the commercial season, or in the second season of the commercial fishing year, rather.

Then Table 6 shows the estimated recreational closures. Again, we have similar scenarios as that first table that I pointed out, and so I'm not going to go through those all again, but what we see, from this table, is that, under Alternatives 2 and 3, there are some expected closures if the maximum landings are hit, but, if the average landings from three or five years occur, then there are no expected closures in either of those two alternatives.

Under Alternative 1, the only year that would be expected to have a closure would be that last year of the timeframe, where it has the lowest ACL level, and then, looking at Alternatives 4 and 5, those were those additional ones that have more of the total ACL allocated to the commercial sector, and there are some closures considering the five-year average timeframe, but none in the three-year average timeframe, and so those are some of the analyses that have supported this, and, similar to that table from Action 1, there is a table here, Table 7, that outlines the percent difference of each of the sector ACLs, between those and the average landings over the last five years, and so you can have that as a case for comparison to what's been observed and what the limit would potentially be, moving forward.

As well, there is the effects section, and the AP has recommended Alternative 1, no action, which keeps the current allocations, and those are approximately 60 percent recreational and 40 percent commercial, and, at this point, I will pause, again, for any questions, and if you all want to have any further discussion on your preferred alternative. Your preferred, as a reminder, is the 65/35, at this time, and that's Alternative 3.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Are there questions or discussion? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to speak in support of staying the course on our preferred alternative. I think it strikes the balance between sharing some of the benefits accrued back to the greater amberjack stock, even with the recognition of maybe the status isn't as good as we think it is, but I think Table 7 really greatly illustrates that you're increasing the commercial ACL by an appreciable percentage, which is going to create opportunity there to help mitigate, maybe, some of the consequences of forthcoming actions. You're going to, you know, affect the recreational fishery, but hopefully not in such a manner as to create a hardship there, and so I just recommend that we stay with the preferred alternative that we have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just, for your information, I would note that Appendix I of the full FMP contains a list of the goals and objectives of the Snapper Grouper FMP, very coincidentally, and maybe, in the discussion, or before final approval, certainly think about how the allocation suits the goals and objectives, or pursues those goals and objectives. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just as a follow-up and reminder, this was something that was put in following the March meeting, and I believe it was the wreckfish amendment that previously had the updated Snapper Grouper goals and objectives in it, and that's being kind of on a slower pace, and that was slowed down, but this one, since it's a little bit of a faster track, those goals and objectives were included now in Amendment 49, so that they can be in the FMP a little bit quicker.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, just to elaborate a little more, there are some in there, like Objective 3, ensuring that management decisions help maximize social and economic opportunity for all sectors, and there's one about management measures relating to discards, and those things are good, and they seem to be relevant to this decision. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more discussion on our preferred for this action? All right. I'm going to turn it back to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Continuing on then to Action 3, this action was brought in to increase the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack. It was initially brought about in response to some public feedback and some AP discussion. In the earlier time of this amendment, there was some discussion about changing the size limits, to have them equal, and, right now, there is a large difference. The commercial size limit is thirty-six inches, and the recreational size limit is twenty-eight inches, and so it was brought about to have some consideration of equal size limits.

There also was some information that has been updated in SEDAR 59, which is the newer greater amberjack assessment, and so the table that you see here is from -- It's based on the SEDAR 59 information. With that updated maturity schedule, you can see -- Excuse me. Table 9 is what I'm referring to. With that updated maturity schedule, you can see the size and the percent of female maturity. Previously, before SEDAR 59, it was expected that females matured at a larger size, at a later and larger size, and so that's been updated and included in this amendment, and so that's there for your consideration.

For the recreational minimum size limit, you see, from the analysis standpoint, there is a table describing the alternatives and the size limits. Right now, the preferred is to keep it the same, at twenty-eight inches fork length, and there are alternatives for thirty inches, thirty-two, and thirty-six, and, the percent reductions associated with the changing of the size limit, that's shown in Table 8.

As you scroll down the information there, you can see the percent of lengths that are in each of these size bins, based on MRIP and headboat data, and then there are the effects sections, and you can see, within that, Table 10 has the estimated change in the landings and some information on the short-term economic changes that would happen, regarding any change in the size, in the size limit, and so the Snapper Grouper AP has recommended maintaining the current recreational size limit, which is the preferred right now of Alternative 1, and I will pause there for any additional discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I prefer the Alternative 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Judy. Any more comments? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess a question for staff. If we're not going to change the preferred alternative, or status quo alternative, would you want us to move this action to Considered but Rejected?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If that's the will of the council, to go ahead and say you all aren't going to give any further consideration to changing it at this time, then that direction can be given to remove it, and I guess that may be helpful in the form of a motion, just to have it record clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: **I make a motion that we take the no action, Preferred Alternative 1, for Action Number 3, and, actually, you want to just take Action Number 3 and move it to the Considered but Rejected category.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Laurilee. It's seconded by Spud. Any more discussion? **Any objections?** All right. **That motion is approved.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so, next, I will continue on to Action 4, which considers a reduction to the commercial minimum size limit for greater amberjack. Right now, the alternatives -- There is no preferred alternative selected. From the last meeting, you all wanted to get some feedback from the AP on what was desired, and you all said, at the last meeting, that you were interested in any additional public comment, and so just mentioning that there is public comment available, and the link to the public comment was sent out with the briefing book materials, and so feel free to look at the written public comment as you consider your decision.

That was brought up, and, right now, the current minimum size limit for the commercial sector is thirty-six inches, and there are alternatives for thirty-two, thirty, and twenty-eight inches fork length. The rationale for considering this change came about from comments from the AP, during our initial scoping phase, as well as some comments from the public during that scoping phase, and some of that rationale included increased equity between the sectors. It was noted that it takes longer to bring a larger amberjack onboard, and that longer time to bring the fish onboard reduces the trip efficiency and increases risk of injury, and it also can be an attractant for sharks. There was also support for this from some of the public and AP for reducing the risk of injury to the fishermen.

Then, on the commercial side, smaller greater amberjack are more commercially desirable, and it's easier to sell the smaller greater amberjack, and so there was desire to lower the size limit for that, as well as the consideration that the stock assessment indicates that there is biomass above BMSY, and so this reduction to the size limit could be done without jeopardizing the greater stock.

From the analysis side, there was not as much analysis for the commercial -- Related to the commercial size limit for this fish. What we have available are the commercial observer lengths, and that's shown there, but I would point out the rather small sample size of thirty-eight fish that are going into this figure, and so just keep that in mind.

One of the difficulties is that we're trying to quantify how often a fish that is not legal to keep is caught and then released, and so that kind of reduces the amount of times that you're able to see that and capture that information, but that's the information that we have to this point, as well as anecdotal information coming from the AP. There have been comments that they are seeing plenty of fish that are just under the size limit there, in that thirty to thirty-five-inch range, and that was particularly noted by fishermen out of Florida, and so there are additional effects that are described in the document.

The AP has recommended changing the commercial minimum size to thirty-four inches. If that is something that the council would like to add for consideration, that can be put in as an additional alternative. There would be a little bit of additional writing, but there wouldn't be a huge time constraint, as far as additional analyses, because we lack the data to be able to do an extensive analysis on this item, and so that's something that -- Adding that thirty-four-inch as an alternative, if that's something that you all wanted to consider at this point, that's something that can be accommodated, from the logistic end of it, and I will pause there for any further discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. I thought we would have some discussion on this. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. I just want to remind the council, as I've said before, that the catch limits that we give you, and that the SSC reviews, are predicated on the existing size limits, and so we really shouldn't be contemplating substantial changes in the size limits without also looking at what the effect would be on the ACL, and so I think, when the council wants to consider the effects of different size limits, that should be built into the statements of work for the stock assessment, so that they can actually look at that and give you some advice. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So, if we wanted to consider a smaller size, would that slow this amendment down then, and it would have to go back to the SSC?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It wouldn't have to go back to the SSC, and I think what Clay was alluding to is that the projections that you see, and that the ABC is based on, that assumes that the current size limits are going to stay the same, and just the timing of when this happened, and the consideration to change the size limit happened after the assessment, and so that's why this has come about in the way that it did, but I guess I can pause and let Clay speak to this, but I think he wasn't as much saying this needs to go back to the SSC and as a word of caution, and is that accurate, Clay?

DR. PORCH: Well, I'm saying that the way it has happened now is you get an ACL, or you set an ACL based on the SSC advice that was predicated on the existing size limits, and then you go back and then change the minimum size limit, and so let's say you make it a lot smaller, and you're allowing the fishery to catch a lot more fish, because the ACL is based on landings, right, and then you start going and set the size limit to a smaller value, and it takes a lot more fish to actually meet that ACL. It can be, and it just depends on the biology and the particulars of this particular stock, but that could end up actually exceeding what the ACL would have been, had we considered that change in size limit all along, and does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I think it makes sense, but I guess I would just -- It seems a tiny bit backwards for us to guess, before the assessment is completed, whether or not we might want to change the size limit, because, maybe if this assessment wasn't so rosy, we wouldn't be having this conversation, and so it's kind of the chicken-and-the-egg about whether or not we would have that ready when the assessment was conducted, or maybe just right after, before the SSC looks at it, and I don't know, but it just seems a little much for us to know that prior to the stock assessment being completed. I get why you want it, and it makes sense for the estimates, and I'm wondering if there is a middle ground of assessment to the council, to see if they want to do something like that, and then to the SSC, and I don't know. Clay.

DR. PORCH: I think we want to move forward with this in the future, and, I mean, from the discussions I heard from the AP, there is other drivers of why they might want to change the size limit, and so you have an idea of what those could look like, and I wouldn't advocate for the assessment to run every possible size limit in one-inch intervals, or something like that, but I think the council and the AP could come up with some -- If they're really interested in it, some particular minimum size limits that we could explore, and you do it while you're developing the projections, as part of the assessment, and it's a lot more efficient than coming back and then we pick it up again and run some new projections and then put it forward to the SSC, and so just building them into the statement of work, when they're really desired.

I mean, I'm not saying as a matter of course and always putting in a bunch of different minimum size limit alternatives, but, from what I hear here, there is some reasons that particular size limits were being considered, and that could have been included in the statement of work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike and then Andy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just reminding you of the timing with which all of this occurred, this action was brought in after scoping of this amendment, which was not initiated until after the assessment, and so it was brought -- When we scoped this amendment, that's when we found out from the public -- That's when we heard from the public and the AP that there was desire to change the minimum size limit, and that's when it got put in. That was after the SSC had already given their recommendation, and the assessment had already occurred, and all of that was already done. There may be some -- That's probably a larger decision than what's in this amendment, and so the idea of having public contribution, or something like that, before an assessment, but that's how this action got put into this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I've got lots of hands. I have Andy, Chris, Kerry, Carolyn.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Madam Chair. I believe I heard the AP was recommending thirty-four inches, and is that correct, a two-inch decrease? Okay. Clay, I am hearing what you're saying, and, obviously, where we're at in the process, it seems that, yes, that's going to have an effect, if we reduce it to thirty-four, but it's much less of an effect than if we reduced it a full eight inches, right, a substantial effect, and so we're three months away from essentially taking final action.

I recognize, like from a process standpoint, this is something we would need to consider going forward, but at least I'm hearing from you that the advice, the guidance, would be maybe, in this instance, not make sweeping changes to a size limit, given the influence that that could have on

the catch limit, and that we could kind of stay the course, but, if we did go to a much lower size limit, that could have a more dramatic effect and may need to invoke the SSC and new projections, and is that fair to say? I'm seeing nodding.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was prepared to make a motion to pick a preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. Go ahead.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure. **I would like to make a motion to choose Alternative 2 in Action 4 as the council's preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. A motion and a second, and so that is Alternative 2, which is thirty-two inches fork length, and so we have a motion, and it's been seconded. I am going to continue through my list of hands. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't want to belabor the point, but I just want to make sure that I understand, so that, in the future -- It almost seems like that now the precedent is that, before the assessment begins, we need to go to the AP and say what are the range of things you could possibly think you might want to happen, so that it can be modeled, and, in my knowledge, we've never done it that way, because that would lead me to believe that the only time we could make a size change -- I hear that maybe a minimal one isn't a big deal, but, if we're looking at a size change, am I hearing that we could only do that if we decided what that would -- I just want to make it clear, because it seems like there's some sort of precedent shift here that I want to understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, that's what I heard, that it would have to go in the scope of work, which is pretty far out from the assessment being conducted, and it just -- If we have to go to the AP with -- If it's like in a fishery performance report before the assessment is completed, and now you need to tell us everything that you would like to see changed, so that then that can be run in an upcoming stock assessment, and it just seems like -- I agree, and Carolyn said inefficient. I agree that I think it's inefficient as well, but, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, and not adaptive. I mean, the time we have between stock assessments can be really long, and so how can we have adaptive management, if that's the case? That just -- I don't mean that that's necessarily what you're saying, but I just want clarification on that, personally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It seems to me that it would be ideal, if the AP had some reason why they thought they wanted a different size limit, to evaluate that in the projections, and that would get us ahead of the game a little bit, but I don't think that would become a criteria. I certainly can't imagine that that would limit the council's hands to consider a size limit change, if you thought it was necessary, when you got the impact of the assessment and were taking action, and you thought that was necessary to optimize the fishery and address all of your restrictions and requirements, and then I think you would still have the ability to change the size limit, and we would analyze it as we always do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to continue going through my list of hands here. Carolyn and then Laurilee.

DR. BELCHER: John pretty much was getting at what I was getting at. We just found that with red drum, and we -- With proposing the regulations, we were basically gauging to see what folks wanted to see at the state level, for size changes and all, but we have those ties back to ASMFC to meet 40 percent SPR.

Well, we've done two assessments, and they weren't overfished. Well, sorry. We don't know what the status was as to overfished, but overfishing wasn't occurring, and so nobody did any kind of bag analysis, and so, as we're moving forward, and people are wanting to suggest size ranges, we can't forecast what is going to come out of that assessment, to say whether or not that's a legitimate ask or not, and that's the only thing that I see, is the caution there is that we offer too wide of a range of things, and then, if they're off the table, now you've got people frustrated, because you've asked my opinion, but there is consequences to my opinion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So there is a variety of reasons that the AP wanted the smaller size limit on the big amberjack, and the main one is shark depredation, and so, if you're throwing these fish back in the water, because they're not thirty-six inches, and the shark is grabbing them right away, they're still gone out of the biomass, and so, in my opinion, it would be better to keep the smaller fish, and bring them to the dock, and it's a more desirable fish, as far as the salability of it, and I think it would be better, in the long run, to keep the smaller fish and not give as many to the shark, because that is the main reason that they wanted to reduce the size, is because they're losing so many fish to shark depredation, and it's not doing anybody any good, and it's still taking them out of the biomass.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: But now, coming back just to Clay's side, I also get, when you're asking to slide off of one -- It's different when you bring it in, because we kind of know what you're taking away, but, when you try to expand it out, you don't know what you're going to be adding back in, and so the potential of your ACL going up relative -- As far as what your catch is relative to the ACL is there, and so I do think that's the one difference, when normally we're looking at it from the standpoint of bringing sizes down, because of concerns of what is coming out, and this is putting fish back, and we don't know the consequence.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's kind of focus back on this motion that we have on the board to select Alternative 2, which is the thirty-two-inch minimum size limit. I would just note that the AP suggested thirty-four inches, but there is not an alternative for thirty-four inches, and so this is the next closest one to what was suggested. Is there more discussion of this particular action and preferred? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I don't remember the fellow's name, but he was a commercial amberjack fisherman.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Paul.

MR. BREWER: Paul, yes, but he wrote a pretty well thought-out and cogent letter to us, comment, and, if I remember correctly, he was talking about thirty-three inches, and I just don't know how much difficulty there would be in putting an alternative in for thirty-three inches, at this late date, if it's going to be real difficult thing, and I would think that that might be a better preferred, just based on his arguments and what he had to say. In any event, maybe somebody from staff can tell us how much of a pain it would be to put thirty-three in as an alternative at this date.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It wouldn't be a terrible pain, just because we're not analyzing anything. We don't have the data to do a full analysis. There would just need to be a little bit of additional language that's put into the draft amendment, and so, logistically, it wouldn't be a huge pain. As a request from staff, I would ask that, if you're going to add an alternative, that it would be something that you feel very strongly about, to the point that you would consider it as your preferred, so that, at this stage, we're not adding alternatives that are then going to get thrown out at the end, and so that would be my only request, but, logistically, we can do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So could you argue to drop one? I mean, is twenty-eight -- I am trying to think back to what the arguments were, but is twenty-eight something that is actually considerable within the group? I mean, would you consider putting commercial and recreational the same? I mean, I thought that was kind of -- The conversation was getting away from that, and so why look at twenty-eight, if you want to look at an alternative other than that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We can definitely move any alternatives that you all are just absolutely saying no to. We can definitely move alternatives to Considered but Rejected. The original rationale for the range that you see was to just have a complete range for both the recreational and the commercial, so that all the options were on the table, but we are late in the scheduling of this amendment, and we're at the later stages, and so, if you all have seen enough of any of these alternatives, and want to move them to Considered but Rejected, then that's something that can be done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Also, he had a typo in his comment, and he was fine with thirty-two.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I think they said thirty-three because they thought that might be as much as they could get away with, but they want less. I know that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: We have a motion on the floor, don't we?

MS. MCCAWLEY: If you want to make a substitute motion to add an alternative for thirty-three and make that as the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like Mel has got something to say, and so I will let --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: All I was going to say is I'm fine with thirty-two. I think thirty-two is close enough. With where we are right now, with what we have, I think thirty-two gets us to what we're trying to do, which was a decrease, and I think it's close enough to thirty-three, and I wouldn't go to a lot of trouble to try to put something else back in there right now, and so I would support the motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just want to go on the record as saying that, when we're reducing these minimum sizes, some of the fish are going to get caught quicker, and some places are going to be disadvantaged, because we don't get fish until a certain time, as these seasons go, and we don't have fish in January, February, March, April, and probably not until a little later, when the water warms up and the sharks get away, and so I just wanted to make note of that. As we're decreasing this, the folks that will have the advantage of this will be when the season starts, and there's a certain percentage that goes from the first season and a certain part to the second season, and so, if we ever get to regional management, I just want to make note of this. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion of this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion is approved.** Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can we hear a little more explanation about the preference for thirty-four inches from the AP? I know we're kind of talking about a level of specificity here that's pretty small, but I'm just curious to hear a little bit more between thirty-six and thirty-four, and why not thirty-two or something less than that?

MR. LORENZ: I think it was rooted in how the conversation started, that kind of a very prominent AP member from North Carolina began the conversation by kind of putting on the table that, hey, amberjack seem to be a little harder to catch than they used to, and so that started the conversation for conservation, which would kind of still lean to things like thirty-six-inch limit, but then, when you had the response from Florida and the distance they go and the predation, then there was a desire to go lower.

Absolutely, everybody would love to have a standardized twenty-eight-inch limit, if they could, but I think most people know that would require some horse-trading, probably, in allocations between the commercial and recreational sector, and the recreational sector was so delighted with their twenty-eight inches that maybe that wasn't going to happen, and so I think the thirty-four-inch was decided just as a way to move and give a little relief to the situations at-hand, having to go so far offshore to get properly-sized fish and then running into shark predation problems.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I will see if I can get a second. **I would like to add a new alternative that would consider the thirty-four-inch size limit.** If I get a second, I will explain my rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom, are you seconding?

MR. ROLLER: Second for discussion purposes.

MR. STRELCHECK: I hear staff loudly, and I don't like putting alternatives in an action late in the process, and this one gives us an opportunity to consider this for final action, if we wanted to change our preferred from what we just selected, but, more importantly, it's a smaller change than what we just discussed, and what Clay went through, in terms of the implications of, you know, calculating the yield levels from the fishery.

We're hearing some conservatism, from what I've heard from the AP, that things may not be as rosy as we think with the amberjack, and maybe there's some precaution needed, and so a smaller change may be beneficial and warranted here, and so that's the reason that I would recommend at least including it as an alternative, and then we have it available to us if we want to reconsider the preferred at our next meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion to add an alternative, and this motion has been seconded. It's under discussion. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I can certainly appreciate a smaller change, or at least looking at a smaller change, but, you know, we don't even have barely under a year under us of the last time we made a change to this fishery, which was splitting the seasons up, and here we are this year, and the same as last year, and, commercially, we're not getting to the quota. We're leaving these fish in the water, and we've got the SSC telling us that it's a healthy fishery, and we're leaving fish in the water, and we've only been doing this split season for a while.

Here we are this year, and we've barely caught 190,000 pounds of an 800,000-pound quota, and I think it would behoove us to look at this bigger change, and go to a thirty-two-inch, and see what happens for a year or two, but we can't keep spinning around in circles, every time we do something, and then do something different a year later. I think we need to give -- I think we need to give this fishery a chance to see how healthy it really and truly is, and I think making a bigger change, down to the thirty-two-inch size, would give us a better opportunity to see if there really is a problem with this fishery. I don't think the difference between thirty-six and thirty-four will tell us a lot, but I think we'll learn a lot more with the difference between thirty-six and thirty-two. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Once again, this is just adding an alternative, and it's not necessarily selecting it as a preferred. All right. Any more discussion of this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and we're continuing on now into Action 5, and this is considering increasing the commercial trip limit for greater amberjack. This is another one of those items that came out of public scoping and initial advisory panel feedback, was consideration of this, and it was kind of derived from given the not overfished and not overfishing stock status, and, at least in some areas of the fishery, the distance to run, the possibility of being able to keep more on a given trip. That's kind of how this action was started.

Alternative 1 has the current trip limits. Right now, the Season 1 commercial trip limit is 1,200 pounds, and the Season 2 commercial trip limit is 1,000 pounds, and, as a reminder, Season 1 is allocated 60 percent of the commercial ACL, and Season 2 is allocated 40 percent of the commercial ACL. Alternative 2 would change the Season 1 commercial trip limit, and the alternatives right now consider changing that to a 1,500-pound, 2,000-pound, or 2,500-pound trip limit. Alternative 3 considers changing the Season 2 commercial trip limit, and, right now, the alternatives that are considered include a 1,200, 1,500, 2,000, or 2,500-pound trip limit.

There is analysis that is included related to these items, and so just bringing up the season projections, and what we see here is based on -- This is based on the two preferred ACLs, the preferred total ACL, as well as the preferred allocation option, which you all have maintained as we've talked through those initial two actions.

When you plug those in with the different commercial trip limits, these are the estimated closure dates under the landings scenarios that I presented before, and so what you see here is the only scenario where there is a commercial closure in Season 1, estimated from the average landings, the five-year average, is in this 2c alternative, which has a 2,500-pound commercial trip limit, and that's only in the final year, where the total ACL is its lowest. There are some closures in this Scenario 3 column with the maximum landings scenario.

Looking at Season 2, and apologies that the table is split, but what we see in Season 2 is that there are no closures estimated on the three-year average landings scenario. There are some closures as you get into the higher trip limits, based on the maximum landings scenario, during that timeframe. Again, caveating the data that are going into that, because these data are from the time period when there was no split season in place, and so just noting that, and there are effects summarized from the different biological, economic, and social standpoints included there.

The AP has recommended maintaining the current commercial trip limits for both of the seasons, and there was concern, at the AP meeting, about potentially running into the limits, especially with all the other changes that are being considered at the same time, and so that was noted from them, and I will pause here for any additional discussion. There is no preferred alternative at this time, and that's another one that was left from the last meeting with no preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I am not ready to pick a preferred or anything, and I would like to hear public comment on it, but I would like to, if possible, if we could see how many commercial trips are at the commercial limits that we have today, and so how many 1,200-pound trips are there, and how many 1,00-pound trips are there, and what does a normal trip really look like for this fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have staff taking some notes over here, and so we've heard a suggestion to wait until after public comment and asking for some additional information. Any more discussion at this time, or does everyone want to wait until after public comment? I see heads nodding yes, wait until after public comment.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and we may have the information that Tim was speaking of available, but what may be helpful, especially given the time that we're at right now, is we can look for that

and see if we can bring that back in Full Council, when this comes up. That way, we can keep moving here, and we can make sure that we're on time for public comment.

Next, moving to Action 6, that's considering revision to the April spawning closure. Right now, during April, no person can sell or purchase greater amberjack. The commercial fishery is limited to one person per day, or one person per trip, and that's the same as the recreational bag limit, and there is one difference, that the commercial fishery would still be held to their sector-specific minimum size limit, as opposed to the recreational size limit, which is smaller, but that's the current scenario.

Alternative 2, considered under this, would put in a closure that would apply to both the recreational and commercial sectors, and so this would be a complete closure during the month of April, and April -- This closure was derived because April is within the peak spawning period for greater amberjack.

Alternative 3 would remove the April spawning closure for greater amberjack, and this was proposed because the spawning closure was put in with rationale from back in the 1990s, when there was not a stock assessment that there was very much confidence in, and so there was uncertainty from the stock assessment, and there was also concern, from the fishery standpoint, about being able to catch greater amberjack very easily when they're congregated to spawn.

During that timeframe, the spawning closure was put in, and the council added this Alternative 3, with the consideration that some of the conditions about not having the -- About having more uncertainty about the stock and the status and such, that those aren't reflected today, because we do have a stock assessment that has been approved, and we do have a stock status that is not overfished and not overfishing. That was put into place for consideration there, and there are some discussion and analyses included related to that action.

The analysis here focuses on primarily the commercial fishery, because that would be the sector that would be opened up in a timeframe that they currently are not, and what was done is there were commercial landings looked at to derive the potential landings in April, and there were commercial landings that were looked at in surrounding months, and then April was predicted based on those, and so, using some estimated landings for April, these would be the estimated closure dates associated with that, and I believe this should be Season 1 in this table, rather than Season 2, but, under Season 1, you would be looking at closure dates that would occur in kind of the middle ACL scenario, and then the long-term ACL scenario, and that's if the five-year average of the most recent years of landings, if that came about. There would be expected closures from the maximum landings scenario, but no expected closures from the three-year average scenario.

There are some additional summary effects, and the AP has recommended maintaining the current spawning closure. As Bob has talked about, there was kind of the back-and-forth and some concern about the true status and health of the fishery, and so they recommended maintaining the current one, and that would be Alternative 1, and there is no preferred that has been selected to this point related to this action, and I will pause there for any additional council discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion on Action 6? We do not currently have a preferred. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I have some discussion, and I don't necessarily have a motion, but a commercial limit of one fish and then a spawning season closure, and then you're not even allowed to enter the marketplace, and that's not really a commercial fish, unless you're just going to give it away to somebody on the corner, but it's sort of a slap in the face, and it's a slippery slope, and either - - I would like to have some discussion about not having possession at all of it or getting rid of the spawning season altogether or adjusting some sort of a higher retention limit, to allow the sale of the amberjack during that time period, because it's a month.

I'm not sure if that's really a long enough period to really capture the actual spawning of the species. Other species that we have spawning for, we don't really get it right, and so we keep going longer and longer, and that seems to be the case, and so it seems like this was -- We just got background that this was made -- The spawning season was enacted due to crappy stock assessments and old data, and so if anybody else around would like to talk about it, or if anybody wants to make public comment on it, and then we could circle back around, and that sure would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds good.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. I will keep on moving through then, and so Action 7, and this is the one that is not greater-amberjack-specific, and this is considering removal of recreational annual catch targets from all of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan.

The recreational annual catch targets were established through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and they've been in place since 2012, and they're not codified, and they're not used for management purposes. The intent is for that to be kind of a warning signal before the ACL is hit, but it has been something that has not been really used for any type of limiting or regulatory purpose to this point, but, because it's part of the FMP, every time that we change the recreational ACL, the ACT needs to be changed as well.

It's not a huge, heavy burden, but it is an additional action that needs to go into each of these amendments, and so that's kind of some of the history behind it. Alternative 1 is to keep the annual catch targets, and Alternative 2 is to remove the annual catch targets. Right now, the council has a preferred of Alternative 2, and the AP has recommended that be the preferred alternative as well, and so I will pause here, once again, for any additional comment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments here? I don't see any hands. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to point out, as it was pointed out to me, that Tim Griner had asked about trip limit analysis, and that is on page 91 of your full amendment, and that has the number of commercial trips below what limit, and so that information is in the amendment. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, with that being the case, we'll leave it as you all can look at that reference. The other outstanding issue to tackle with this amendment would be to have the approval of all of the actions, and, if you all want to come back to preferreds, but those are items

that we can probably take up in Full Council, after you all hear some public comment on some of the actions that you wanted that additional feedback on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think that's it for amberjack, before public comment. Thank you for that, Mike. All right. I think we're going to go into the EFP presentation next.

MR. DEVICTOR: All right. This should be fairly quick, and so this is in your briefing materials, and it's Attachment 7a and 7b. 7a is the letter that SERO wrote the council, telling you all that we received an application request for an exempted fishing permit, and 7b is the actual application that the applicant sent us.

As we always do, once we get these applications, of course, we bring it before the council, and we get your comments, if you have any, and try to answer any questions, and then we put it out for comment, and we put a notice in the Federal Register, and we do a Fishery Bulletin, and then we either approve or disapprove the exemption to the regulations.

This one actually is a change to an existing exempted fishing permit that we gave back in February, and so this is nearly identical to the one that we gave, but they just want to make changes to that study, and what we decided, in the office, is, unfortunately, instead of just making changes to the existing exempted fishing permit, that we have to actually cancel that one and then give them an entirely new one and take public comment, and here we are bringing it to you to comment.

If you look at 7a, it's the more abbreviated version of the study, just describing the study, describing the exemption from the regulations, and then 7b is the more detailed application, and so you can look at that and see more details and who is participating, who would participate, in the study and all that.

This has to do, of course, with the sub-sea buoy retrieval systems, or what they're calling SBRS, and this is for the commercial black sea bass pot component of the snapper grouper fishery. As we all know, black sea bass pots have vertical lines and buoys going to the surface, and so, as we talked about in the past, they want to look at minimizing the impacts, potential impacts, to North Atlantic right whales, by having what they're calling a ropeless, lineless, pop-up system, where they're stored at-depth, and there is no buoy or line to the surface, and they go out to the pots, and they can press a button or such, and it pops up to the surface, and so it's a very cool study, and it's gotten some press, and it's gotten a lot of positive feedback to that.

Again, this letter has -- Again, the letter that we wrote to John has the regulations that they looking at being exempted, and, again, this is the same exempted fishing permit that you already looked at, and you get a presentation in December from the applicant, and then we gave it to them in February, and so I will just go over the differences that they want to do.

One, unfortunately, is, due to unforeseen circumstances, they weren't able to get out and test as much as they wanted to, and so they're looking at testing year-round, and so the one that we gave them in February was only allowing them to test in November through April, when those closures are in place, and they said we weren't able to get out as much, and so we want to be able to go year-round, during the summer, and part of it is they want to add new people to this test, because it's gotten a lot of positive feedback, and new people want to try testing this equipment, and so they want to use those summer months, when fishing isn't as great during the winter, to test these

new people and train them, train these new people. That's part of it, again, and so they want to go to year-round testing.

The second is more positive, where they go more funding, and so they have these funds, and they want to add additional testing to this, and so those are the big changes. Again, they want to test year-round, and add new people to train them, but everything else is the same that you all approved, that you all liked, in December and that we gave to them. I think that that is pretty much all I have to bring before you for this, and, again, so I guess the process is you all -- See if you have any questions, and then you take public comment, and then you talk about it again at Full Council, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are there any questions about the EFP? Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: No questions, and I was just going to say that it has gotten a lot of attention, and, obviously, if you can do things in utilizing technology to avoid vertical lines, that's always a big hit with folks, and particularly protected resource kinds of things, and so I like it. I mean, I think it's a good thing to keep moving on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester.

MR. BREWER: Rick, you may have said this, and I just didn't catch it, but you said there are some minor differences, and what are those minor differences between the original and this renewed?

MR. DEVICTOR: The one that we gave them in February was only allowing them to test during those winter months, November through April, and this would allow them to test year-round, and the second change is to add new people, because we specify exactly the vessels and the people that would be allowed to be exempted, and they want to add some more people to this to be able to test.

MR. BREWER: Thank you. You know, I don't know that we need to wait to bless this thing. I mean, we've already blessed it once.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, that's our procedure, is to talk about it before public comment, see if there's any public comment, and then talk about it again during Full Council. Any more questions or comments? All right. Continuing through the agenda, I think we want to go back to snowy, if we can, before public comment.

Before we go into snowy, we have another item on the agenda that we probably need to cover today, and that's the Snapper Grouper AP comments that we have not already covered throughout the day, and so I think you guys are going to pull up maybe a presentation, maybe a slide, here. After we get that slide up, then Bob can give us a report-out on all the rest of the items that were in the AP report that we haven't already talked about.

MR. LORENZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. This should be able to be pretty quick, about the other items, and they were things that have been gone over many times and then some top-of-the-head things. We were informed of Amendment 46, and that tends to be something -- You know, that's been within the APs and the recommendations made for a number of years now, and so we're

happy to see that is progressing. There are lots of people behind that. It could be interesting, at some point, if we actually did a polling of the private recreational anglers, where they would net-out on it, but we know most other folks, anybody that's within some type of commerce that needs fish, wants we private recreational anglers to be under a permit system and then a reporting of species.

Again, stating that it should be highly prioritized, and, I mean, that was said a number of times, and one of the things that's always in there is that, if it is difficult to come across the entire complex, why not pick a few critical species that have probably an anticipated smaller population of recreational anglers that participate and then learn how it works through that, a particularly important species, and the reporting requirements, how it works, and how you deal with permit renewal and that sort of thing. If people don't report, do you stop and make them start again, that sort of a thing, and so those are the kind of thoughts that get tossed around a lot, and we're very happy to see Amendment 46, most of us, moving on.

One thing that's been brought up, and it is kind of funny, and, with the barrelfish, and, I mean, I had heard this a little before on the commercial side, but, very recently, again as statements were made here by the council with deep-dropping, this is now entered as a fish -- I know the commercial guys are thinking this may be important to start to look at, and possibly include it in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and then we do now that, hey, recently, these fish, and they're a little hard to handle, but there seems to be, with deep-dropping, and the better boats and equipment, people catching these fish. There's been sportfishing shows on it now, and sportfishing magazine articles about barrelfish, and so it's possibly something that's coming from the AP, and maybe this is something to look at, eventually, that is, I presume, not closely managed right now.

Then the final thing would be the National Marine Fisheries Service observer and commercial discard logbook programs, and this is always an interesting topic, but, you know, besides the -- It always is brought up about the liability and the boats and the safety equipment and all those sort of things, and so that's always out there as a concern, and then concomitant with that is the concern that everybody will have for safety and insurance costs for that, and, also, you may want to think about it a little, if we're going -- If you watch what's happening in government and industry a lot, just look at another liability that's hardly discussed, but it's coming on strong for a lot of organizations, and a lot of companies, and that's what I call social liability.

You can be sued and get in some trouble just for the way people speak, if it's found offensive, and how you address people and that sort of a thing, and so that's probably a new thing to consider, if you wanted to go into something like an observer, and consider what you have, a boutique fishery, with lots of recreational fishermen, and they're buddies and friends, and they have a certain way of interaction, and I'm sure the crews on the boats that -- They have a certain way they banter and hang about each other, and how do you accommodate then an observer, within all the rights that they may have, as any other employee would have, and so keep that in consideration.

That's never a -- That's never, at this point, a popular thing with the AP, and it's particularly funny, because we have, at this point, all men on the AP, but it is -- When we go out for a dinner or something, and some of the wives come along, they kind of put their two-cents in, and that's always interesting. If you ever got public comment on that, that should be a little fun to watch, and so maybe something that might be better on that, as we're heading forward, rather than a physical observer, is use other types of --

You know, there's technology available, other than an observer, with boat operations and things, as small as we have on this coast, and we don't have these big, industrial fisheries, and that's probably a much better way to go, and certainly more comfortable for all the people in the fisheries, and I would say the commercial, and even if you get to the point of wanting to do some recreational observation, and there is probably a better way than somebody on a boat. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Bob. Any questions? All right. I don't see any hands. All right. Our Vice Chair says we are now going to move back to snowy.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so where we left off for snowy is we had gone through Action 4, which was -- Sorry. Action 3, which would reduce the snowy grouper commercial trip limit, and I had recorded some direction to staff, and so the first thing that we discussed was removing that hundred-pound gutted weight alternative, and then we were discussing the consideration of an increased trip limit later down the line, and I included -- I added some to this, and so I kind of posed the question of do we want additional alternatives for that, and, if so, what poundage increases and then what timeline on that, and then I know we discussed as well that weekly trip limit and those regional differences, possibly in another amendment, and so I wanted to get clarification on both of those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I want to throw a hail-Mary and bring this up one more time, and in regard to the fuel. Would there be consideration by the board, and I understand my colleagues from North Carolina and their concerns, but I am looking out for the boats in Florida, in the central part of Florida, that have to run a long, long way to go get snowies, and could there be a possibility of adding another alternative that would add a once-a-week trip limit of between 400 and 500 pounds, which, if you add it up, it could actually produce less fish than the boats going out three times a week and doing 200 pounds a trip.

The reduction in the weight that they would be bringing in would be more than offset by the lower cost in fuel, and it could actually extend the season a little bit, because they wouldn't be bringing in as many pounds of fish, and so you would be looking at -- You would be looking at 400 to 500 pounds of fish, versus 600 pounds of fish, during the week, and so that's my -- That's my request, is could we add an additional alternative of a weekly trip limit for between 400 and 500 pounds, ideally 500, but we would take 400.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I can appreciate the distance to run to the snowy grouper fishing grounds, because nobody runs further than we do in North Carolina to get to the snowy grouper, or South Carolina, and I can assure you of that. It's a flat sixty-mile run, and it's thirty, and it's not forty. It's sixty, and I don't know anybody that is snowy grouper fishing on a day basis, and so everybody I know that snowy grouper fishes is on a multiday boat, and so they're not going out twice a week anyway. My real fear, with getting a trip limit too high, with such a small quota, is that we can't make it through the most important time that we need that fish, and that is when we don't have any other grouper on the market.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I don't think that I made myself clear enough. This would be like a choice. You could either do 200-pound trips or, during the seven-day period, you could do one trip that had between 400 and 500 pounds on it, and that would cut our fuel in half.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think what we're trying to say is we don't know anyone -- That's how everyone is operating, and so that would de facto raise the trip limit for everyone to the 400 or 500 pounds, and that's what we would do. You would be raising my trip limit from 200 pounds to 400 or 500 pounds, and that quota, as small as it is, is just going to get caught up so quickly, and we're going to lose that market.

Again, you and I talked about fuel prices yesterday, and I know what it just cost me to fuel up my boat to go fishing tomorrow, and I am running -- Mark is running sixty miles offshore too, and he only has 200 pounds, and he does -- Basically, these guys, all of them, and I don't know anyone that is, for the most part, not doing, you know, sixty-mile multiday trips, and so it really -- It changes it for pretty much 90 -- At least 90 percent of the industry, and I just worry that it will get caught up too quick. I hate to say it, and I don't know enough about your guys. I mean, are you saying that, once they get offshore to fish for snowy, there's nothing between the inlet and the snowy fishing grounds for them to get on the way in or the way out, nothing? No trigger and no vermilion?

MS. THOMPSON: That's it. That's pretty much it. They're running out and catching 200 pounds of snowy and coming back to the dock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with Kerry, and I think that this is -- We're talking about what would be essentially an increased trip limit, when the stock is not in great shape, and I do appreciate where you're coming from on the fuel, but I just -- I am concerned as well. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do you want to talk about the step-up? We're at 200, and some kind of step-up at the numbers would be maybe like 200, 400, and 600, and then when -- I need a little more time to look at how that ACL changes over the years, but the when is the harder part for me to figure out, but --

MS. IBERLE: The IPT too can look over that, if you don't mind giving the IPT the liberty to look over that as well, but if, between now and Full Council, you come up with hard dates, we can include that, and so I will have the direction to staff be include alternatives to look at the increase in trip limit, if you're good with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't recommend increasing the trip limit, in this instance. The ACL is only increasing by 1,000 or 2,000 pounds a year, over the next three or four years, and I just don't think it will be really meaningful increases to accommodate a higher trip limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. So then it looks like Kerry is saying, okay, no go, and so it seems like the weekly trip limit is off the table, and this auto-increase in a trip limit is off the table. Okay, and so where we stand on this is the no action alternative is the preferred. Do we want to move this action to Considered but Rejected? I see some heads nodding yes. Would someone like to make that in the form of a motion? Tim.

MR. GRINER: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so that is a motion to move Action 3 to the Considered but Rejected. All right. Is there a second for that motion? It's seconded by Laurilee. Any discussion on that? All right. **Any objection to that motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.**

All right. We're going to go ahead and stop for today. However, we still have a few items left for the Snapper Grouper Committee, and so our esteemed Vice Chair here is suggesting that we start early tomorrow, at 8:00 a.m., and, when we come back at 8:00 a.m. in the morning, we are going to go back to snowy, and we'll also get the presentation from Scott Leach on the South Atlantic Reef Observer Coverage Expansion, and then we'll also do Other Business.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 15, 2022.)

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JUNE 16, 2022

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Key West Marriott Beachside, Key West, Florida, on Thursday, June 16, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going. Start making your way over to the table. Thank you for starting a little early today, so we can try to wrap up Snapper Grouper and try to get back on track here. We are going to reorder the agenda a little bit, and so, first up, we're going to get this presentation, and Scott is going to talk about South Atlantic reef fish observer coverage, and so I'm going to pass it over to you.

MR. LEACH: Hello. My name is Scott Leach, and I'm the Observer Program Branch Chief. Today, we're going to talk about the South Atlantic reef fishery observer coverage expansion. I have Brad Smith's name up here, and he's one of my observer coordinators, and he's been doing a bunch of the heavy lifting, as far as outreach goes, and so, if many people have been contacted in this room, that was likely Brad Smith.

We're starting off looking at past coverage in reef fish, and, historically, we have not had significant coverage. This coverage began in 2018, and we have averaged fifty-two seadays and selected, on average, ninety-two vessels. Based off of need, we're looking at increasing that, and

so what we are going to be doing, starting in Quarter 3, is we're going to be ramping-up coverage, and that's going to be -- Our goal is 380 seadays in 2022 and 2023.

What is that going to give us? Historically, we haven't hit 1 percent coverage in this fishery. We started off at under a quarter of a percent, and we increased a little bit last year, but, with some additional funds, we're going to be able to get that up to two-and-a-half percent for the entire year this year and next year. Based off of our selection and our vessel costs, this is a number that we hopefully will exceed, but, because we're going to be doing such a significant increase, I kind of wanted to be a little bit conservative in what our estimate will be, based off of kind of prior coverage.

That is based on 1,500 seadays, is one of the other things that we're basing that off of, and we have seen it decreasing a little bit, but some other differences are who does this apply to, and so this is going to be all snapper grouper permit holders that meet a landing threshold, and we had talked to our branch statistician and looking at what sort of landings we see in this fishery, and we determined that the most effective way for us to proceed would be to cover vessels that are in the top 80 percent of landings, and so that's going to equate to roughly people that land over about 425 pounds a year. We are going to be still covering some of the smaller vessels, that don't do a whole ton of landings, as well as the heavy hitters.

Previously, we had only covered vertical line. When I say vertical line, that's going to be like rod-and-reel, bandit gear, and handline. However, we're going to be covering those as well as spear, trolling, longline, gillnet, power spear, and trap. The reason behind that is that we're just looking at permits and landings, and, when we have covered some of these fisheries, you might think, well, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to put an observer on a spearfishing vessel, and that's just what is recorded on the logbook.

In reality, these trips, a lot of times, are mixed gear, and so we will see spearfishing, but, in addition to that, there will be handlines being used and other types of gear that does lead to discards, and so we're going to be looking at everything. This might be something that we realize that we need to change as we go forward, but just, not knowing a lot about this fishery, and what we've seen when we have covered these trips, it seemed prudent to take a look at everything and move from there.

Kind of looking at our Quarter 3 selection, as we've increased the gears that we're going to be covering, what is Quarter 3 going to look like? You could see a significant number of handline and electric, and electric would be electrified, like bandit gear and stuff like that, and so that's going to all be vertical. A little bit of spear, and then a very small percent trolling, longline, gillnet, power spear, and trap, and so, while we are covering -- We have included all gear types into our selection pool, it shakes out that it's going to be a majority of what we call vertical.

What will the observer be doing? The observer duties are going to include length and weights on catch, bycatch, discards, mortality status, gear information, location and depth, environmental elements, fishing effort, otoliths, gonads, fin clips, and genetics, and so that's the stuff that the observers are going to be doing. It's going to be dependent, a little bit, on the size of the vessel, and we know that deck space is going to be an issue, and so we are going to be having to maybe modify what we're doing so that it will still work for the vessel.

Then what are we doing to make this a success? Any time you're talking about putting observers on vessels that have either maybe never been covered, or have infrequently been covered, we're going to need a lot of outreach. The last thing anybody wants is to be surprised, and that's not how we get coverage, and so that outreach started off with we mailed a one-pager about just what we are doing, how we're selecting vessels, to all permit holders, and that went out to everybody.

We followed that up with selection letters to selected vessels, and we did follow-up phone calls to those vessels, and also some in-person outreach, which this is one of the events we're doing, and we've been going to fish houses and talking to selected vessels, and just vessels that have permits, to let them know what's going on and try to solicit feedback from them about what their concerns are, what issues we might run into, and how we can be successful at this.

We have two in-person outreach events. We're in the Keys right now, and we're going to be heading up north after this, to visit a fish house, and hopefully talk to some more vessels, and then we're going to be in South Carolina in two weeks and doing the same thing, just having times that we're going to be at a location, and we have them listed here. It's going to be the Murrells Inlet Community Center, as well as just doing dockside outreach.

In addition to that, we've been working with other partners, council members, the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, the U.S. Coast Guard, port samplers, and fish houses. What we don't want is anybody to be surprised when they hear about this, and we want at least people to have an idea of what we're doing, and we want to put everyone in a position where we can succeed. We don't want to swamp the Coast Guard with a hundred boats needing dockside vessel safety exams, and they're unable to get them, because they heard about this at the last minute, and so we've been trying to think about who needs to know about this and making sure that they're aware, so that we can get the success that we need to increase our coverage in this fishery, and so thank you for your time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Are there questions? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure, and not a question, but a suggestion, and I would also encourage you to head up towards Jacksonville and Mayport and also Morehead City.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Good morning. I was just going to say, from the outreach aspect, I'm not sure if you're talking a lot to the state agencies, but I know there are people who deal with all the fishermen, and like our statistics section and all could be very helpful in helping to promote this, or at least make sure that people are aware of it. I'm not sure if we knew about it or not, and that could just be from my perspective.

MR. LEACH: That is something that I would absolutely like to do. We started kind of with the port samplers, the state port samplers, who are going to be maybe getting questions, and we had talked to people involved in the stock assessments a little bit, some of which were state, but I am absolutely open to any suggestions of additional people we should talk to, because this is really a collaborative thing, and so I will grab your email and follow-up with that, because I do want to make sure we're doing a good job with the state as well.

MR. BELL: Yes, and I would be glad to help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? Clay.

DR. PORCH: I just wanted to thank Scott for the initiative that he has taken here to get this program off the ground in the South Atlantic. As he mentioned, we've just kind of flirted with an observer program in the past, just getting a few people on boats, and usually less than a hundred days at-sea, which we really couldn't do much with, as your SSC commented on, and so this is going to be a major improvement, at least for the coming year.

The problem will be the years after that, because we had some extra funding in the program, and I don't know that we can achieve 2.5 percent coverage in years after that, without some increase in the funding of the observer program, or repositioning the resources, and I would say that the Southeast, right now, has probably the worst overall observer coverage in the country, just because it hasn't been a priority for the observer line funding, and the South Atlantic was among the worst of the worst, right, because it didn't have virtually any coverage, and so this is a huge step.

2.5 percent isn't particularly high coverage, and, obviously, we would like to achieve a lot higher coverage than that, and so that gets to my question, and Scott has been involved in other observer programs across the country, and which, by the way, it's really exciting to have Scott onboard in this new position, and we used to have observer programs supervised by different groups across the Southeast region, and now we've consolidated them all in one place, and so Scott is in a unique position to oversee all of the observer programs for the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, which I think gives him a unique advantage over his predecessors, and so I'm really excited about that.

Scott, I wonder if you could cover, or you could discuss, what kind of coverage ultimately we would like to see, to ensure that we have, you know, good, representative estimates of commercial discards and other information?

MR. LEACH: When we've been talking to kind of stock assessors about what our minimum was, the number we were hearing was we can start doing something once we cross that 2 percent, but that's not ideal. That's basically just -- What we were doing, we weren't able to do very much with. We were just at such a low level, and so, you know, we need to be, if possible -- I would like to at least sustain this. I just don't know, funding-wise, how we're going to be able to do it.

I have been looking into trying to see how we can be as efficient as possible with the money we have. It's difficult, when we're kind of having to ramp-up in a short timeframe and training a bunch of people and getting something like this running, but I do want to try to be as efficient as possible, because that efficiency is going to translate into more seadays, that is ultimately what's going to make this more useful to everybody that's going to be using this data, and so, I mean, it would be throwing numbers out there, because it's just, as much as we can afford, we would like to get, and I don't think this is something we need 25 percent coverage, but, if we could be closer to 5 percent, it definitely seems like we would increase the value of the data we're collecting, and kind of the dollars we're spending doing it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Kind of on the idea of percent coverage, when you are expanding a program like this, how do you make sure that you're getting a representative sample of the fishermen in the fleet, and how important is that to the accuracy of the data?

MR. LEACH: That's significant. If we don't have a good representative pool that we're doing our random selection from, we've introduced bias like right off the bat, and so that's something that -- Right now, we're using logbook data, and I want to be moving towards either verifying that or maybe switching over to using landings data, because that's going to give us a more accurate picture, and so, right now, we have -- We know what permits are out there.

Using the logbooks, we're able to determine what sort of landings we're looking at, and, from that, we're going to be, you know, doing a random selection, and then it's going to be just having observers in the right places to make sure that we can cover the trips, but definitely, from the very get-go, we're going to be looking at and trying to reduce any sort of bias, because that is going to also hurt the value of this data, and so that's something we're definitely thinking about, and I'm hoping that, when we start looking at landings data, that's going to kind of verify that we've been doing a pretty decent job, but I do know that isn't going to be the ultimate place that we're going to want to be creating our selection pool from.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you for the presentation and the outreach information. How about the observers, and will they be strategically placed to where you're looking at, and available at the docks, and the boats that they're going on, and not have to travel a long way, or are they being put up, so they're there and ready to go on the ground, when boats come in and go back out and different things like that, instead of having to wait for time to travel and stuff like that? How much is -- That's one question, and my second question is how much of this are you getting from dealer reporting of where the actual landings are all coming from, to get an idea of your heavy-hitters or where fish are being landed at?

MR. LEACH: We are really trying to hire people that are going to be in the right location, because I realize that, with this fishery, the difference between a fishable day and a day when the weather is not going to allow fishing -- It's significantly smaller than larger vessels that are also observed, where they know they're going to be going, and they can look at the weather much further out, and so a big part of this is going to be flexibility, if we're going to succeed, and that's why we've been really trying to make sure that, one, we can get observers in the right place, but also let industry know that -- Let us know if you might be fishing, and let us know if you would like to be fishing, but the weather is kind of questionable, because, the less we're surprised, the more we can put ourselves in a place to kind of work with these vessels to get observers there.

In a perfect world, we're still hiring. It's looking promising. In a perfect world, we would not be traveling people very far. As this is going to be a significant increase in coverage, and we're looking at, you know, over a fivefold increase, there will be some, you know, mistakes, where we just find there is higher coverage, either that we couldn't have predicted, or maybe we couldn't hire anybody, and we're going to have to travel people in, and so that's going to be something that we're going to try to take on that burden as a program, so that we're not putting the boats in a bad place, because we don't want boats to be delaying trips, or not fishing, because we couldn't get an observer there in time, and so that's something that I'm aware of, from my time in other small-

boat fisheries, the flexibility we need as a program, and it's something that we're -- I want to do everything we can to get observers that are going to be somewhat local, so we can get them where they need to be quickly.

As far as dealer reports, that's something -- That's where I want to be creating our selection pool from, but, right now, we were using the logbook data over dealer reports, just because we didn't have -- What we had access to, we felt it would have more bias than using the logbook data we had available, and so, no, I would like to go there, because that's going to be much more accurate, as those fish are run over a scale, than an estimate by a captain, which can also be very accurate, but, ultimately, I would like to get there, but this was created from logbook information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks for being here, Scott. I really appreciate it. Could you briefly tell us some of the things you've heard at your two Key West meetings that have already been held of sort of people's concerns and how you all have addressed those, and I'm just curious what you all are hearing so far.

MR. LEACH: Key West has been really positive. I haven't heard a lot of significant concerns. In the council, one of the things I've been hearing is life rafts, and, obviously, it's a small-vessel fishery, and we have boats that are fishing and either using like the three-person exemption for survival craft, or they're going to be fishing with four crew onboard and a four-person raft, and so how are we going to address something like that.

Something that's done, and we can do, is provide a -- Not a SOLAS-B raft, and so it does get tricky, if it's going to be a documented vessel that's fishing a ways out, but vessels that are either state registered or fishing within twelve nautical miles, we have the option of providing a raft, so that we're not going to put the vessel out of compliance, and we can keep them fishing how they would normally fish, because our goal here is to be collecting a representative trip, and so, if we're forcing people to fish differently, that's not giving us the information we want, and so the raft has been a big one, and that's something that we're going to need to just look at do we have enough program rafts to do that, and how are we going to get them where we need them, and those are questions that we don't have an answer yet, and so that's something that we're really trying to find out when we send out these selection letters.

We try to get these selection letters out thirty days prior, and we try to follow that up with a phone call, to talk to the boats about what are the problems going to be for your specific vessel, because it's going to come down to individual vessels are going to have kind of unique problems, and I don't know -- Some of them, we're going to have to figure out as we're going, but the life raft is one that we have dealt with before.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. I think that's an issue, and I know, for our personal boat, it's that and bunk space, and, the last time we were asked to take one, we had to go one crew member down, and that's fine. I think, personally, that's part of the price we pay for using a public resource, and it doesn't bother me, but I hope that there's some way, or there are conversations, or there are notations made, by the observer, saying, you know, this is a boat that would normally go four-handed, and it only went three-handed, just so that is sort of captured in that way of identifying

that boat as fishing differently than it normally would, had the observer not been on there, and I think that's just important to note.

MR. LEACH: Absolutely, because basically anything that's moving us away from a standard trip, we want to at least be aware of, and hopefully be thinking about ways to kind of mitigate it, because, you know, as we -- If there's a way we can resolve that, and it doesn't just help the boat, help the observer, but it helps the quality of data we're collecting, which is ultimately the reason we're out there, and so we have some amazing coordinators that are working with these vessels, to let them know what the requirement is and just being open to what their concerns are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure, and I encourage you, in your meetings and talks with these captains and crews and permit holders, to discuss the severity of not complying with this. In the South Atlantic, historically, you know, we had the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, who ran the observer program for a long time, and everybody wanted to take an observer, because they got paid to do it. They would make long trips and get that group lots of great data, which is also available to anyone who needs it, and I'm not sure if we utilize it or not.

Then that line item funding or whatever went away, and NOAA took back over filling the void, and a lot of people sort of said, oh, well, I'm not getting paid for this, and I do realize that people don't realize that in other regions that they actually have to fund their own observer coverage, but it's sort of a nonchalant, you know, we'll get them in there sometime this quarter, you know, and we're not going to do our due diligence, and we're not even going to read the two-page letter that they sent, and I'll take them when it's calm or whatever, and so we're going to make a trip, and then here it comes, a year or a year-and-a-half later or whatever, and here's a \$10,000 fine for not complying. I just want you guys to make sure that you're conveying the message.

I talked to Brad at length, and I realize that's not the intent of the program, is to get people in trouble, but, you know, it's a requirement of the permit, and people need to comply, and they need to understand the severity of not complying.

MR. LEACH: This is one area that I feel we've been really lucky, is just having some great support from OLE, and that was one of the things that yesterday -- We were driving around with some enforcement officers, local enforcement officers, and the goal here is not let this non-compliance get to the level that they're having to go with summary settlement.

This is something where we're going to be providing a list of who we've made contact with to the local enforcement officers and just kind of letting them know that, hey, we haven't heard from this boat, and, if you are on the dock, and you see them, could you just remind them -- Just let them know that this is required, because the last thing I want is to be sending, you know, a compliance report at the end of the quarter with just a ton of boats on it that we just were not able to either get ahold of or get to respond to us, and so it's -- The level of OLE support has exceeded what I was really hoping we could get, and it's been really great, and the relationship that a lot of those officers have with these vessels is going to go such a long ways, because some of these ports -- If we haven't observed either -- If we rarely observe out of them, we don't have those relationships with these boats, and that's going to be new.

That's what we're going to be forming this year, but, just because these are commercial vessels, a lot of these enforcement officers do have that relationship with them, and it seems that this might be all of -- The perception is that some -- Obviously, not all vessels are happy, but a lot of the relationships these vessels have with the EOs is not a contentious one, and it's just people they see on the dock doing other things, and so that's why we're trying to get everyone involved we can, and I've been just really happy about the OLE involvement.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was encouraged to hear that in my conversations with Brad, and it's going to require the OLE, and maybe the state agencies as well, is keeping the chatter going and staying in contact, and so perhaps you guys need to have some sort of agreement, or maybe even something in writing, that they sort of help you guys and not just -- They are required to help you make sure that you're getting your people on these vessels, because it's a big undertaking for you, and there's only a couple of people in your office, and you've got plenty to do, and, if you have boots on the ground, and those folks need to be held accountable, to make sure that the job gets done and everybody is happy, and so I think the constant communication is going to be the game-changer in this new endeavor, and everybody needs to start off on the right foot and not get a bad taste in their mouth, and so it's going to require full-circle communications.

MR. LEACH: We're kind of looking at that communication as being we're going to break our selection list into the areas where these enforcement officers -- Kind of their areas, and then we're going to use a color-coding system of people we've gotten ahold of, people we've been unable to find, and people that might not be interested in participating, so that we can really focus on them, because, if we just give OLE a list of boats, a big list of boats for the entire coast, we're not setting them up to succeed, and so we want to really just let them know where we need their help and do our part, and so that's something that, luckily, we have spreadsheets that allow that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris and then Kerry.

MR. CONKLIN: Another thing to sort of remember is a large majority of the permits in the region are leased out, and so a permit holder could be like somebody living way far away from the coast that doesn't do anything other than sit back and collect a check, and they may not even communicate with the person who is utilizing that license, and so, you know, face-to-face interaction with the people on the dock is critical.

MR. LEACH: Yes, and that is one of the difficult things we've found, is that -- Not so much in the Keys, but some other locations are very heavily leased permits, and we do have to start there and hope that they're willing to let us know who the captain is, because it's their right as a permit holder that that's who we start with.

We can't just go directly to the captain, because, when something does go wrong, they could be held liable as well, and so you're absolutely right, and that's something tricky, is that we know we need to get ahold of the permit holder, and, if that's not the captain, we need to work with them to get to the captain, because, as good of a job as we do informing the permit holder, if they don't pass that information on to the captain, there is no chance that the captain is going to be letting us know when they're going to be fishing and staying in compliance, and so that's definitely a problem that we're going to be working on, and hopefully addressing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just wondering, and, after you send the first letter, which, if I recall, the one I got like at the beginning of the year I think just came regular U.S. Mail, and I feel like the second one might have come certified, but I could be wrong, but, after you send that first letter, if you don't hear from someone, I'm curious about your next step, because like I just had this flash of like, oh my gosh, did I get one, and I put it in a file, and I forgot, and like very non-maliciously and maybe not following up on it would be a question for you.

For everyone else, I think something to think about, maybe, as we look at the overall fishery, moving forward in the future of it, something like this might be a good reason -- I know you all are going to groan, but this is why I am a believer in like operator cards, because that is a way to get in touch with the person actually running the boat and having that person that actually can be held, you know, accountable, instead of, you know, the holder, or the owner, of the permit, but I'm curious about your -- Like, once the letter comes, if you don't hear from someone, what is your normal next step?

MR. LEACH: You're absolutely correct. The one-pager we sent out was just regular mail. The actual selection letters are sent certified, because we do want to get receipt there. If we don't hear from people, we have a couple of options. We try to utilize how people are going to respond to us, and we found email to have a very low response rate, which is understandable, and so it's mainly been we want to try to text people, as well as to call people, because our goal is, however communication is going to work with industry, that's what we want.

If that doesn't work, that's where we start looking into things like having observers place a note on the boat, if we have somebody available, having them do some of that outreach, talking to our partners at OLE, and is there going to be enforcement officers on the dock, and what can they tell us about this boat, because maybe they have a relationship and just say that guy participates in another fishery for this part of the year, because that's something that we could see, is that somebody gets the letter, and they realize that they're not going to be participating, and they just say, okay, I'll call them when I need to, but we do want to do -- We do want to do everything we can to try to figure out how can we get ahold of these people and start that communication, even if it is, hey, I'm just not going to be participating for a while.

That's very useful to us, but people are busy, and they prioritize the time they have, and, a lot of times, we don't get that, and so we're going to be -- I am open to, you know, ideas on how we can do it, but just kind of phone calls, texts, and then just getting people down to the boat, and potentially observers leaving a note like, hey, we sent you a letter, and we've been giving you a call, and just let us know what your plans are, and I think that's something that, you know, a lot of times, when I talk to fishermen, the first question, when they get these letters, is not to respond to us, but they talk to the rest of the fleet, their friends, and just say, what is this? Does this apply to me?

That's why we want to try to hopefully get the word out there as well, that, when they do reach out to a port sampler, or another fisherman or something like that, they're saying, yes, give this guy a call, and they'll work with you, and they want to succeed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? All right. Thank you so much, Scott. All right. I believe we're going to jump back to snowy, and so just give us a moment for Allie to get up here. All right. I'm going to turn it back to you, and I think we're over to the snowy recreational season.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I'm going to start off with Action 4, which will modify the snowy grouper recreational season, and so the purpose of this action is there's an approximately 43 percent reduction that's needed to achieve the updated catch levels, and so modifications to the recreational season are being considered to help constrain recreational harvest to these reduced catch levels.

In March, we discussed the -- We kind of formulated these alternatives and came up with three alternatives, and so Alternative 1, no action, retains the current recreational season, which does match, right now, with blueline tilefish, and that runs from May 1 to August 31, and then we added two alternatives for two single-wave seasons, the first being Wave 3, from May 1 to June 30, and then the second being Wave 4, which is July 1 through August 30. Then you can see the season waves and dates there, and the current season is Wave 3 and Wave 4.

Then Figure 4 shows you the seasonality of the snowy grouper landings, recreational landings, and you can see there kind of the little bit of a bump in May through June, and then again later in the summer, and then, looking at the preliminary analysis, you have seen an analysis of the approximate season length, based on a five-year average from 2015 to 2019, and so we've already looked at this. However, we added the predicted season length based on the three-year average from 2017 to 2019, and so there is a lot of variability, when you're looking at the three-year versus the five-year, and that stems a little bit from the uncertainty around the snowy recreational data.

Based on Table 10, and, again, those open waves are bold, and so these are the average landings in those waves, based on either the three-year average or the five-year average, you come down to Table 11, and so Table 11 shows you the recreational ACL, in numbers of fish, and this is based off of your preferred alternatives for Action 2 and Action 3, and so ACL equal to the ABC, and the selected preferred for allocation, and so that's where this rec ACL is coming from.

The blue column shows you the approximate waves that you will have open based on the three-year average, and then the green column is based on the five-year average, and so you're noticing there is a pretty decent difference between the two, and we did this in waves, again, because of the uncertainty of the rec snowy data.

Then the IPT recommends -- So, during the March council meeting, the council requested additional analysis for the rec season for a more recent and stable time period, and the IPT discussed this and decided that including more historical years to accomplish that stable time period, for the most recent two years, wouldn't be all that helpful. In general, we have really high PSEs for this species, and, because of regulatory changes in 2010, and so that was when the vessel limit was established, and the 2011 deepwater prohibition, and then, in 2012, that prohibition was reversed, that might make it difficult to compare for the rec sector.

I am going to go over the draft amendment Chapter 4 sections really quick with you, and so Alternatives 2 and 3 are expected to result in beneficial biological impacts, as they would shorten the season. However, there is not many differences between Alternative 2 and 3, because it's the same season length, and you're just changing when the season would be open. Then, according to

Kolmos et al., snowy grouper spawn May through August, and so any season that allows for more spawning would obviously provide additional biological benefit.

For economic effects, if the ACL is not fully harvested, it can lead to fewer short-term economic benefits. Thus, there is potential for Alternative 2 and 3 to have lower economic benefits than Alternative 1, and Alternative 1 provides the longest fishing season, of four months. Thus, the highest potential short-term economic benefits, followed by Alternative 2 and 3.

Then, finally, the social effects, and so participation in the snowy fishery has historically been highest during Wave 3, which is May through June, followed by Wave 4, which is July through August, and so Alternatives 2 and 3 would allow for recreational anglers to access when participation is highest, and so Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 would reduce harvest during the snowy grouper spawning season, when compared to the four-month season, and so Alternative 1 would contribute to those rebuilding goals and provide long-term benefits.

Then a review of the AP's feedback, and I'm not going to go through every single one of these bullets, but the AP did recommend Alternative 2, which is Wave 3, and so having the season open May 1 through June 30. They noted some concerns in weather, and how it creates issues with access, and they noted that Florida does have a little bit more of a year-round fishery for snowy, but they also noted that improved technology is making access to snowy a little bit easier.

You guys were talking about the blueline tilefish season, and the AP did discuss that as well, wanting to make sure that there is access to blueline tile when there is access to snowy. Bob mentioned talking a little bit about the deepwater closure, that 240-fathom depth closure. This was discussed, but there wasn't really much consensus around that. They talked about concerns over the possible underestimates of the MRIP-FES data in collecting recreational catch, and they noted some possible habitat overlap between blueline and snowy, and then the AP felt that the 100 percent mortality rate used in the assessment was inaccurate, and so we heard feedback that some recreational fishermen are descending snowy and feeling them active on the line after they were descended, and so they recommended increased education on deepwater best fishing practices.

With that, we are -- To give you a reminder of the timeline for this amendment, we are kind of set to approve this for public hearing, and so it would probably be good to select a preferred for this action, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Allie. On this particular action, and I know I can't make any motions, but I think I would like to see Alternative 2 as the preferred. As we were discussing yesterday, the State of Florida -- We don't just -- Our consistency on these recreational pieces, whether it's season, size limits, bag limits, it's not automatic. We have to go in and do rulemaking to be consistent. Otherwise, we're using an executive order, and we don't always have time to do that, and so we do think that there is an issue with snowy.

We think that, really, one of the only ways to constrain the catch at this point, because the vessel -- We're already at one fish per vessel, and so we think that one of the only ways to do that is to work on the season here, the recreational season, and so our preference would be for Alternative 2, and then the intent would be for the State of Florida, FWC, to go consistent, once this is passed, with all of these items, because, right now, the State of Florida is inconsistent in state waters. We don't have this in place.

We also heard some discussion yesterday about electric reels, and so we have been hearing that from the Keys as well, concerns about people using electric reels for recreational, and so I will just point that out as well. Thoughts? Mel.

MR. BELL: I would move to adopt Alternative 2 as the preferred, if I get a second, just to discuss it, to move things along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Mel. It's seconded by Kerry. Is there discussion on this season? Tom and then Kerry.

MR. ROLLER: We had a discussion on this, briefly, during the blueline discussion, and the importance of having the blueline and snowy grouper season to be coordinated. I'm trying to keep my thoughts in order, because some of them are just comments, and so, if we do this, and the blueline season runs longer, how much will have to be -- Go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Our intent would be -- That's why I brought this up yesterday, just like you were talking about it yesterday, and, ultimately, we didn't really modify the season. We modified the accountability measure, but that just doesn't really work for our state agency. We really need a specific season that we can go consistent with, and so our intent would be to try to line these up, and so to go back and revisit that blueline season, when we get to Full Council, and so I hope that helps in your thoughts.

MR. ROLLER: No, it absolutely does. I guess what I was getting to, in the blueline season, is addressing the concerns of fishermen in North Carolina who have expressed the need for access to the blueline fishery during the hotter summer months, when the pelagic fishery is not quite as good, and I just think this is a time to point out how difficult it is to manage these species through MRIP waves and the need for some sort of permit and reporting for recreational anglers, going forward.

One more thing, and I really enjoyed the public comment, the gentleman who came and brought up the point that, when you're using electric reels to catch one snowy, it may not be a good idea to use an eight-hook rig, and I thought that was a very brilliant and commonsense comment, and I really appreciate him sharing that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I liked that as well. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Again, I hate to beat a dead horse, and I'm looking forward to getting into some of these other issues in the future, because it's clear that we need to do more than what we're doing here, but, just for biological reasons, I would support Alternative 2 or 3 over no action, just knowing that that's peak spawning. I mean, we're saving a little bit of that spawn, and, if I recall correctly -- I was asking Rick if he remembered, but I think they're pretty much aggregate spawners that maybe even get a little aggressive and are a little easier to target when they spawn, and so that makes me feel a little better, and, for that reason, I would support something other than Alternative 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Mel, I think you have your hand up?

MR. BELL: Yes, ma'am. I was just also going to say that I think you've got some unique things going on down there, which is why -- None of the rest of us, I think, have the ability to access these in state waters, and, of course, that's pretty easy access, if it's in state waters, and so I think accommodating that, and realizing that that's kind of unique to you, but I think the fact that, if you are able to match up your state and federal, that would be helpful, but I think -- I don't believe any of the rest of us can access these in state waters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I forgot to mention that, but, yes, that's one of my points, Mel, and that's why we've been waiting for this to get through, in order to work on consistency for state waters at the FWC. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to thank you, Jessica, for kind of leading on this, and I agree with recommended alternative, and I like, obviously, the benefits of consistency. I also was thinking about it in light of blueline tilefish, right, and not so much in terms of the accountability measures, though I recognize the problems that presents to the states, but, when you have deepwater species that cooccur with one another, and you're closing one earlier than the other, that, obviously, has implications on discard mortality, and so aligning the seasons makes a lot of sense, to me. I looked at blueline, and this season, at least based on historical landings, would not close, or would have a much lower likelihood of closing for blueline, if we set it for snowy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that, and so, yes, our intent would be, when we come back to blueline in Full Council, to advocate for the same season for blueline. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So you're saying that, when you come back in Full Council, you'll be advocating for this May and June for blueline also? That simply ain't going to work for North Carolina, because the fish -- The majority of the fish they catch, as Tom said, the pelagic, would be later on, in July and August, when they need that.

I mean, you're going to be discarding snowy grouper, period, and we can't get to recreational reporting, or whatever, fast enough to get to this stuff, because this snowy grouper fishery -- It ain't going to get no better, because it's the discards of the recreational industry up and down this coast, period, and somehow -- I mean, that just simply -- Well, I'm just at a committee level, but that's simply -- A May and June only season for blueline tilefish, the crowd won't even be catching half of their ACL, and you'll be shutting them out there from that, and that simply -- I mean, it's not going to work for northern North Carolina, where the majority of bluelines are caught at, and the data shows that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. All right. Is there more discussion on this? All right. We have a motion on the board to select Alternative 2 as the preferred for Action 4 for snowy. Is there any more discussion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This may just be beating a dead horse, but I just have to look out for my North Carolina fishermen and just point out how important this fishery is for them in the summer, and I understand the constraints here. This is the sort of issue that we as a council do the best we can, and I know it can lead to frustration in the fishing industry, right, because it doesn't seem like we're setting the seasons when they would be most usable for our fishermen, but it is what it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tom. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Since we can catch fish year-round down here, is it really a big difference in Florida, whether it's in May or June or July and August? When you look at when the fish were landed, there were considerably more fish landed in July and August than there were in May and June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We were partly going with what the AP recommended, and so, based on that discussion, they recommended this particular alternative.

MS. THOMPSON: When was Florida's blueline season?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's the same, May and June.

MS. THOMPSON: Could we change Florida's blueline season to July and August? Is there a reason that we have it in May and June?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I might have to get back to you on that in Full Council. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: One other thing. North of Cape Hatteras, up there on the other side of the shoals, up there with the majority of blueline, there is no snowy grouper. There is no cooccurrence, but, once you get further down, where the least amount of bluelines are caught at, and further down the coast, there is probably issues with snowies, but, where the majority of the charter boats fish at, north of Cape Hatteras, the majority of where the catch is coming from, there is no snowy catches. You might catch one. In like seven or eight years of fishing, I caught one grouper, and so you've got some real issues here with regional different things that are going to affect some folks that don't need to be affected, and the majority of the area where it needs to be affected -- It might get a little relief, but there's still going to be a lot of discarding snowy grouper from the recreational industry catching other things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just throwing an idea out and trying to balance all this, and, when we go back to blueline, are we getting crazy if we can just keep the blueline season May to August north of Hatteras? I don't know if that's an enforcement nightmare or what, but, I mean, maybe that's more for Full Council discussion, but I'm just trying to figure out how to make this right for everyone.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that we would be okay with the July to August season for both. I think that we're advocating for is that they be the same and that we don't just use the accountability measure as the only means here, and I think that we need to select a season. All right. Mel.

MR. BELL: Just real quick, and so am I hearing that -- This is another one of these cases where we have some differences between one end of the region and the other, but I seem to be hearing that we could maybe live with July and August, and that would accommodate both, again realizing that Florida is going to have to wind things up, but that's a possibility?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's a possibility for Florida, yes, and so, if we would like to select Alternative 3 as the preferred for snowy, then, yes, when we get to Full Council, we would be suggesting a similar season for blueline, and so it's important to us to line them both up. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: A little of a question for Dewey, if that's okay. Since you have your finger on the pulse of the fishery north of Hatteras, is a July and August season more palatable than May and June? I hate to put you on the spot like that.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That's no problem. I get put on the spot all the time. If you look at the data north of there, there's nothing but blueline tilefish, period, and that's what is getting landed, and so, basically, if you cut the season back to July and August, and there's a good chance they might not even catch half their quota then, if there is tuna and mahi, and so you're going to penalize this one area, because all they catch is blueline, and everybody else has got cooccurrence and mixing of the species, and so what you do is you set a season north of a certain longitude and latitude, and you've only got two inlets to come out of, and that's Hatteras and Oregon Inlet, because their county is considered north of Cape Hatteras, because it's one county in the MRIP survey and different things.

I am just trying to -- I mean, it shows you the regional differences, and there is no need for guys that fish in one area, and all they catch is blueline, to be penalized because of everybody else's cooccurrence with snowy grouper, and so how you fix that conundrum -- I mean, I'm just stating the way it is, and there's got to be something besides saying, hey, let's just do July and August. Well, there's a good chance -- You've got to give a reasonable opportunity for the folks that have the 116,000-pound ACL recreational to harvest their catch, just like you do commercial, and so it's just -- It shows you the regional difference, and it's -- I mean, this council will do what it wants to do, but it will be shutting folks out, when there's no need, because that's the only species they have to catch there. It's not a multispecies bag limit.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and we've heard that from fishermen for years up there, and we know it to be the case, but are you suggesting that the blueline season just needs to be much longer? I mean, that's what I'm asking, and not in terms of snowy, but in terms of blueline, and what would be the appropriate timeframe for the fishermen north of Hatteras?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would say May 15 to -- Well, it ain't up to me, but it's also what Andy's office has to say about setting the season, with the amount of the catch, but that's what it is, if you've got to fit the ACL with what the season is, or try to, based on past historical stuff. I am not here to speak for the charter boat industry or whatever, but I'm just telling you what the data shows, and what's there, and you all can make the decision from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say, to move things along here, we have this motion on 2, and we could move on that. If folks feel that 3 would actually be better, someone could do a substitute motion, perhaps, or we could just take 2 and move with it, and I realize the discussion with blueline is kind of complicating this, but we're dealing with snowy right now. We could do something right now, and then come back at Full Council and adjust, to accommodate blueline or whatever, but, just to kind of move things along, that would be my recommendation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What are the thoughts here? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, snowies and bluelines aren't even an issue for Georgia, but just we've heard, repeatedly, from the recreational sector about the need to address seasonal differences in the occurrence of species, and like Dewey has described, and I know it's hard. It's hard for a lot of reasons, but, you know, is there a way to move towards that with specialized fisheries like this? I mean, it's much easier for something like this than perhaps some of these other fisheries that we're dealing with, or species that we're dealing with, and so is a differential season -- Is it so impractical as to not be feasible?

I think that's some of the things that I think we need to start asking ourselves, I mean, because we've got to have the ability to be flexible. I mean, this rigidity is just causing perpetual conflicts. I mean, we all know that we've got twelve degrees of latitude that we're trying to deal with here, and it's -- People look at this and go, that's a no-win situation, but we have a circumstance, with blueline, where we have some definitive data that is reasonably trustworthy, I think, as much as anything is, and is it just simply not feasible, from the Service standpoint, or from enforcement, to just -- Do we have to just categorically disqualify it, or is there something we can do here to try to give back to the folks we're managing and address their concerns about regional flexibility? I mean, we're going to deal with this more and more and more. I mean, we're seeing it with discard mortality, and it's haunting us in everything we do, and so that's just a question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, to that point, I'll take it one step further, and my question is, is it feasible, and is it feasible to do anything in this document, because that's where we're at right now, right, and this document is getting ready to get approved to go to public hearing. In theory, we could go to public hearing without picking a preferred, and that's not ideal, but we can do it, and we can hear what the public has to say.

My question, right now, is, is it too late to change this sort of suite of alternatives, in which case then, yes, we need to muddle through what's happening here, and is this the appropriate place to address Spud's concerns, and all of our concerns, about needing some sort of regional management, especially since we're on a statutory deadline?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me try to speak to that a little bit, because I feel like -- So snowy is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and it's been that way for a long time. Having a longer than two-month season concerns me, and here we are in the snowy document and trying to make a decision. I would like to see us go out with a preferred selected for this season, and then folks can react to that, so they have an idea, kind of, of what we're thinking.

Then I feel like maybe we can circle back to the blueline tilefish discussion, and is there the ability to do some kind of regional carve-out, and I don't know. It's a great question, and so -- But, since snowy is in worse shape -- Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I certainly don't think we're trying to fix the blueline in the snowy, but, obviously, you're trying to sync them up, and I think we do need to consider that, where there is cooccurrence and where we want to minimize discards and that sort of thing, but I guess my question is -- I mean, when we go back to blueline, are we in a position where we could consider some sort of regional attribute to the management, or is that one of these MSE things that we're

going to have to deal with? I mean, I think we will be dealing with that in MSE, but can we address this more immediate issue in the blueline document, or is that out-of-bounds at this point?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think, based on all the data, there's a way to carve out a regional area that shows where you're not catching nothing but blueline tilefish, and so what it would be is you would set a longitude and latitude of where it's at, and then, if anybody is in that area, and happens to possess a grouper, it would be illegal for them to do that, because the data shows -- I mean, not that you couldn't maybe drop down one time and catch a grouper, but it ain't -- The data shows that, 99.9 percent, you're not going to catch one.

I'm just trying to keep a fishery that's been segmented, and it's been browbeat, all the other things, and this is the only thing you catch, and it ain't all this mixed occurrence that goes on everywhere else down the state, but it's just the nature of where we live and where it's located, and that's all it is, and give a fair access to the recreational industry to harvest their ACL, just like the commercial that we fought for, and I think there's a way of looking at a longitude and latitude number, based on the data, and I've got some in my head, but that will be later on in the discussion maybe, of where that could be done.

Then you'll have to see -- This is all coming out of one inlet, and you don't have all these inlets where all these people are fishing, and so it would be easier to do something, and what's wrong with trying it? I mean, this is like a no-brainer easy one to start something, because, in the future, maybe you'll get to regional management, depending on whatever is going on, but this is a no-brainer easy one to try, if it meets all the mandates of SERO and everybody else's accounting or whatever.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am certainly not opposed to the idea, and I think there's a lot of challenges in dealing with blueline and snowy, the first and foremost being we're dealing with an ACL that's in the thousands of fish, and so we are slicing and dicing an already small pot of fish, or catch limit, and determining regional management.

Now, some of the ideas being floated, like having differential seasons, are certainly feasible. The mechanics would have to be worked out, and we would have to think carefully about that, and, for example, if we're going to have a single ACL, but differential seasons, there would be potential that Florida could catch up all the catch limit, and then we have to shut down the fishery before North Carolina, or the northern states, obviously, have access to it, and so there's ways to address that, in terms of then splitting out the catch limits and having in-season accountability measures for specific catch limits by region, but I think the biggest challenge becomes then we're dealing with hundreds of fish for a catch limit rather than thousands of fish for a catch limit, and so we're dealing with very small numbers of fish and a very complicated, I think, system for a fishery that's relatively small, in the whole scheme of things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to try to bring us back here, and so we have a motion on the board to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative for Action 4. Once again, this is for snowy. It sounds like we're going to circle back to the blueline tilefish discussion when we get to

Full Council, and so we've had a lot of discussion on this particular season. All right. Any more discussion? **Any objection to this motion?** Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: At this point, I would like to abstain on this motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We will note one abstention.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The last action to go over for snowy is Action 5, which would modify the snowy grouper recreational accountability measures, and so modifications to the recreational accountability measures are being considered to separate the commercial and recreational accountability measure triggers and establish a viable accountability measure for the recreational sector. I am going to, again, use Table 14. We do have an additional alternative that you haven't seen that the IPT added after the March meeting, and so I'll review that.

The current AMs in place, you have an in-season recreational AM, where the recreational landings reach, or are projected to reach, the ACL, and the current rec season closes. You also have a post-season AM, where, if the recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, the total ACL is exceeded, and the stock is overfished, then there is a payback the following year, and so, again, you need all three of those things to happen to trigger that post-season AM.

Alternative 2 is NMFS would annually announce the season start and end date. Alternative 3 removes the current in-season AM and then uncouples the post-season, and so I've been using that verbiage all week, and so the only thing that would need to happen to trigger that post-season AM would be the recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, and so no longer tied to the total ACL or to stock status.

That additional alternative that the IPT is recommending is added to the suite is retaining the current in-season accountability measure, and so, if the recreational landings reach the ACL, then the current season closes, and then uncoupling the post-season AM, and so this is kind of a hybrid between Alternative 1 and Alternative 3. Again, that recommendation is that the IPT recommends considering the additional alternative, Alternative 4, which retains the current in-season, but unties the post-season.

A review of those draft amendment sections, really quickly, is I did want to note that we actually reordered the biological benefits, and let me make sure that I'm saying this correctly, and so, essentially, we need to have a functioning AM to see biological benefits. The biological benefits would be greatest in Alternative 4, followed by Alternative 1, 3, and 2.

For econ effects, in terms of potential short-term negative econ effects to the rec sector, Alternative 1 would have the highest potential for negative economic effects, since there is a payback provision, followed by Alternative 4, 2, and then 3. Then, finally, social effects, and so Alternative 1 could result in in-season closures, which would result in negative social effects.

Alternative 2 could result in foregone fishing opportunities, if landings occur at a rate slower than projected. Alternatives 3 and 4 both remove the total ACL and status trigger from the AM, which would result in the fishing year varying significantly from year to year, which could incur negative social effects, and then, finally, Alternative 3 would remove possible -- It would remove the possible negative social effects if the season were to close, and then Alternative 4 would remove

the in-season trigger, which would prevent negative social effects associated. Actually, I think there's an error there, because we do have an in-season trigger for Alternative 4, and so Alternative 4 has the potential for an in-season closure.

To review the Snapper Grouper AP feedback, the AP recommended, through a formal motion, adding an alternative that would retain the in-season AM and only remove the stock status trigger, and so I'm going to pop back up here, so I can show you what that would look like. If you're looking at Alternative 1, their suggestion was to retain the current in-season, and then the only thing that you would be removing is stock status, and so you would -- To trigger the post-season AM, you would need to exceed the recreational landings, and then you would need to exceed the total landings. With that, I will turn it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that, Allie. Is there discussion here? We have an added alternative. Go ahead, Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would ask a question. So then, to understand that, the AP recommendation is basically Alternative 4 with the total ACL trigger portion of it, correct? Yes. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that clarification, and so, yes, the one that's highlighted here on the chart is the one recommended by the AP with the total ACL. All right. Do we want to select a preferred here? I am thinking Alternative 3, but I'm open to suggestions here. Based on the PSEs, is in-season really feasible? I am thinking no, but I'm just putting that out there. Thoughts on a preferred that we could take out to public hearing? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: **I will make a motion that we choose Alternative 3 as our preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. Do we have a second? Mel has a hand up. Is that a second?

MR. BELL: Yes. Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so motion and seconded for Alternative 3 as the preferred. Is there more discussion on that? **Any objection to that? I see heads nodding no.** Let me look on this side. **It looks like no objections to that.** All right. **I guess that motion is approved.**

Then what do we want to do? Do we want to take this out? There's a draft motion on the board here for approving this for public hearings. One more time, Allie, can you remind us of the timeline?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and let me -- I'm actually going to come back up to the timeline for you guys. We would -- If we approve for public hearing, we've -- For some of the other amendments, we've talked about doing possibly a webinar public hearing in addition to having the September council meeting serve as another public hearing session, and so that's what we had tentatively planned, pending your approval, for this amendment as well. We would have July and August, in that timeframe, doing a webinar, and then the September council meeting could also serve as a public hearing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so the timeline is there. What do people think about the timeline, and so this is webinar public hearings and then an in-person public hearing that would occur simultaneously with the September council meeting. Are people okay with that? I see people nodding yes, and I think that they're okay with that. All right. Would someone like to make a motion to approve Amendment 51 for public hearings? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Somebody has got to do it. **I'll make the motion that we approve Amendment 51 for public hearings.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Spud, and it's seconded by Mel. Any more discussion? **Any objection?**

MR. BELL: Actually, I had something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say, realizing that we're going to have the public hearing in September up here, but, again, we're doing the public hearing also virtually at the same time, and so that will afford folks from both ends of the spectrum the opportunity to have a public hearing in September as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and Allie is mentioning that there would be two separate opportunities, just to clarify that. All right. Any more discussion? **Any objection, because Mel jumped in there at the last minute, and I'm just checking one more time. Any objection?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.**

All right. Thank you, Allie, for this work on snowy, and so the only other item left here in the Snapper Grouper Committee is Other Business. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: This could devolve into an hour-long conversation, but I am curious, and we heard yesterday, from Bob Lorenz, that there is certainly interest in moving more quickly on some sort of specialized snapper grouper permit that addresses these deepwater fish, and so all this discussion, and what we're going to be doing more on tilefish, just keeps bringing me back to how do we expedite that, and so I was thinking that the Mid has got this recreational tilefish permit. Now, is that managed by the service, or is it managed by the council, the Mid-Atlantic Council, staff? Dewey, I mean, you're --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It's managed by GARFO and not the council. It's managed by the Northeast Region.

MR. WOODWARD: Okay, and so it just makes me think, and is there any way that we could take that and couple it with other species and expand it down to the South Atlantic region and more quickly start trying to capture better information, because we all know that -- I mean, MRIP estimates of these recreational deepwater species are -- I mean, they're never going to get any better, under the current circumstances, and so, I mean, I'm just throwing that out there, and I don't expect a solution, or an answer, but I'm just curious, and is there a linkage there that might could exploit to move this more quickly ahead, instead of waiting for 46 and plowing through all these things, and so, anyway, it's just a thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am certainly supportive of moving more quickly, and we often move way too slow, and the Fisheries Service has been having some internal conversations about a federal permit, right, and one of the concerns we have is each council developing kind of a separate independent permit for their respective fisheries and not having kind of continuity, and there, obviously, has to be tailoring of permits, and there has to be different, you know, needs for why those permits are being developed, but there's also some standardization, I think, that could bring value to the process, and so we're working towards that.

In terms of the Mid-Atlantic, I think one of the suggestions that I would make, if you're interested in the tilefish permit they've done up there, is maybe invite someone from GARFO, or the Mid-Atlantic, to come to the next meeting and present on that.

My limited understanding is that there's some challenges with that permit, in terms of people subscribing to it and reporting from it, but, Dewey, maybe you know more, and I don't know the full scope of how it's being used in the Mid-Atlantic, and so I want to make sure that we have full disclosure with regard to the utility of such permits, going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: To my knowledge, one of our biggest problems is the compliance. We've had a number of people sign-up for it, and probably up to like nine-hundred-and-some, but the compliance rate for actually reporting is tremendously and woefully inadequate, but we also have not provided any compliance assistance, and, like anything you do, until you provide that compliance assistance, you're never going to start to move up the ladder, and that is something that, you know, we'll probably be talking at the Mid in October about, when we come up with tilefish, and I know I will be, that we've done it for a year-and-a-half, and now when are we going to put the compliance assistance in there and help the folks.

The uniqueness, not only for the Mid's permits, is that a majority of the landings for these particular fish are coming out of a few states, and we just have to provide compliance assistance. The futility that I see here, about transporting a ready-made app type of thing, is you look at -- I would recommend a presentation from GARFO and the Mid-Atlantic to come down here and talk about it, but you already have one that's made and done, and maybe it could be transported here, but the urgent need for the deepwater species in the South Atlantic is like paramount to start out for something, and, if you've already got a ready-made package to go somewhere, maybe you can do some tweaking and it works, and, if you're looking to do something in the future, all the way, you can just use that as like a pilot program, going ahead, that it's ready made, but it's a start. It's not five years down the road.

The way I see it, particularly to the commercial industry, we need it now, to show the magnitude, which we see on social media and everywhere else, and it shows that the magnitude of the recreational industry -- We've heard, all around the table, comments, over the years, just to start to show that, but compliance assistance would help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I asked John to come up here and talk a little bit about the timelines and what we have on the list for the agenda for the September council meeting, which we're going to look at when we get to Full Council, but I think it's a lot already, and a reminder that the sanctuary stuff is coming to the September council meeting, but I'm going to turn it to John to remind us of the timelines and that special group, a subset of council members, that were working on this, and they had already seen these presentations, and I suspect it will come back to the council at a later date. I think that Spud was asking can we expedite this, but let me turn it to John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The first bit of September is looking full, and we're going to have to do another severe prioritization, as we did in March for this meeting, and we have the Florida Keys Sanctuary to deal with, and we have that WECAFC thing that I mentioned earlier, and we have the scenario planning that I also mentioned earlier, and all of this is coming.

We're already looking at scheduling a separate webinar meeting at some point, to pull some of those things off of your docket for September, and so, given the history of the presentations on this topic, I don't think that it's something that is really worth the time for the council to come and have another presentation on this at the council meeting.

What I'm referring to is, you know, we had that recreational permitting and reporting workgroup, and they put a lot of time into looking at other programs, and they had a presentation from the Mid-Atlantic staff on the program that they had implemented, and they also had presentations from groups like HMS, to look at their reporting on sharks and things, their permitting and reporting systems, and we also agreed to create a permitting and reporting technical advisory panel, and I fully anticipate that that group --

Our plan, in March, was to hopefully appoint people here and have that group meet potentially before September and look into some of those, and so I think we can ask that group to look at the progress of the Mid-Atlantic reporting since that time, and particularly, as Dewey noted, the challenges with compliance and where that's standing and maybe think about what could be done to improve that and then really think what is this council going to do.

I think, if the Fisheries Service is talking about national-level reporting and permitting, I mean, we would certainly want to get someone who is involved in that to come to this group and talk about it as well, and I just think, with the workload that you guys have, and the statutory amendments and the extra things added to amendments here at this meeting, there's a lot to be done, and I am just not confident that coming to the council with something technical like that, at this point, is a good use of the limited time we will have in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Okay, and let me maybe suggest a course of action here. I assume we're going to discuss, tomorrow, the appointment of the members to the working group, and can we go ahead and ask them, once they are formed, to make this -- Basically, their first task is to evaluate the feasibility of taking the tilefish model and expanding it to other deepwater species, and were we going to do anything with Amendment 46 in September?

MR. CARMICHAEL: 46, the permitting amendment?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I don't think we were, formally. We were going to let this group go, and I think it would be completely appropriate for you to provide guidance to that group for its first meeting when you make the appointments, and, if you want to try and have that happen and report to you on that topic by September, you could factor that in as well. That's totally appropriate.

MR. WOODWARD: That would be sort of my -- I mean, they've already gotten -- I mean, there is at least five of the individuals that are already on the workgroup anyway, and so they're going to be familiar with it, but that -- I see that as a way of maybe expediting this and moving us towards something actionable a little earlier than we might otherwise be able to do, and so that would kind of be my approach, is task them, and let them come back to us with their assessment and the feasibility of expanding and modifying an existing mechanism, and then we have something tangible to discuss, if that makes sense to everybody.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. It says that staff are suggesting that we're going to capture that another way, it sounds like, when we get to that discussion tomorrow. Is there any other Other Business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? Okay. I don't see any hands, and I think we can adjourn the Snapper Grouper Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 16, 2022.)

- - -

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
July 13, 2022

Snapper Grouper Cate
Jules, 6/14/22

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③ Rick Devictor
④ Jeff Buckel Du.
⑤ Bob Lorenz
⑥ Shep Grimes

⑥ Du. Jack McGovern
⑦ H. Pat O'Shaughnessy
⑧ James Ingvar
⑧ Ashley Oliver

Shaffer (Hooper) CMA
Jues, 6/14/22

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SAFMC June Council
Attendee Report: Meeting (6/13/22 - 6/17/22)

Report Generated:

06/15/2022 05:55 AM EDT

Webinar ID

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Actual Start Date/Time

06/14/2022 08:04 AM EDT

Duration

8 hours 38 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Aukeman	Trip
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Barbieri	Luiz
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Berry	James "chip"
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	Cindy
Yes	Conklin	00The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Bobby
Yes	Cox	Jack
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dover	Miles
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	Dunn	Tracy
Yes	Flowers	Jared
Yes	Floyd	Brad
Yes	Franco	Dawn
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Goodhue	David
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Griner	00 Tim
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	John
Yes	Harrison	Alana
Yes	Hart	Hannah
Yes	Heffernan	Katie

Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Iverson	Kim
Yes	Jacoski	Greg
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Klibansky	Nikolai
Yes	Kuehn	James
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Latanich	Katie
Yes	Locascio	James
Yes	Lorenzen	Kai
Yes	MERRIFIELD	JEANNA
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Masi	Michelle
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Parker	Bill
Yes	Peterson	Cassidy
Yes	Poston	Will
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Rawls	Kathy
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Renchen	Jeff
Yes	Reynolds	Jon
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shertzer	Kyle
Yes	Smart	Tracey
Yes	Smillie	Nick
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Sternle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Thompson	00 Laurilee
Yes	Thompson	Michael
Yes	Tran	Anderson

Yes
Yes

Travis
Trudell
Vecchio
Vincent
WHITTEN
Walia
Whitaker
Wiegand
Williams
brewer
colby
sandorf
vara

Michael
R. J.
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Erik
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barrett
scott
mary

Snapper Grouper Cmtc
Wed, 6/15/22

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Andy Strelcheck
Laurilee Thompson
Mid-Atlantic:
Dewey Hemilright/Joe Cimino
Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

SEDAR

Mel Bell, Chair
Carolyn Belcher, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
Tim Griner
Kerry Marhefka
Jessica McCawley
Trish Murphey
Andy Strelcheck
Staff contact: Chip Collier

SHRIMP

Carolyn Belcher, Chair
Laurilee Thompson, Vice Chair
Chris Conklin
LT Robert Copeland
Jessica McCawley
Trish Murphey
Andy Strelcheck
Spud Woodward
Staff contact: Roger Pugliese

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✓ Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
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✓ Mel Bell
✓ Chester Brewer
✓ Chris Conklin
LT Robert Copeland
✓ Tim Griner
✓ Judy Helmey
✓ Trish Murphey
✓ Tom Roller
✓ Andy Strelcheck
✓ Laurilee Thompson
✓ Spud Woodward
Mid-Atlantic:
Dewey Hemilright/Earl "Sonny" Gwin
Staff Contact: Mike Schmidtke

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Chester Brewer, Vice Chair
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LT Robert Copeland
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Bob Lorenz
Clay Porch

Monica Smit-Brunello
Jack McGovern
Rick Devictor
Step Grimes
LT. Pat O'Shoughnessy
Jamal Ingram

Snapper Review Crto
Wed, 6/15/22

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

Executive Director

✓ John Carmichael
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**SAFMC June Council
Meeting (6/13/22 -**

Attendee Report: 6/17/22)

Report Generated:

07/14/2022 08:36 AM EDT

Webinar ID

778-545-691

Actual Start Date/Time

06/15/2022 08:07 AM EDT

Duration

9 hours 25 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Aukeman	Trip
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bailey	Adam
Yes	Bell	00 Mei
Yes	Berry	James "chip"
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	Cindy
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Conklin	00The Real Chris
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Cross	Tiffanie
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	Darden	Tanya
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dover	Miles
Yes	Drury	Mark
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	Dunn	Tracy
Yes	Flowers	Jared
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Franco	Dawn
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	John
Yes	Hailey	Rebecca
Yes	Harrison	Alana

Yes	Hart	Hannah
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Iverson	Kim
Yes	Jacoski	Greg
Yes	Jennings	Gary
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Joyner	Woody
Yes	Keener	Paula
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lizza	Katie
Yes	Locascio	James
Yes	Locke	Charles
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Masi	Michelle
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McPherson	Matthew
Yes	Meehan	Sean
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Merrifield	Mike
Yes	Merten	Wessley
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Nelson	Paul
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Parker	Bill
Yes	Peel	Ellen
Yes	Powell	Jessica
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Rupp	Jack
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Smillie	Nick
Yes	Smith	Bradley
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Stam	Geoff
Yes	Starbeck	Haley
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Thompson	00 Laurilee
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Trudell	R. J.
Yes	Vecchio	Julie

Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes

Walia
Wamer
Whitaker
brewer
carswell
colby
moss
oden
sandorf
szymanski

Matthew
David
David
00chester
stewart
barrett
david
jeff
scott
luke

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS continued

Snapper
Grouper Cmte.
6/16/22

MACKEREL COBIA

Spud Woodward, Chair
Tom Roller, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
Carolyn Belcher
Mel Bell
Chester Brewer
Chris Conklin
LT Robert Copeland
Tim Griner
Judy Helmey
Kerry Marhefka
Jessica McCawley
Trish Murphey
Andy Strelcheck
Laurilee Thompson
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Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

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Jack McGovern
LT. Pat O'Shaughnessy
8 Jamel Ingram

Monica Smith-Brunello
Shep Grimes
Clay Parch
Rick Devictor

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*Shopper
Group Cmtc
6/16/22*

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SAFMC June Council

Attendee Report: Meeting (6/13/22 - 6/17/22)

Report Generated:

06/16/2022 08:28 PM EDT

Webinar ID

778-545-691

Actual Start Date/Time

06/16/2022 07:19 AM EDT

Duration

10 hours 18 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Aukeman	Trip
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Bell	00 Mel
Yes	Bellavance	00 - Rick
Yes	Berry	James "chip"
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Bonney	Rick
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bubley	Walter
Yes	Buckel	Jeff
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	Cindy
Yes	Cimo	Laura
Yes	Coggins	Lew
Yes	Collier	Chip
Yes	Conklin	00The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Bobby
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Curtis	Judd
Yes	Darden	Tanya
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Dover	Miles
Yes	Drury	Mark
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	Flowers	Jared
Yes	Franco	Dawn
Yes	Franke	Emilie
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Glazier	Ed
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Gray	Alisha

Yes	Hadley	John
Yes	Harrison	Alana
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Hudson	Rusty
Yes	Iverson	Kim
Yes	Jacoski	Greg
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Keener	Paula
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Kuehn	James
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lee	Jennifer
Yes	MERRIFIELD	JEANNA
Yes	Malinowski	Rich
Yes	Masi	Michelle
Yes	McGovern	Jack
Yes	McPherson	Matthew
Yes	Meehan	Sean
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Murphey	Trish
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Malley	Rachel
Yes	O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	Oliver	Ashley
Yes	Parker	Bill
Yes	Patten	Willow
Yes	Peterson	Cassidy
Yes	Phillips	Charlie
Yes	Poston	Will
Yes	Powell	Jessica
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Ralston	Kellie
Yes	Ramsay	Chloe
Yes	Rawls	Kathy
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Reynolds	Jon
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shertzer	Kyle
Yes	Shervanick	Kara
Yes	Smillie	Nick
Yes	Smith	Bradley

