

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina**

December 9-11, 2025

Transcript

Snapper Grouper Committee

Jessica McCawley, Chair
Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair
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Judy Helmey
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Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVictor
Dr. Clay Porch
Sonny Gwin
Dakus Geeslin
Shepherd Grimes
Annie Hawkins

Kristen Foss
Kathy Knowlton
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Matt Walia
Dr. Luiz Barbieri
Chris Kimrey

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on Tuesday, December 9, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The first order of business for the Snapper Grouper Committee is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any modifications or any known items for Other Business at this time for the Snapper Grouper Committee? Are there any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. Seeing none, we'll consider the agenda approved. Are there any substantive edits to the September 2025 minutes for the committee? Seeing no hands, any objection to approval of the minutes from September 2025? All right. Seeing no hands, we'll consider the minutes approved. Next up, we have an update on rulemaking. Are you giving that, Rick? All right. Great. Thank you.

MR. DEVICTOR: I normally do, and so four amendments. We've talked about these before, but I'm happy to report we have had some movement on these through the system despite the shutdown. The four amendments are Amendment 55, Regulatory Amendment 36, the commercial e-logbook that we just talked about briefly, and Amendment 48, wreckfish.

Amendment 55, this has a statutory deadline with this. This has to do with scamp and yellowmouth groupers. We were trying to get the September implementation with this. However, we were affected by the shutdown with this, and so we're working on the final rule package, and so that's the last step with this amendment, and, once we get that published, there will be an implementation date along with that, and so that's 55, working on the final rule package.

Regulatory Amendment 36, this proposes changes to gag and black grouper vessel limits and stowage of on-demand gear. This one, the next step is for the proposed rule to publish. This package was actually sent up to Headquarters, which is good news, and so it's under review by Headquarters, 36, and so that's proposed a rule package.

Commercial e-logbook, this would implement electronic reporting, and so, this one, we actually did get the notice of availability published for the amendment. That published on November 20. There's a sixty-day comment period with that. Hopefully, you saw the Fishery Bulletin, and that comment period is open through January 20, and so there's also going to be a proposed rule comment period with that, and so this was just the sixty-day comment period for the notice of availability. There also will be a thirty-day proposed rule comment period, but that has not published yet, and so that's commercial e-logbook, and that's under public comment. Finally, Amendment 48, and we're working that proposed rule and NOA package now, and so those are the four amendments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions for Rick? All right. I don't see any hands. I'm going to turn it back to you, Rick. I assume you're going to be the one going over the EFP application for black sea bass?

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Great. Thank you.

MR. DEVICTOR: Okay, and so we did receive an EFP application around the beginning of September, and, as we normally do, we present this to the council for any comment you may have on this. This is in your briefing materials.

It's titled *Project to Modernize Pot Fishing for the Southeast Commercial Black Sea Bass Pot Portion of the Snapper Grouper Fishery using Subsea Buoy Retrieval Systems*. You've heard different names with these systems, and here they're using subsea buoy retrievals. It's also known as ropeless, lineless, pop-up, and you'll probably hear me calling it on-demand gear. We tend to use that language a lot.

The date is September 9. The applicant is requesting a start of November 1, and so they want to start now. They want a three-year study. This is April 30 of 2028. The applicant's name, which you're probably familiar with, is Kim Sawicki. She's President of Sustainable Seas Technology, Incorporated, and I will note that two participants are listed to my right here, and so Charlie and Jimmy are listed on there as participating in this study.

This is the third EFP that they're requesting. We did provide two EFPs, and I will say that this is a great application. It has a lot of good information on it. It has a lot of good diagrams on how these on-demand systems work, and exactly the ones that they are testing, and so, the application, it goes through the background, research objectives, the project timeline, requested exemptions, and fishing methods and what data is to be collected.

I'll just touch upon some of these, but, again, this is all in your briefing materials for you to look at. First off, the purpose of the EFP, this is listed on page 3, and they're calling this a follow-up, because they did get those two EFPs previously. They want to maintain momentum and progress by continuing the training and knowledge transfer, and so what they're calling a train the trainer program that they've been using successfully.

They want to conduct focused, refined gear testing, and so test different mousetraps, so to speak, different on-demand systems, address shark interactions, because, as they talk about here, they are seeing damage to buoy and buoy lines due to sharks, and then also assess economic feasibility, and so there's some testing of socioeconomic information here, and so that's the overall purpose. They do have more information, on page 5, on specific objectives, okay, exactly what they want to test, just expanding on those main ones I talked about, and so those are listed in more detail.

Just moving a little bit to the methodology that they're looking at, and this is on page 12 of their EFP, they want to test -- They have a table on page 12. There's six different types of on-demand gear that they want to put out there and test. They're going to compare that to the control pots, okay, and compare those two, and they want to operate, of course, in the closed area during the closed time, because, as they know, it's important to test in that area.

To test the economic viability of the project, they must test where black sea bass is greatest abundance. It's during that closed area during the closed seasons, and so what they want to test are fishing singles and what they're calling 2DFs and 4BYs, and so 2DFs are two pots tied together, and 4BYs are four. You'll see diagrams of those on page 14. They want to test that fishing those four pots tied all together is more efficient in collecting black sea bass, and they're going to do some virtual gear marking, et cetera.

Okay, and so that's basic methodology. You can see exactly what information they are requesting. That's on page 11, the catch information and effort information, okay, and basically effort and amount of gear to be used, number of gear hands, soak time, all of that, to compare and see how these six different traps work and compare to each other.

Finally, I just want to go a little bit into the exemptions. They have a good list here. I like how they have all the exemptions, and then they have a reason why they're requesting the exemptions from this, and so this is on page 8, separated into three parts of trap configurations and markings, because, again, they want to try tying two together, or four together, and so that's currently not allowed right now.

They want to test or be exempted from having to take the pots out at the end of each trip, because they do state they occasionally want to keep it in overnight, and the final thing is the big one. They want to be exempt from the seasonal closure and the spatial closures. Again, they want to test using this on-demand gear in those areas during those times.

Looking over my notes, I think that's really what I wanted to go over for you today. Again, this is the third EFP that they are requesting. We already gave them two others, and they have done two research programs already, and so this will be the third one. Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick, and so looking for questions here for Rick. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: No questions, but just, hopefully -- Based on the comments you made, you sound positive about it. I really encourage the approval of it. On the side, I've been working with one of the fishermen associated with it, and we're developing a market stream for his fish, if he's able to fish this on-demand gear in a closed area, and that is going to yield him a much better value for his product, and so there's really exciting news on, you know, the support of this kind of innovative technology, and that won't be as possible if this isn't approved.

I think that we all agree that one of the promises we've all made over the years of, you know, if we use more sustainable, innovative technology, you'll be rewarded in the market, and it will sort of draw people to be more willing to use this kind of gear, and so we're this close to achieving it, if this can get approved, and then, eventually, we can do our end on the council to turn it into something more permanent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Other questions or comments? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, of course, I haven't pulled up my comments on it. I was good with it. It seemed to me, and I was trying to find it, where I took my notes, but the amount of black sea bass they're asking was like 40,000 pounds, and I think that's more than our ABC, and so I don't know if that needs to be discussed further. I had it written down somewhere, but I didn't open it up, but I know that jumped out at me, was it -- It seemed like a high number, especially compared to what we're proposing now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good question. Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: That is a question that we definitely will look at, yes, and that is on page 12. They want to expect to harvest a total of approximately 10,000 pounds whole weight per year per fisher, for a total of 40,000 pounds whole weight per year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions or comments? Let me just remind -- Before I go to Sonny, let me just remind folks of the procedure here. We discuss the EFPs in committee. This happens before we get to public comment. The public has a chance to comment on it during the public comment period, and then we discuss it again when we get to the committee in Full Council, and I think we usually write a letter about what the council thinks about the EFPs, whether we're recommending them or not. Sonny. Sonny, and then Andy.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to comment on how important this on-demand gear is up in the New England area in these closed areas, and it's been an economic windfall for these guys up there. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Sonny. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two questions for Rick. The first is -- Remind me, and this is a fairly long time period for an EFP request, four years. Is there a reason for the four-year time period, versus a shorter time period?

MR. DEVICTOR: Not that I'm aware of. They do go through in detail about, starting on page 5, the specific objectives. They lay out pretty specifically, and so they are testing something new kind of each year, and it kind of evolves over the three years. That's the only thing I can think of, is they kind of want to space it out over three years, the research questions.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and then the second question is -- Is there any work ongoing in the Mid-Atlantic or New England with regard to sea bass by the same researcher that you're aware of?

MR. DEVICTOR: I am not aware.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I found my note, and so it was 40,000 a year, and it looks like we're proposing an ACT of 48,557, and so I just wanted to throw those numbers out there, if that needs to be readdressed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good questions. Good points. Any more questions or points on this EFP? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So what happens if they're asking for 40,000 pounds a year, and we only have an ACT of 48,000? How does -- I mean, what happens?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Well, the ACT is proposed right now, and so, when she submitted this, it wasn't in place, and, of course, it's not in place right now, and so that's something that we can take

back to the applicant and factor that into -- You know, certainly we'll put this out for comment, the proposals themselves, and there will be a public comment period with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I can't resist. I'm sorry, but there are other circumstances in which EFPs are allowed to exist outside of the ACL, and why -- When are we choosing to, and when are we choosing not to?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good point. Any more comments? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just -- Thank you for saying the quiet part out loud, Kerry. It needs to be said. I just appreciate your comments there, and Trish as well. I mean, it's a big number, compared to our low ACT, and I'm sure this is going to come up during the red snapper discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, and then Kerry?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I'm certainly hearing maybe some concerns about the quantity of fish that they're proposing, and so I'm not necessarily looking for a specific amount, but, if the council, obviously, feels strongly about that, we would certainly want to see a recommendation on those lines. We, obviously, can work with the applicant, in terms of modifications. We did that with the state EFPs for Florida, in terms of modifying some of the quantities of fish that they had proposed.

The other thing I'll emphasize, because it will come up throughout this week, is so you can ask for exemptions from regulations, but it doesn't negate or alleviate us from also meeting our Magnuson mandates, right, and so, that's, obviously, the challenge when we look with these EFPs, is we have to look at it more holistically, with regard to how are we still abiding by our mandates under the Magnuson Act, and consistent with that, and so we do environmental analyses, NEPA, when we do these exempted fishing permits. Obviously, when we get large quantities of fish being requested, we have to take a look at that in terms of NEPA and our MSA requirements.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and so I just wanted to give some rationale for when we do send a letter, which I hope this council will send a letter in support of this EFP. Additional rationale would be that, one, going back to the on-demand gear, and the importance of this gear, the importance of proving that this gear is effective, that fishermen are willing to use it, that it has market benefits, goes beyond this council.

I know that that's not necessarily our purview, but make no mistake that this is sort of one of the pieces of evidence that will be entered into the entire debate in this nation of using on-demand gear, and so I feel a heavy responsibility in that.

The second thing I would say is this body has spoken about the importance of this very small black sea bass pot fishery. These guys rely on black sea bass, for the most part, and I know I'm making a generalization. I'm sure there are people who feel differently, but I believe, for the most part, the trap guys rely on black sea bass significantly more than the hook-and-line guys do, and so, as we're

trying to work to rebuild this, and I'm speaking strictly commercial by the way, and, as we look to try to rebuild this fishery, this body has spoken several times about the importance of sort of ensuring that these thirty-three guys -- How many have we got? Five that really operate in this fishery are able to sort of sustain themselves through this rebuilding period, and so, in my mind, this is another way for them to do it.

That's just some rationale I would like to provide on the council's support, and, you know, where it comes out, as far as the numbers of fish that are taken through this EFP, I can't necessarily say, but I would say that I would err on the side of a higher number. A higher number meaning, you know, closer to the ACT than not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess my other question for Rick is, is that number like the sum total for the four years, or is it that many per year, each year for four years, I guess?

MR. DEVICTOR: I was just notified that Kim is online, Kim Sawicki, and so maybe she can answer some of the more specific questions, but 10,000 per year times the four people, and so a total of 40,000.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kim, did you want to answer some questions about this? Then we'll go back to hands here in the room.

MS. SAWICKI: Sure. Can you guys hear me?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. SAWICKI: So whoever just spoke last, that is 10,000 per year per fisher. I don't think we've come close to that in the last four years, but I'm sure someone can correct me if I'm incorrect. I think that's the first -- The primary question I've heard so far. I just hopped on, and so, if there's anything else, I'm happy to -- I'm here now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Great. Thank you, and so just seeking a clarification, and I heard something that you said. It sounded like you said 10,000 per fisherman per year. I just want to make sure that's what you said.

MS. SAWICKI: Yes, that's correct. We're willing to amend that, if necessary.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. All right. I see hands going up. I've got Dewey, Kerry, and then Amy.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering -- They expect to harvest that, but I believe she said, in years past, it hadn't been close to that, and so does anybody know what the numbers have been that she's talking about?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kim, do you know that answer?

MS. SAWICKI: I do not have an update on that yet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you.

MS. SAWICKI: I know it's been -- I think somebody there might be able to answer that question though.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't think so, but thank you. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Hi, Kim. Thanks for being online to answer these questions, and I'm just wanting to make sure that I'm understanding the fishers correctly. I see three fishers listed. Two fishers have one vessel listed. One fisher has three vessels listed, and so is there a fourth one that I'm missing, or is there something else there that you can tell me about, please, to get to that four times 1,000 pounds to 40,000 pounds a year, or 10,000 pounds per?

MS. SAWICKI: The captains, I believe, all count separately, and so the three vessels plus one is four separate captains. It's not the same captain on all three.

MS. DUKES: Gotcha. Thank you.

MS. SAWICKI: No worries. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do we have any more questions or comments at this time on this particular EFP? Bob Beal.

MR. BEAL: Not directly on the EFP, but, during the Mid-Atlantic Council update that Sonny provided, you know, he noted the on-demand gear, or gear marketing framework, that the Mid and New England are working on, and, you know, this on-demand gear is exactly why they're trying to get something figured out, how to identify where this gear is sitting on the bottom, so that, you know, someone doesn't sit right on top of it, or mobile gear goes through there and scoops it up, and so, you know, I think that this council -- You know, obviously, it sounds like they're getting into the on-demand gear business.

They'll need to really pay attention to what's going on up there in the Mid-Atlantic and New England on that gear marking framework, to make sure it doesn't create any problems with the unique fisheries down here, compared to what they have up in the Northeast, but, you know, it may be a pretty complex system of marking the deployed locations of each trap on a chart, and that's downloaded to other chart plotters, or, you know, a pinger on some traps. There's all these different ideas that are out there that I think this council probably wants to keep tabs on and see where they're going to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Without knowing how much, to me, the ask is, you know, what, 85 percent of a possible take of black sea bass for this here, and it doesn't seem like they need that amount, even though nobody knows what the amount has been in the past.

I would like to hear, you know -- I'm sure that somebody has to know that number, and, also, is this, the reliance of doing this project, based on catching other sea bass in the gear, or are they also funded with this project? How is it funded?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kim.

MS. SAWICKI: Dewey, just to answer your question, it's not funded, and so the fishermen are all participating, so they're out there actually fishing just like they normally would, and so there's no stipends. All the data that they provide is voluntary, and it's primarily on the reliability.

We have had -- Some of the different gear manufacturers have written grants, and have provided stipends, and we'll say two or three days at a time for fishers, if they've got an R&D change to gear, or if there's something in particular that they want to study, but it's all being paid for by the fishers, really just through the fishing, and, if it helps to clarify, the three of the vessels that are listed under Charlie Phillips have not historically been heavily fishing.

They've primarily been involved in the research aspect, and so not a lot of effort, certainly not what we've seen in North Carolina, but I think, again, that 40,000 total annual is not really anywhere near what we would expect, but, in the past, we've wanted to just make sure we were covered for that, and so it's definitely something we're willing to talk about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question for Kim, and so this is Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries, and so you've just stated, obviously, the poundage, and you may be well under that in past years, or wouldn't come close to harvesting this. Do you have like a minimum number of sets, or a minimum number of trips, that you need to make with each gear, and could you then approximate, based on kind of catch rates, what that would equate to for the potential for the exempted fishing permit? I think the concern here is we're going to set our catch target at 48,000 pounds of fish, and you're proposing up to 40,000 pounds, which is a significant amount of fish compared to the overall catch target for the entire black sea bass commercial fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kim.

MS. SAWICKI: Thanks, Andy, and so, from our perspective, we could drop down the number of vessels, if that would be helpful, and just keep say one spot right now available that could possibly be moved to -- Moved around the vessels, or, you know, we can -- It's something that I'm not -- Because I don't have the numbers in front of me right now, I would hate to lock us into something, especially when the people that are doing this work are doing it without really any stipends, and so they do need to make ends meet on those trips.

They have to pencil out, but I completely understand us potentially taking, you know, like 85 to 90 percent of that catch, and so I think we would have probably adjusted that ahead of time if I had known about that, which is probably bad on me, but it's definitely something we can work around, if you guys are still willing to let us continue this R&D work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I guess, for me, part of it is I don't know -- If they're operating as they generally would, in terms of it's your general season and all that, and it's really just around the fact that it's not -- It's continuing modifications to the gear, and it's just giving them permission to modify the gear, why do we -- I mean, I know it's because that's what's asked for in the EFP, but it's kind of

no different than if they're still held to thirty-five pots, and it's just issues of tweaking along the way, and it's just giving them permissions to tweak, then why does the count need to matter?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought that they're allowed to go in the closed area.

DR. BELCHER: But they're still -- If they're still fishing -- I mean, I get that for the four people, right, but you're still going to be operating as part of your business plan. The thing that's still going to operate the fishery is still the landings overall, and so I guess I can understand if it's something that it's inequitable to the remaining people in the fishery, because they're fishing in that closed area, but I don't -- It's a gear thing to me. It's not an issue of harvest. It's an issue of gear, because it's trying to get them to be able to deploy this gear all year round, right? I mean --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, but what if the quota has been met, and then the boats aren't going out, and so the gear can't be tested effectively, with enough trips, et cetera, because the number of -- I guess that's how I interpreted it, but I see --

DR. BELCHER: I guess I get that point, too, but I think the other split point of this is black sea bass -- The biggest difference we're dealing with right now is the stock has got a perceived issue that's leading our levels to be lower, and so I guess where I was going to was more of the idea that this is a gear testing thing, and so why not let it operate within the fishery and just give them the license to do R&D while they're doing their general commercial fishing?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I saw a hand up. Kerry, did you have your hand up? Okay. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on a process question, and the comment period for this closes when, and usually after -- I mean, I can't remember the timeline for approving or whatever, or weighing-into an EFP. Can you tell me like when this likely might come to fruition, and how that might look compared to what some of the preferred alternatives are in 37 for 2026 for me, please?

MR. DEVICTOR: I believe there's actually -- Maybe it's fifteen to forty-five days that you might have comment. We typically have a thirty-day comment period on that, okay, and so we have the comment period. It just occurs whenever we publish the Federal Register notice, and so there's no time certain with that. It's just, after we get your comments, and then we work on it, depending where our priorities are, and also working with the applicants, and working with the timing that they would like, and that's how it kind of happens, process-wise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other questions, or comments? Remember that we don't necessarily need to decide anything right now. The public can comment on this, and then we'll come back to this when we get to Full Council, but go ahead, Kerry. Have you got more questions?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm sorry. They're questions that might help us. Okay, and so, right now, this would be -- Technically, this could go in place while the current ACL, and we don't even have -- I don't even think we have an ACT right now, and the current ACL is in place, and there would be some time to operate.

This is a long -- We've already mentioned this is like a four-year proposal, which is -- Or three, which is a little on the long side, but if -- I would suspect the thought is to have this stay in place

until the council can actually take permanent action using -- Like deciding if this is a gear we want allowed to be used in the closed area, in my mind. Whether or not that's what they intended, that's how it would work in my mind.

We're going to approve Reg 37 I think at this meeting, with the potential for the new ACT to go in place summer-ish, maybe, you know, and I'm just -- I know we don't know for sure, but I'm just spit-balling, and so, one, could this be possibly amended not only to have less fish, or not -- Say not have an amount of fish, like Carolyn is saying, or a shorter timeframe, because, as soon as we go into Reg -- As soon as we're done Reg 37, we're already working on Reg 56, and we've got to do something about these numbers, in which I would hope that we would consider making this something more permanent.

There's -- I think there's a lot of overlapping timeframes, and I'm not saying we're going to figure this out right now, but maybe, before we get to Full Council, we can do a little sidebar, to figure out a way to make this palatable, given that there's a lot of timing that is also involved, and so I just wanted to make sure I had those facts right, and that we were all aware of those facts, because, if this went in place right now, and these guys got a couple months in to be able to -- Because the closed season is -- The closed season as it exists now for right whales --

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

MS. MARHEFKA: That would -- So, in theory, they could have a couple months in the closed season before the new ACT went in place, is my point. There's a lot of moving parts. We should take a minute and try to put our heads together and figure out what we need to do to make this palatable to everyone.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, are you suggesting that we do that right this minute, or that people think about that, and then, when we come back to Full Council, that we have that discussion? All right, and so have that discussion later in the week, it sounds like. All right. Okay. There is a hand up online. Kim's hand is up.

MS. SAWICKI: I just wanted to reflect on some of, you know, what Carolyn was getting at, and also what Kerry just said. It's really important for us to continue this work, and to be available, as a fishery, to continue to mentor other fisheries, like we have done, but, also, you know, black sea bass has been an excellent proving ground for a lot of these technologies in other places, where it's just -- It's simply not even allowed to be tested, because of the communities that perhaps, you know, we're doing the outreach to.

Really, whatever is most palatable to the council, that would still allow the guys to go out and do the fishing that they've been doing, but still be able to use this gear, that repetition, and our sample size has been, you know, something that has really moved the needle on this, and so we would be grateful for anything that you all would come up with that would be -- That would still allow for us to get out there and do this work, but would still stay within the guidelines that you're looking at moving forward. That's it. Thank you, all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Anything else, or any other questions for Kim, while we have her on the line? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do you think, between now and Full Council, she can come back with the amount of fish that's been harvested a year from the past up? That ought to be a simple ask. Thank you, and the number of participants that harvest that. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kim, do you think you could have that ready before Friday?

MS. SAWICKI: I will try my hardest, yes, and I might need a little help, but I will do my best.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good. Any more questions or comments at this point on this EFP? I don't see any additional hands. All right. I appreciate everybody's willingness to dive into Snapper Grouper today. I think that we are done with the committee for today, and then our chair says that we will start back up at 8:30 in the morning, and so, when we come back, we will be back in the Snapper Grouper committee. All right. Thank you, everybody.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 9, 2025.)

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DECEMBER 10, 2025

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: First up on our agenda this morning is the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program Update, and I'm going to turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. This is a revised presentation, based on a little bit of feedback from the lead authors of the study. The other thing I want to point out is it's not the lead authors that didn't want to be here today. It is council staff kind of saying -- You know, they're still going through the review process. We don't want to have the full presentation given until it's been through the CIE review process, through the SSC, and making sure that the numbers are finalized, and so this is a brief overview about the information that has been collected through the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Program.

The purpose of the project was to develop methods to estimate population size of age-two-plus red snapper in the South Atlantic region. This can be a little bit of a challenge, because age structure, or the ages of fish, will overlap in the population, and, if you look into the report, there is some indication that some of the projects that they did in there actually incorporated age-one, potentially age-one, fish as well, and so their estimates might be a little bit biased based on the age distribution, but they did what they could to really estimate the population size of age-two-plus red snapper. The other big part of this is they want to be able to incorporate the findings of this research into SEDAR 90, which is the ongoing red snapper stock assessment for the South Atlantic region.

As Clay mentioned yesterday, you can find a preliminary report. It's on the South Carolina Sea Grant website. If you want to look into the details of the report, it basically has four chapters. The first one is an introduction chapter, the second one is looking at the Bayesian hierarchical integrated modeling, and that's a fun thing to say, and it's going to be abbreviated. As we always like, we're going to have some abbreviations through this, and so that's the BHIM that you'll see throughout the report.

The third chapter is the close kin mark recapture, CKMR, and that's going to be doing some really novel research, and Clay had mentioned some of the work that they had done, and really seen the benefits of that work. Chapter 4 are their summary and conclusions. Those are definitely not finalized. They really want to get feedback from the CIEs and the SSCs, in order to fully develop the summary and conclusions section. It is well written now, but they want to add to it.

There's also ten appendices, and this really gets into the details of how they made some of their assumptions, how they tested some of the work that they did to make sure that the findings that they presented are valid, and it's some of the supporting documents.

The data methods that they've used for this project are varied. They used the video camera traps. We commonly refer to those as the SERFS survey, and so, those were incorporated into this research. They also used remotely-operated vehicles, trying to do transects of areas where red snapper are, but they also looked at areas where, you know, there's likely low abundance of red snapper. If you remember back to the Gulf of America's report on red snapper and the unconsolidated bottom, there was a significant population of red snapper, and so they needed to search in the South Atlantic, if that was the same case.

It also used habitat mapping. They did some of their own habitat mapping, but they also utilized other maps that have already been done, and so that's incorporated into some of the modeling. They used traditional tagging methods, trying to figure out where these fish are moving to, trying to estimate different pieces of this puzzle.

Finally, or two more things, is they used genetic fin clips for the DNA analysis. This is looking at the close kin part of it, but they can also use that DNA analysis now to get age -- To estimate the age of the fish that they're looking at, and then, finally, they had to do gear calibration studies, making sure that one piece of gear is matching up to another piece of gear and figuring out exactly what it means.

Going into a little bit more details, and not great details, and I will say that I'm not an expert on this. I just read part of these projects, and so I'm probably at the same level as you all. The methods for the Bayesian hierarchical integrated model, basically, it was trying to convert fish counts into a population estimate. In order to do that, they needed to understand the density of the fish populations, and so they sampled certain areas, and let's say, like in the cartoon on the bottom left, you have the ROV transect, and you see four fish over that habitat.

You need to identify that habitat type, put that on a habitat map, and then expand, based on the density of the fish in that area, to the overall habitats in the South Atlantic region, and so they did this based on habitat distribution as well as depth.

For the close kin mark recapture, and you're probably familiar with mark recapture. Basically, if you go into the left side of this, and you go into a bag of let's say marbles, or in this case it would be turtles, and you would mark all those turtles, put it back into the bag, shake it up, and count how many of the ones that you marked before. You can get a total estimate of how many marbles were in the bag based on the fraction of marked versus the unmarked fish, or turtles.

In this version, they used a DNA version of this, and so they were looking for close kin mark recaptures for sibling pairs, and that's how they did their estimate of the total population, based on basically how related these different individuals were in the population.

In the appendices, if you really want to get down into the details, they describe how they did gear calibration. That's covered in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Looking at habitat use and stakeholder maps, that's covered in Chapter 3 and Chapter 8. The genetic structure, that's available in Chapter 4. The CKMR, or the close kin mark recapture, sensitivity, that's in Chapter 5. Tagging and discard mortality, that's in Chapters 7, 9, and 10, and then model integration, or incorporation, is captured in Chapter 6.

When we're talking about model integration -- Sorry. Before we get there, basically, the conclusions -- This is where it changed. I had mistakenly put that the authors were recommending an approach, and they said that they were not recommending an approach until after the CIE review and SSC reviews, and so, with the preliminary conclusions, the CKMR, the close kin mark recapture, was robust to most inputs tested, and you can see that in the chapters on the sensitivity.

The bayesian hierarchical integrated model was sensitive to the estimated distribution of habitat, or distribution of hardbottom habitat, and you all talked about the importance of getting estimates of hardbottom in the South Atlantic region, and there's also a possibility that there were age-one red snapper included in this estimate.

The CKMR estimates were similar to the SEDAR 73, and that's going to be the closest I'm giving you on numbers of fish that were estimated through this. Like I said, this is preliminary analyses. We are going to get a more thorough review at the CIE, and so we're going to get final numbers at that point.

Combining the study into the SEDAR 90, and when it can actually get into management, and I feel like we're getting pushed to try to get this into management as quickly as possible, and we are. We had a stock assessment that started prior to this research program ending and actually knowing the final end date of it. We started the stock assessment in hopes that it would get done at a certain time, and it seems like it's getting done at that part, and so it's currently being integrated into SEDAR 90, with the ongoing web-based stock assessment webinars.

We are going to have a CIE review in January, and so the Center for Independent Experts is going to review this project January 13 through 15 in Charleston. The SSC will review this in April, at their April meeting, and then the SEDAR 90 SSC review will be occurring in October, if everything remains on track and integration goes well with the research project as well as the stock assessment, and then you all should get the SSC's recommendations for SEDAR 90 in December of next year, and so that's our hopes, with everything that's going on.

We've been working pretty well. We have open communication with the team. South Carolina Sea Grant has been a great partner in this. The team is doing great, and NMFS is doing great to keep this on track, and so I feel like we're going to get everything that we need for red snapper coming up in December of next year, and so, with that, I will take any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Remember that Chip is not a co-author on the document, but, if there are questions -- If there are questions here that he might be able to answer, or the answer might be we'll bring that back, and so questions on this? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks, Chip. All right, and so, if we get the assessment in December, and part of the answer may have -- It, obviously, probably has to come from Andy's office, but when can we have regulations for the new assessment in effect?

DR. COLLIER: I feel like that might be in your new book, and so it depends on what you do, right? If you're just adjusting the catch limits, it can be done -- You can request that council staff develop an amendment and bring you a document the following meeting, if it's one of those framework adjustments. If it's something that's going to be much more involved, it could take a long time to get everything engaged, and so, not knowing the directionality of anything right now, it's hard to say how long it will take.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other questions? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do they know yet who the CIE reviewers are?

DR. COLLIER: I do not believe they know who the CIE reviewers are quite yet. There was a list that they had put together for the potential -- I think it was either the October or November meeting, but it's not guaranteed that those will be the same reviewers for this part of it, just because availability is very important for those CIE reviewers, and so I haven't seen a list of it. Clay might be aware if there's a list that's been put together, but I haven't seen it yet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Getting at Charlie's question, can you remind us when the review workshop for SEDAR is going to be held? Is that August?

DR. COLLIER: The review workshop for the South Atlantic SSC of this SEDAR 90 is going to be October, is what we're planning, October 20.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not the SSC, but the actual SEDAR.

DR. COLLIER: The CIE review, I would have to look at the schedule for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that the document indicates it's September, is when the in-person workshop is, but I don't think that the actual dates in September are selected yet. Okay. Thumbs-up from Judd. Any other questions? All right. Thank you for that update, Chip. I really appreciate it.

I think, next up, we're going to move into Amendment 60, which is the Commercial Permit and Trip Efficiency Amendment. This is -- We're going to be going over the Commercial Subcommittee report, and so we'll be reviewing this and then kind of figuring out next steps. All right, and so, because this is a subcommittee report, it is posted for you guys to look at, because it's kind of like a committee report, because it's a subcommittee.

All right, and I'm going to start running through here, and so the Commercial Subcommittee met on December 8 to further develop Amendment 60 to the fishery management plan. The subcommittee approved the agenda and the minutes from the December 2025 meeting, and then we went into the decision document.

The document had some updates since the September council meeting, but there were some challenges, because of the federal government shutdown, but the subcommittee reviewed the actions and alternatives as currently drafted. There were also a list of questions in the document that the subcommittee tried to respond to and provide guidance on.

Action 1, which is revise the two-for-one snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy, and so we have four bullets there. I don't really want to read all of these bullets. I'm just going to give you kind of some highlights of this, including the direction to staff, and so one of the bullets there is talking about communicating early and often with the public, so that they know that we are working on something, and so there was direction to staff to send the first letter in January 2026, and then there would be follow-up communications later in the process.

The next bullet there is the input that the subcommittee received from the Permits Office explaining that single permit transfers are not recognized in the federal system. The permit remains in the name of the original holder until two permits are exchanged for the new permit. Both permits must be valid or renewable to be exchanged.

The subcommittee also went into the fact that they believe that the current number of permits is appropriate, and the number of permits that are active at the time of the amendment implementation would be the number available moving forward, and the amendment should include guidance about when it may be appropriate to consider increases or decreases in the number of permits in the future, which was something that Kerry brought up, and so it's ten years from now, and how do people know, you know, what the subcommittee did, what the council did relative to this, and so it would provide some future guidance.

Then the subcommittee went into Action 2, which was to establish dynamic step-down trip limits that vary throughout the season based on the tracked catch and the time remaining in the season for snapper grouper species with species-specific trip limits, and so we spent a lot of time on this action.

I did a lot of work here, and so, for several species, when the commercial trip limits were set, much of the discussion centered around the lowest viable trip limit to extend the season, and then some of the resulting trip limits, and we had a nice table there, where it's too low for step-downs to be a viable management tool, and so the direction was to develop a framework to consider these factors for each species with a commercial species-specific trip limit, not including the jacks complex, using discretion, as not all factors would be applicable to all species.

It would change the baseline commercial trip limit, or look to change the baseline commercial trip limit. This would be the trip limit that's either stepped up or down, and develop options for the threshold and the ACL percentages by an associated time of year that would result in the step-up, and so there would be options for that. Develop options for the threshold ACL percentages associated with times of the year, that would be for a step-down, and then define a procedure for enacting timely increases or decreases of trip limits in step-up or step-down situations.

This is the process that would be given to the Regional Administrator and would allow for these in-season changes, and so this specifically-defined process with less discretion can implement changes more quickly.

All right, and then we got into Action 3, which was establish an incidental or out-of-season allowance for harvest of deepwater species, and we decided we would remove that action from consideration in this document.

Then Action 4 is revise existing stowage requirements for gear onboard, and the subcommittee clarified that this revision would apply for bottom longline gear. That's already an authorized gear in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and this would not give any additional access to snapper grouper species with that particular gear, but, while fishing for species that are not currently allowed to be possessed while having longline gear onboard, this action would allow the gear to be onboard, but stowed, according to the requirements that we're going to define in this action, and so then we had --There's some sub bullets there about how we would define that.

It could include hooks not baited and stored below deck, as well as spools stowed below deck. and then a notification system could aid enforcement. There is a note there from staff to possibly consider a VMS requirement for species to use multiple gears on the same trip. While I think it's fine to bring that information back, that could slow this amendment down. Just saying, and so just I think it's okay, as we're in the early stages of discussion, but, when we bring this back and start that discussion, that could hang this amendment up.

Then the committee got into Other Business and there were two items for Other Business. The subcommittee reintroduced something that we discussed last time, which was a potential revision of applying trip limits to the sale of fish, as well as potential vehicles for addressing this change. We felt like this needed to be further discussed in the Snapper Grouper Committee after the AP comments on this topic are presented, and so we are going to get into the AP's comments, and then we probably need to add this as an item under Other Business, and then talk about it on the workplan, and like what is the vehicle for this document, or for this action. I'm going to put this under Other Business. I'm just looking around to make sure that people aren't wanting to discuss this right now, or anything. Anything, if you have other questions or comments. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I forget how it works procedurally, because, you know, given time between the two days, I've had some thoughts, and, procedurally, how are we going to --If we want to make any changes in full committee to what the subcommittee worked on, procedurally, how would you like to handle that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike says you can do it right now, and so, if you have some things that you want to suggest, now is the time.

MS. MARHEFKA: Then, if I can, I wonder if the subcommittee, or the committee as a whole, would be amenable to -- Mike, can you go back to the gear stowage, please? I had a conversation after that thought we may be able to get at what we're trying to get at by taking out VMS, potentially, and adding that vessels with a valid shark permit would be allowed to use the gear onboard. "Only vessels" is the point. Only vessels with a valid shark permit would be --

MR. HULL: A directed shark permit.

MS. MARHEFKA: A directed shark permit. Very good point. Exactly. A directed shark permit would be allowed to have multiple -- These two multiple gears on a trip, and, in my mind, what I would really like to do -- I think most of us are like VMS is going to slow down this document, and it is not really where we're thinking right now. If this solves the problem, I would like to take that out now, because that is just an albatross around the neck of this document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Thanks for working on this since the subcommittee met. I see thumbs-up from Jimmy. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay. What does that do for golden tile longlines, and what happens if you have a shark permit and a golden tile permit, which I have on a couple of boats, or at least one boat, and so -- Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: If we amended it to include a golden longline endorsement, so it would be shark directed shark permit holders, golden longline, golden tile longline, and I truly believe that there is the chance for bad actors to have that bottom longline gear on the boat and for them to use it in the snapper grouper -- For snapper grouper species, and that's what I'm trying to avoid, while threading the needle and not having to get into VMS, because I want to get this two-for-one through, and I want to get this trip limit thing through, and VMS will slow this down by years. Years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree. That's just been -- While you were off the council, Charlie, there were a lot -- There was some discussion about VMS, and it was quite a slowdown for some other things that we were working on, but go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay. I just -- So long as we can figure out a way where, you know -- Because, again, there's only, what, twenty two, three, four golden tile permits, and most of the -- A lot of those guys also wreck fish, and so, you know, if we can, you know, slice and dice and twist it, where, you know, those guys aren't, you know, kind of kicked to the curb, but thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that, and so we've had some additional direction here to remove VMS, and then listed out two specific permits here that would be allowed to have these multiple gears on a trip. Remember that staff is going to bring something back after the IPT meets on this. Any other direction here, or comments? Okay. I'm going to move back. I don't see -- I'm sorry. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I was just saying -- I mean, the golden longline fishery, the golden tilefish longline fishery, is a small fishery, right, with twenty-four people, and, given all the discussion, maybe --

Since we're so concerned about VMS slowing down the document, maybe this is just not the time to allow that, you know, to -- Maybe we have to exclude this from this, and stick with the shark permit and not say, hey -- Not allow both of those gears if there's still so much concern that bad actors could use that gear in a way which it should not be intended to use.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would suggest -- Are you good with moving the document forward, so staff can bring something back, and then we could have that discussion again at the next meeting?

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and I'm fine with that. I just want to state that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know about the bad actor part, because we're talking about crumb fisheries. I mean, somebody -- My understanding is that modification of a spool -- I just I just feel like we're too worried about the bad actors, given the crumbs that the trip limits are for different things, and I don't really think that somebody is going to go to the effort for seventy-five pounds of setting longline, which is probably only ten or twelve red snapper, and so I don't worry about that.

It's almost like it's got to be part of it, and go with it, and, if there's some track coming out, and enforcement looks at it, and then they go there, but don't -- You know, there's bad actors in everything and stuff, and so let's try to do the best we can, and move on to achieve something, and then it can always be worried about in something in the future. I don't think the world is going to stop because we can't, you know, get this figured out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I -- You know, I don't want to shoot all the good guys, because there possibly, and probably is, a couple of bad actors, and I remember those fines that law enforcement were giving out, and that was not chump-change, and I am guessing that, if you catch somebody doing some serious -- They could actually probably pull their license for X amount of time too, if they were to catch them twice, and so I think somebody is going to think twice before they start just getting happy, for lack of a better word, and so I agree with Dewey. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question about this, and I wanted to go back to dynamic trip limits, when we're ready. For those that are in the shark fishery, we're talking about a notification system, and is there any sort of notification requirements right now for the directed shark permit?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: No, sir.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, and so can we go to dynamic trip limits?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We can.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and so, toward the bottom -- Apologies, and I, obviously, wasn't here for the subcommittee discussion, and so I see comments about maybe this taking longer, in terms of an implementation process. I think you also discussed the potential for the administrative burden on the Fisheries Service if we kind of take the shortcut approach, and then ultimately are too prescriptive, and then we have to do Federal Register notices, and this could really be a lot more work for the Fisheries Service, and so I would like to figure out a way to strike a balance here, and figure out a way that we could have some flexibility within some bounds analyzed by the council for both step-ups and step-downs.

Then, if the concern is about the timing of this amendment, and how quickly we can move it forward, maybe we should think about certain species that are kind of most critical to test out these step-up and step-downs, and try to get something in place more quickly for at least a subset of species, but I really would like to work with my team to kind of come up with some ideas, and the South Atlantic Council staff, that provides that flexibility.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. You encapsulated some of our discussions from earlier in the week, and I think that we were hoping that, when this went back to the IPT, that they could make some of the suggestions that you're talking about. All right. Anything else on these previous actions before we go back to Other Business?

All right, and so we talked a little bit about the first Other Business item, which was the trip limits, applying trip limits to the sale of fish. I added that to Other Business on the main committee agenda here, because we would need to figure out the vehicle. If we want this to move faster than the rest of this amendment, we would need to figure out the vehicle for it, and we also said we wanted to wait until we talked about the AP comments, which is later in the main committee, and so I put it under Other Business for the main committee.

The other thing that we talked about was a direction to staff about the SG 2 snapper grouper permits. It's referencing something from the AP, and it's talking about maybe a recommendation on whether or how these permits should be used in the future, and maybe this could come back to the AP.

I think that the next AP meeting would be March or April, and so, technically, the council could have a discussion on this one more time, and this would be looking at the usage of this permit in the last five years, ahead of this discussion, and so I think that this included things like transferability and other things. All right. I see heads nodding yes. All right. Just looking around the room to see if there's anything else relative to the Commercial Subcommittee before we leave this report. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just a quick question. When we scoped this document, did we scope -- At some point, can you come back to us with the wording of -- Like I just -- Or I'll go back. Maybe I'll just go back and look at the scoping document, in regard to the permits, because I want clarification that we didn't scope this 225, and so we couldn't add it in here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the 225 permit wasn't brought up within the scoping, but that doesn't preclude you from adding it later on in the process, because that -- I guess the step that kind of hinders you from adding something a little bit later would be the public comment, the like public

hearing process, which comes later on, once a draft has been developed, but, within scoping, you're still within your realm to be able to add actions, as you as you see fit and we're developing the document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Kerry. Anything else on this? Okay. Anything else relative to this commercial subcommittee? All right. We're going to -- Sorry, Amy. Did you have something? Go ahead.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure that we stick to the schedule as adding this conversation about the trip limits and the cell. It's going to be really important for Matt, sitting to my left to be here, and so, if for some reason we start to run tight, he is flying out Friday morning, and I want to make sure he has the ability to have that conversation with us, and so I'm just putting that out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else? All right. We're going to conclude the Commercial Snapper Grouper Subcommittee report, and then the next item on our agenda is the SAFE report, and I'm going to turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The first thing I will say is, if you looked at this document earlier in the week, it is different now, and you'll note that you get a little gremlin notice if you open it. That is because I was changing it last night, at around two in the morning, and so it didn't get all the way fixed. We're close, but it was -- Some of these changes were made based on the comments here, or at recent suggestions, and some of the information from the SSC, and what I'm trying to do is provide you just a reference document for you all to have.

It's going to have some economic information on it, and it's going to have some landings information on it, and it's going to have EFH maps in it, and so it's going to have a ton of information in there, and it takes a while to build, but hopefully this is going to be usable for you all, and I feel like I have it set up in a way that it's going to be easier to do in the future.

It's still kind of in draft form. There are some changes I need to do to it, and so don't be diving in there and believing all the numbers quite yet. They need to be checked, to make sure they're right, but, once we do have a finalized version of this, this will end up on our website, and what we're thinking, as staff, is the place to put this SAFE report, given that it covers all snapper grouper species, and some of the species aren't incorporated in there yet, but they will be added in there, but, if you were looking at this, would you be looking at the FMP page, and so, therefore, the SAFE report would end up -- The best place for you to find it would be on the FMP page for the snapper groupers?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so, but I'm looking around. Yes, and so I see some thumbs-up.

DR. COLLIER: We could put it on the science page, but I don't even go to that site, and so I don't recommend that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Is it possible to just put some links on some multiple pages, so it's just easy to find?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and Nick said we can do that, and so we should be able to do that, and so let me just give you a brief introduction to it. If you go to the SAFE report, it's going to be a -- It's not going to be a PDF or anything like that. This is going to be a web-based document that's clickable, and adjustable, and so the first table you come to is going to be a variety of metrics that we include in this.

The first is looking at the overfishing status, the overfished status. You all have brought up this week whether or not you're getting to your ACL as an indicator. With an ACL, you don't want to be going over that, and so this is set up in such a way that, if you're exceeding the ACL, that is a bad thing. However, for most of the stocks that you manage, you set OY equal to ACL, and so, in this document, or in this table, when you're looking at it, you're going to see if you have a good -- If you're doing well with your ACL, you're quite often not doing great according to your optimum yield, and so there's some tradeoffs there, but we're trying to incorporate some of this information.

Then we also have an indicator looking at trends in the last ten years. That's looking at it relative to the average. We have trends in abundance. This is currently based on the trap survey, the trends report that South Carolina does every year. I would like to incorporate, for some of these species, the video survey, because there's some information in there that might differ from the trap survey, as well as some of the information for the more southern species that might be based on the dive survey that is currently going on.

I also have trends in recreational directed trips as an indicator of economic value on the recreational side, and then trends in ex-vessel value for different species, and you'll see the different icons here. There's a definition icon down below, so you can see exactly what they mean.

Yesterday, you had brought up the idea of, well, I want to see which species are getting to the ACL, and so you can click on the ACL up and down, and you can quickly see which species are getting to your ACL. You can change the number of species that are being displayed in the table, and so it's a very flexible table for you all to use. Hopefully it's going to be very beneficial, and let's continue down.

One of the important pieces of this is looking at the overall number of -- Or the overall pounds of landings, versus the number of discards, and that plot is provided for you here. I will note that, in some of these plots, we do have red snapper in there as FES numbers. That fish is tracked with -- It's tracked with the mini-season numbers, mainly from Florida, and so there will be some differences between this and the final values that come out of it.

The other thing is we have a top species. I provide the last five years of top species for the recreational fishery, and these are in complexes, and so you see the snappers there as the top species that is targeted, and so, what we're talking about with snapper, that's cubera, lane, and gray snapper, that complex, and then you can go down to the commercial top-five species, and this is based on ex-vessel value. Everyone was requested to look at this for the commercial fishery, and then, recently, it was requested to be able to look at how trends in state-specific landings are going, and so I have this separated out into recreational and commercial. We have Florida and Georgia lumped together, and then North Carolina and South Carolina.

These are all on the exact same scale, so you can look at them to see relative to each other where they are. If you would prefer something different, please let me know. If you want to see a more fine scale on what the different states are doing, we can adjust this X-axis so each one is different, and you can get a better indication of what's going on.

The next table that's in there is the table of stock assessment and NOAA Fisheries -- Describing the overfished versus overfishing condition. This is based on the most recent stock assessments, as well as the congressional report, as well as a report that NMFS gives to Congress. This is the 2025 Quarter 2 report, is what is being referenced in this document, and then you can go into all the different species.

They have very similar information included in each one, and so we'll just go through black grouper real quick, although the stock assessment information is different for this one, and so let me go down to gag. You can just -- As you go through these, you can click on the genus, or grouping name, and so groupers. We have all the groupers under there. I have not incorporated other shallow-water grouper yet, but that is next on the list to add to this document.

For gag, we're going to start off with looking at the spawning stock biomass, look at that over time, as well as F, and this is based on the most recent stock assessments. Then we have information on the status determination criteria and fishing level recommendations, starting off with all the status determination criteria, and then going into the OFL and ABC values for the individual species.

We have recent management changes that have occurred for the different species, and then, going down into fishery and population trends, what I've tried to do with this one is it's a combined landings, and we're looking at the catch relative to the OFL, ABC, or ACL.

Scrolling further, we have recreational discards. For most of the commercial fisheries, we do not have availability of the most recent time series for commercial discards, and, for several of the species, we need to develop estimates based on some of the observer work, because logbooks are not necessarily the best way to track discards for the commercial fishery. For many of the species, we'll have the index of abundances that were included in the stock assessment, and then, if you look post-stock assessment, you'll find a trap survey that's included in there, along with their associated CVs, and so all that information is provided.

Then we can get down into recreational versus commercial sectors, and what I've tried to do in this one, and it might be slightly different than the previous graphs, because what I'm trying to do is look at FES values, because quite often those are a little bit different, trying to make sure we're using the best information to see what's going on in the trends, and, with this, I tend to look at the -- This one is looking at the last thirty-five years, but, in some of the more recent ones, I was looking at just the last ten years.

Economic and recreational data, we're definitely looking at the last ten years for these, and so, in this time series, we're looking at 2015 to 2024, and then you'll see an average line on there, just trying to figure out what the trend over the last ten years is.

Then, finally, we'll have closures, if closures have occurred for the species, and so, with that, that is basically what the SAFE report is going to look like, with the introductory table, as well as some of the single species information in it. There's a ton of information in it. I hope you all find it

useful, and it has everything that you might need, but please let me know if there's other pieces of information that you would like to see. If it's not at the resolution that you would like to see, please let me know that, and we can adjust it however you see fit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. This is a great document. I love that little table, you know, with the arrows up and down. I love that thing. Any questions or comments or concerns? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Chip, is there any way we can talk a little bit about Georgia and how Georgia gets lumped in with Florida? I understand the protections of it, but, landings-wise, it's probably more similar to South Carolina than Florida. I don't want anybody getting mad at us. We're this big in this, and we're not part of the bigger removal, and so I think -- You know what I mean?

I think it's just scaling-wise. I understand biologically if there's a need for that, there's some dividing line that biologically says that our fish are part of Florida's fish, but, on the magnitude of landings, I think it would just be helpful if we could have a better way to look scaled compared to an appropriately-scaled state.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so, for the most part, there's not a problem with that. For let's say MRIP data, or for the commercial data, I can simply say that lump Georgia with South Carolina. There are some headboat pieces of information that automatically lump northeast Florida with Georgia, and so I would not be able to separate those out, but that's a very minor component, but that would be a caveat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Carolyn. I get it that you don't want to be with us. I got it. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Maybe you can ask North Carolina if they want to be lumped with Florida. Chip, fantastic job on this. I guess a couple of things. One, I think it would be beneficial for the Science Center, since it contains so much data, to take a look at this.

The second aspect, and I've long thought about this, is I feel like that first summary table, that Jessica pointed out, that tells the story, right, and that's almost like our report card, and it also is giving us a more real-time indicator of what's going on with these species without having to wait on a stock assessment. To me then, the logical next step is what do we use this for, and can we be less reactive, and more proactive, with regard to addressing both our fisheries challenges as well as fisheries successes, and I think that's something that we can start really taking a careful look at this data to utilize.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great points. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I was thinking about the other pages, and one of the pages I go to a lot is just regulations. To me, that would be a good place for a link, and then, when I'm sending people to that regulation page, they're like what's the size limit on this, and how many of that, and when does it close, and I say go to the regulations page, but if they can go, and then they can scroll down and open up those SAFE reports, where they can get some history on trends and all that other stuff, it is going to help educate the fishermen a lot more as to what's going on, why we do what we do, and I look at this as a huge teaching tool, and we've been trying to get updated SAFE reports since I first stepped on the council many, many moons ago. I mean, this has been a battle, but this looks great. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Chip, I love this so much. I don't want to create more work for you, but I'm thinking about sort of the discussions we had during the commercial subcommittee, and like, you know, which species are we achieving our ACL, and which aren't we, and so I was wondering, and would it be a ton of work to either split out that exceeding ACL column, or do two columns that shows, you know, recreational and commercial meeting ACL, or not meeting ACL, for both sectors, so that it was a quick reference as we're trying to achieve optimum yield in both sectors?

DR. COLLIER: Do you want to toggle or switch between --

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and however you want to do it, but some way to reference sector ACLs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip is taking some notes. Is that possible?

DR. COLLIER: Yes. Yes, and it's definitely possible, and so, right now, the way it's set up is there's data in there for the individual sectors and ACLs, and so it could definitely be set up without much of a struggle. I just have to go back in there, to make sure that the values are correct, and it's always a challenge, because we're in this transition period from CHTS to FES, and so what I need to go in there and do is to make sure that the values that are incorporated are identified to what they truly mean.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Then would it be both? Would it be like exceeding the overall ACL and then split out to rec and commercial? Is that how it would look?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think what would be better is to have a separate table for the ACLs, because that's going to make it a little bit cleaner. Going much further, you can see it's getting tight on the screen, and then I have some random numbers, over there to the right, and I'm not certain why they're there, but they're there to help you sort. That's why they're there, but I think looking at individual sectors is going to be a lot easier than trying to add those two into the table.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see thumbs-up on that. All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Actually, Kerry got to my point about trying to be able to separate this out, the ACLs, and really being able to decipher it, and so thank you for doing that, and you answered my other question, which was what are those numbers?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm hearing a lot of questions about looking at trends, and I'm wondering, maybe if under Other Business, I can have about ten minutes, and I've got a better way that's out there, with the GARFO quota monitoring page, that shows the trends, what's being caught, and it would answer a lot of our questions. We could add it to where it's five years. Right now, it does two years, and everybody could see how the fishery is operating throughout the year for the past few years. Right now, we don't know that.

We only have the SERO quota monitoring page, and it shows you. It don't show the trend. You've got to go back and look at history. If somebody would look at the GARFO quota monitoring page, and then start playing with it, the states, and they've got species there. I think eventually -- I don't know how long it would take. I'm sure it would take a little bit, but people would say, wow, this is great, and we're really seeing something here, and so it's already there, with our partner up at the GARFO region, and I'm sure that they would share it with our SERO region, if time would allow and staff would -- I just listen to these questions, and, man, this is a better -- This would be a better way of showing the trends.

Right now, it's two years in the GARFO region, and you could have it for five years. It shows an ACL line up there, and so, if people around the table would go to the GARFO monitoring page, and start playing with it, and just see what you think, and we can have a discussion, maybe in the future, or the players, of how to get something very similar to that, I think it would help a lot of people around the table, and also help the public, especially particularly commercial fishermen that are looking at things, and so I'll leave it at that, please.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, Thank you. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Chip, we also have the ecosystem status report, and, granted, the last one I think is 2021, but we're working on updating that now. I wonder if there's a way to link those reports, maybe even explicitly, because some of these trends might be correlated with some of the trends we see in the ecosystem status report.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and that would be great to incorporate some of those that we think are the most important drivers, to put those maybe in the introduction of this document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and this is an excellent document. Love this. Any other discussion on this report? All right, and so next we're going to move into Red Snapper Exempted Fishing Permits, but, before we do that, so we can try to get set up, can we take a five-minute break, and we'll try to get set up on that.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. As soon as we can get some council staff up here, we're going to get going into the red snapper EFPs, and so the first item on the agenda is we're going to give a presentation on year one of FWC's red snapper EFPs. We call these our research EFPs, and so I'm going to dive into this presentation for us. I'm really excited to talk to you guys about the results.

All right, and so here are the principal investigators within FWC for these projects. We have all of these folks online today that can help us answer questions, depending on how hard your questions are for us today. We are people from FWC Division of Marine Fisheries Management. We also have folks from our fishery-independent monitoring group. We also have some of our social science team, and we have Luiz Barbieri is also on our team from FWRI. He's our section leader over the marine fisheries items.

We also have other colleagues that are not the principal investigators that have helped out with this project. We had an app running, and so our Office of Licensing Technology, and we ran this through our Go Outdoors Florida licensing system, and so we have people from licensing and

permitting, and then we also have, in addition to these folks, our five dedicated project biologists that are out in the field collecting the data, and so a big group across the agency.

All right, and so just to remind you a little bit about our three projects, and so the first year is complete. You can see the dates of the first year there, and so it started in August of 2024 and went through July of this year, and we've shown you guys, as recently as the last meeting, what the goals were of the project, but, just to review those again, collaborate with anglers to obtain catch and discard data, trying to test innovative strategies to reduce discards, allow additional red snapper harvests, develop a reporting app and an education course, and see how those worked specific to these projects, and also looking at angler satisfaction and angler behavior through these projects.

Just a reminder of the study area, and so two of the projects occur in northeast Florida. The map there on the left, that is the hotspot fleet and the study fleet occur in that area, and then we have a third project that occurs in southeast Florida, and the dividing line for these projects is at Cape Canaveral.

You've seen this table before as well, but, just to review, this shows our three different projects across the top, and then I just went through showing where the projects are occurring, and so two occurring in northeast Florida, one in southeast Florida.

The who, and so the study fleet includes private vessels and for-hire vessels, whereas the other two fleets, hotspot and southeast Florida fleet, are just private anglers. The number of participants, and so we had, across the whole year, forty folks in the study fleet. That's ten per quarter, and then, in the other two fleets, we had 800, and so that's 200 per quarter, and then, just to summarize, we were testing out a fifteen-fish aggregate bag limit, and so, in the study fleet, it was more vessel based, and so full retention of red snapper up to sixty per vessel.

In the other two fleets, also testing the aggregate, but there were additional red snapper harvest opportunities, with a bag limit of three per person, and we had both experimental groups that are allowed to take red snapper and a control group that wasn't allowed to take red snapper, that fished as normal, and all of these folks in these two fleets were selected with the Go Outdoors Florida licensing system via a lottery. Just over to the -- Back over to the study fleet, that should be thirty-six per vessel, and not sixty per vessel.

All right, and then the angler requirements are there at the bottom, and so folks had to do an education course prior to going out. This was -- If you want to dive into this, this was multiple modules that people had to do, and so, if it was angler based, just the angler did it. If it was vessel based, and it was for-hire, the captain took the course, and then printed out the materials, and the captain was required to go over those materials with the customers prior to starting the trip.

There were hail-in and hail-out provisions using the app. We did data validation. We also used this customized app built by the FWC for reporting. We then also did angler satisfaction surveys. We did these before the trip, at the end of the trip, and we also did semi-structured interviews and other things for some folks, and then we also had angler incentives.

If you think about the various fleets that you have here, and they were told to log in a certain amount of trips during each quarter, and so, after they did that, and reported a couple of trips, then

they would get some incentives for participating and reporting all that information back to the FWC.

Just to get into a little bit more specifics about some of these components of the proposal, we had an aggregate bag limit that was designed to hopefully hit the bag limit quicker, and then people were required to stop bottom fishing once they hit that snapper grouper aggregate bag limit, thereby reducing discards, and this aggregate bag limit -- There's a lot of detail in our EFPs about this, but it considers the current regs, and so, in other words, if there's a one fish bag limit for something, it's still a one-fish bag limit within this fifteen-fish aggregate, and so it considers stock status, and there were a couple species that we dropped it even lower than what the council regs are now.

The education course I mentioned, it's three modules. It focused on the project itself, why we were doing it, what the issues were in the fishery, and it also focused on how to work the app, how to hail-in and hail-out on the trip, and so kind of the procedures of how you participate in this process, as well as a module on best fishing practices, and a lengthy module on fish identification, and these were designed to educate participants and disseminate information about the project.

Then we had this customized app. As I mentioned, it was built by the FWC specific for these EFPs. This is how you had the hail-out information. This is where you put your trip information. It had information about the species that you were harvesting, and your discards, and we were kind of testing what it was like to do self-reported data.

Also, people had some data sheets, so they could have the data sheets onboard the trip, so they weren't actually having to log into the app while they were on the trip, and the data sheets let them know that they were going to be asked in the app to report, and so they could fill that out, and then, after they got back to the dock, then they could log onto the app to fill out the information from the data sheet.

I mentioned that we had these angler satisfaction surveys before and after the trip, and then some people were selected for semi-structured interviews following the trips, and this was trying to focus on understanding angler behavior and drivers for participation and other types of things.

All right, and so, to do some more side-by-side comparison on those two lottery fleets versus the study fleet, and so trips had to be declared twenty-four hours in advance. You're, on the lottery fleet, collecting data during the fishing trip, angler-based, and so the angler could go out on a private vessel, or they could go on a for-hire vessel, but just the angler that was selected was the only one participating in this program, whereas, in the study fleet, the data was being collected for the whole vessel, and so it was really kind of incumbent upon the captain to do all the things that were required, filling out the data sheets and other things, and so it was vessel-based.

Then, once you got back to the dock, then you use the app to provide the trip information. This was within forty-eight hours of returning to the dock, and so, the lottery fleet, when people got back to the dock, the biologists would sample the trips. The targeted intercept rate was 20 percent of the trips that were taken, whereas, in the study fleet, we had cameras onboard the private vessels, and we had observers onboard the for-hire vessels, and then we were allowing biologists to sample these trips, but we were really targeting 100 percent of the study fleet trips.

Then what the biologists are looking at is they're interviewing the anglers or the captain about the trip, and they're inspecting the harvested fish, and then they're also collecting biological samples, including, in the study fleet, we took DNA for the Patterson study that you heard from Chip about this morning. We were taking DNA from the study fleet for that project as well.

Here's a summary of the four quarters, and so you can see the months that people fished. We're going to have these on the data slides coming up. You can also see the number of applications received per quarter, and so a ton, over 7,000, in the first quarter, as low as 3,500 in the second quarter, and then back up to 5,800 in Quarter 4, and then you can see that we were selecting 410 participants for each quarter, and so, in total, over 22,000 applications received. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I didn't mean to interrupt your train of thought, but I'm just curious, and do you know like how many are unique applicants out of the 22,000?

MS. FOSS: I don't have an answer right now, but I could get back to you, but there definitely were repeat individuals who applied like across the quarters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and just a reminder that, if you were in the control group in one quarter earlier in the project, and you reported your numbers of trips, and you used the app, and you did all of that, then you got like preference points, like our quota hunt system.

You got preference points to be selected to be in the experimental group in the following quarter, so that you could be in the group that collected red snapper if you participated in the control group and submitted trips earlier in the project, and so there were a lot of nuances here, and then the applications did not carry over from quarter to quarter. We told people you're going to have to -- If you didn't get selected, and you're wanting to participate, you have to reapply every single quarter.

Here are some of the project statistics here. You can see over 22,000 applicants, a total of 1,230 participants, and so the number of trips completed was 1,019. 866 education courses completed. Otoliths taken from over 5,000 red snapper, and there were 5,615 red snapper harvested across the whole program, and we had sampled -- Biologists sampled 5,395 of those, and so, just as a reminder, the EFP requested 11,760 red snapper, and only 5,615 of those were harvested, and so less than half the fish that were requested were actually harvested in these projects.

Here's more of the data that was collected, a tremendous amount of data coming in from these three projects, everything from the aggregate bag limit, details about the fishing trip, you know, weather, time fished, depth, seasonal variations, catch composition, the amount of effort by quarter, information about the fish that they were harvesting and the discards. We're going to do some comparisons across the fleet, some information on angler satisfaction, and then we had multiple validation methods.

Even though, you know, we're past the end of year one, and we're going to show you some data here, we are still working up the results. For example, all of the camera footage from the private vessel study fleet trips -- We've not looked at all of that footage yet, and so more to come. This is kind of what's been analyzed so far.

All right, and so we're going to dive into some of the results here, and so this figure shows the harvested species composition, and we've got the hotspot fleet on the left, and so that's northeast Florida, and then the southeast snapper grouper fleet on the right, and so what -- Each bar is representing the quarter of the project, and then, the colors, you can see the bottom in light blue, the other fifty-four snapper grouper species in dark blue in the middle, and then any other species that are not reef fish, and so such as mahi or cobia. They're on the top there, kind of in that light pink color.

The graph is showing us really that red snapper is the primary driver among all species harvested across both of these fleets, accounting for nearly a third to half of the total harvest in each quarter. These graphs are also kind of telling us that, when people are out there taking red snapper, they are taking other reef fish at the same time, and so this tells us also that, if you have effective red snapper management, that that would have an impact on the other snapper grouper species in the complex, which I think we already know some of those things, but this was kind of testing that out. Then, also, another takeaway is we would say, if you allow red snapper harvest, red snapper is the predominant species being harvested compared to the other species.

We're looking at red snapper ages here across the different fleets, and this is only including data from August through December, because we don't have all of the age data in here yet, and so this is just covering 1,377 ages of aged fish, and, in this time period, approximately 5 percent of the fish that were aged were greater than ten years old, and so you can kind of see the distribution there of the ages in this graphic.

Okay, and this is looking at the ages for red snapper separated out by the fleet type. Once again, the same time period, August through December, and so, from this data, we can also see that a higher percentage of older fish greater than ten being caught by the northern fleet, and so the hotspot fleet is on the top, and so that's northeast Florida.

The middle fleet there is southeast Florida. The bottom, the study fleet, is also in northeast Florida, and so you can see that some of the older fish are really coming from that area in northeast Florida, compared to the southeast Florida fleet that's there in the middle, and so we're going to continue investigating this. I mentioned that not all of the ages have come in yet. We're still working on the otoliths, and we'll continue this as we're moving into year two of the project.

Looking at red snapper discards, and so this is just two of the fleets, and so we have the hotspot fleet in northeast Florida on the left, the southeast snapper grouper fleet on the right, and the control group, which shouldn't have been taking red snapper, was on the left, and they were supposed to be abiding by the current federal regs, and then you have the experimental group that is allowed to take red snapper on these trips on the right.

This figure is showing the mean number of fish harvested in light blue on the bottom, and then the discarded fish in dark blue on the top, and so this is not the full retention fleet. This is the other two fleets, and so, if you're comparing the control group and the experimental group in these fleets, you can see a decrease in the proportion of discards from the experimental group, and so this is also something, I guess you could say as expected, that, if you allow harvest of red snapper, the overall number of discards declines, because you're turning those discards into harvested fish, and so that was one of the goals of the project, was to try to look at this, and we feel like, yes, that is what people will do, is turn those discarded fish into harvested fish.

This also tells us that, when you're allowing that red snapper harvest, that that is helping to resolve some of the discard issues, and don't worry. Those people in the control groups that inadvertently harvested red snapper, those were counted in that overall number of fish that were taken across the entire project. Also, another observation from our EFPs was that, when anglers hit their red snapper limit, they were really content with their fishing experience and headed home, ultimately also reducing red snapper discards, because they ended the trip.

All right, and this is looking at red snapper harvest by quarter. Once again, those same two fleets, the northeast Florida hotspot fleet on the left and southeast snapper grouper fleet on the right. This is just the experimental group. It doesn't include the control group. The bars represent the number of red snapper harvested, and the black line is the number of trips, and so the data is telling us that red snapper harvest was definitely higher in northeast Florida, the graph on the left, and highest in the quarters that were February to April and May to July.

This is likely, based on the data that we can see, likely due to better weather during the spring and summer months. There were some frequent storms in the fall, and a number of rough seas in the winter months, and so, in thinking about state management, this information, I mean all of this information, that we collected was used as we prepared our state management EFP, but, specifically, looking at this information, this was used as we set up our other EFP, to figure out when people might want to fish, based on angler preference and fishability in different months of the year.

All right, and so this is looking at snapper grouper aggregate harvest specific to the study fleet, and so this was the full retention fleet. A reminder that anglers were allowed to take up to a fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate, and so this was -- The aggregate was to allow access to other reef fish while trying to reduce discards while fishing for red snapper.

I mentioned earlier that anglers were required to stop bottom fishing when they reached the fifteen-fish aggregate, so that that would reduce the discard mortality on all snapper grouper species, and so this is showing us the frequency of which anglers were reaching the aggregate, and so no anglers reached the fifteen-fish aggregate, and so they were definitely way under that fifteen-fish aggregate number, with most anglers only taking, outside of their red snapper, about two other reef fish within that fifteen-fish aggregate, and so people were really more focused on taking red snapper and not really worried about, at least on these trips, pursuing other snapper grouper species.

All right, and so this is looking at the other two fleets, and looking at the aggregate in these fleets, and so northeast Florida on the left and southeast Florida on the right. The yellow line there is the fifteen-fish aggregate limit, and so anything to the right of the line exceeds the fifteen-fish aggregate that we're testing as part of this project.

Similar to the study fleet, most anglers are not even close to harvesting the fifteen-fish aggregate, and those that did so, and so you got some pretty high numbers there to the right of the line, were actually a result of these trips harvesting grunts, and so some anglers reported harvesting up to thirty-four grunts on a trip that they were using as bait while targeting other snapper grouper species, and so we had to up our education here, but we had lots of arguments with people who did not believe that grunts were in the snapper grouper aggregate that the council has.

This was a very interesting discussion, and made for some interesting phone calls as we tried to work through this, and so, basically, over half of the trips that exceeded, or of the fifteen trips that exceeded this aggregate, over half of these were due to harvesting over the limit of grunts.

After learning this, and I mentioned that we tried to improve our messaging, and so, as we were kind of moving throughout this project, there were definitely some things that we learned, or calls that kept coming in over and over again, and so we did things like send out emails to all the participants, changed up the materials that we were mailing to people say in the next quarter, and we recorded more videos for how to do things, to try to educate them as we were moving through this project, once we had something like this occur.

Also, the other thing that we did is we have these three projects running in year two right now, and we made changes between year one and year two, and one of those changes was to decrease this aggregate from fifteen fish down to ten fish.

All right, and so, diving into some of the angler satisfaction information, which was another component of what we were trying to understand here, and so this figure shows the level of satisfaction across groups before and after participating in the EFP project, and so the far left two graphs are all participants, and so across all of the different fleets, and you had the control group in the middle, and then the experimental groups on the far right.

The pre-participation survey is in the hashed bar on the left, and the dark blue bar there is the post-participation survey, and so we were trying to determine if the regulations that we were testing with the EFP impacted angler satisfaction, versus the current regulations that were on the books that are set by the council, and so the short answer is yes.

Anglers in both of these groups, both the control group and the experimental group, had significantly higher angler satisfaction after participating in the EFP projects, but anglers who got to keep red snapper had a higher level of satisfaction than those that were in the control group. Also, anglers reported that they were satisfied with their fishing harvest experience. They were happy to report data to the FWC, and keeping red snapper increased their overall satisfaction with their fishing experience.

Digging more into some of the social science aspects of the projects here, some direct quotes from our social science staff that were taken from post-fishing interviews with anglers, and so an additional benefit of collaborating directly with recreational during this project has really been an increase in trust between anglers and the FWC.

Through these direct interactions with FWC biologists and managers, we feel like we fostered stronger relationships among stakeholders, which has led to greater trust in the agency to manage their fishery, and we'll get into this a little bit more when we show you a slide in our next presentation when we went out to public workshops before we submitted our state management EFP.

So, also, the multifaceted approach of the education course, and lots of communication with the participants, really allowed anglers to better understand kind of what goes into managing the fishery, and so we had some information in the education courses about the management, who manages in state waters, federal waters, kind of what the current situation is, what the issue is with

discards, and then we talked a little bit about kind of -- People were commenting on just kind of what goes into managing the fishery and kind of understanding what all FWC was doing to try to reconcile some of the challenges that are facing the fishery right now.

We have a couple of slides on some of the takeaways from year one, and so, from the data that we've analyzed so far, we've learned how many folks across the agency it takes to run these projects, which is a lot. We've learned that the fifteen-fish aggregate was too large, and that's why we reduced it to ten in year two.

We learned that many anglers were content with being able to hit their red snapper bag limit and then stop bottom fishing, and then the experimental group's discards of red snapper were significantly reduced, and discards were turned into harvest. We learned that effort varies by season, based on weather conditions, and that affects available harvest opportunities. Anglers also supported reporting their data to the FWC, and we learned that participation in these EFPs increased angler satisfaction.

Overall, these projects had high interest from the public, positive feedback, and so we're going to continue to comb through the data. You saw that not all the otoliths are analyzed, and not all the video is analyzed, and so additional analyses are coming and are ongoing.

Some more lessons learned, and so it's also -- I guess you could say that it's best to try to limit the requirements as much as possible to ensure participation. We tried out a lot of things that the council has been talking about, or considering, and we really asked a lot of these people that were participating in the EFP, everything from download this app, you know, do a hail-out, do a hail-in, report your data on the app, take these education courses, just all kinds of different things.

I would say that it's challenging, and, the more things you put on the anglers, the more challenging it could be. It took a lot of work. We had a cell phone number that people could call in if they had a problem with the app, if they had a problem doing the hail-out, if they had a problem with the education course, et cetera.

There's a lot of behind the scenes things that had to happen, like manually inputting the number of the education course into a different system, so that people could submit the hail-out and, you know, be ready to go in the app, and so a lot of things that we learned of what it would take to do this and expand it to more participants.

We also learned, which was something that we kind of already knew from our work in the Gulf, was that not all fishing days are created equal, and so a weekday worth of fishing versus a weekend worth of fishing is just not the same, and so a weekend of good weather has a lot more participants than a weekday of bad weather.

We also learned that anglers are open and responsive to change in fishing behavior and management strategies, especially if you help them understand the why, like understanding what the problem is, understanding why these particular management strategies were selected, and kind of how they can help, how their participation is helping to get data for this management system, et cetera.

Anglers that were participating in the project were willing and eager to assist in providing better data, and we really felt like the project was building trust and relationships, and that was really key to conserving the resource, and then, as you've heard a little bit throughout the project, but you'll see when we get to our next presentation, that the results of this project informed our state management EFP proposal.

We did make some changes, and so year two is underway right now, and, while we continued a number of things from year one, we really looked at trying to make some improvements, and so we took things like the public comment that we had heard here at the council meeting as an opportunity to make some changes.

We added a headboat component to the study fleet, and so there was one headboat allowed in the study fleet. We modified red snapper retention limits in the project. We adjusted, as I mentioned a couple times, adjusted down the snapper grouper aggregate limit, and we removed the control group. We felt like we had tested that out fully in year one, and so we also felt like, people fishing under current regs, that there were plenty of those people out there, and so we took this control group out and just focused on the experimental groups, and we tried to, in the app, streamline some of the data reporting, based on feedback from folks in their usage of the app, and so we're in the middle of Quarter 2 of Year 2 right now.

This could not have been successful without the dedication of all the efforts of the participants, the sponsors, and the staff, and all of those who supported the project, including folks around this table here at the council, because you guys supported us doing these research EFPs for year one and year two, and so this slide just shows some photos from a few of our EFP angler trips.

This is just to acknowledge and thank all of the folks out there. This was a tremendous effort, and so thank all of those that have contributed to this and made this project a success, and, with that, we're happy to take any questions from you. Remember that I mentioned that, in addition to having Kristin up here, we have all of the principal investigators online, and so, whether it's data collection, dockside interviews, the social science component, et cetera, we hope that, with all of these folks online, that we can answer your questions, and so, with that, we're happy to take any questions from year one. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Thank you. Great report. On the behavioral side, did we -- I don't -- Maybe I missed it, but did we capture information on length of trip, time fished, all of that pieces, to understand the recreational fishermen and what effort is the input for, and then, also, part two, and you can answer at the same time, is, obviously, you chose 410, I think was the number, and was that one trip per person, or was there multiple trips included in that selection?

MS. FOSS: Okay, and I'll take those in two parts, and so, yes, we did capture all the information about length of trip, time, et cetera, kind of where they're fishing, and so that was kind of incorporated in our reporting app, and then I'll let Phil, in a minute, or Chelsey, if they want to add anything more to the social science aspect, and then your question was the number of trips. It was 410 participants per quarter. It was broken down to like 200 for the hotspot, 200 for the northeast, 100 control, 100 experimental, and then ten within the study fleet, and, yes, there were unique numbers of trips that they could take.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it wasn't like every single fishing trip within the quarter that they got to take red snapper. Depending on which fleet you were in, it might have been three trips, or it might have been four trips, and that also was limiting the number of trips with which people had to report all of this data, and so it wasn't all of their fishing trips. It was just their specific EFP fishing trips.

MS. FOSS: Right, and so, for the southeast, it was two trips, hotspots were three, and study fleet was four, and so that was the max number of trips that they could take within that quarter that their permit allowed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, online, Phil or Chelsey, did you want to respond to anything else about the social science survey, based on that question? It looks like, online, they told us no, that they're good. I saw Carolyn's hand, and then Charlie, Tom, and Dewey.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you. It's a lot of great work you guys did. One question that came to mind was -- You talked about fishermen terminating once they hit their red snapper limit. Did you look to see -- Was there any impact, or have you looked to see if distance traveled to fishing spots, knowing that, obviously, to the south, you don't have to go as far to be in deeper waters, versus the northeast, where you have to go farther out, and did that impact their stopping fishing once they hit that mark? Do you know if that was looked at all?

MS. FOSS: I don't have that information right now. It's possibly something that we can look at. I will phone a friend for Genine, Chloe, or Luiz.

MS. RAMSEY: Speaking about the study fleet specifically, we didn't see any instances where people kept fishing after they reached their red snapper limit, and so it wasn't -- Because of that, there was no instances where we could see if it was dependent on distance or anything like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So it wasn't dependent on distance. Thank you, Chloe.

MS. FOSS: But we do have the fishing locations, and so we can dig deeper into that, looking at harvest numbers, and then by season, to see if it varies, you know, throughout the year, and then location throughout Florida.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that question. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am a little bit awed about for the effort and the number of staff and what you all have done. This is -- It's very good that you all would, could, and had the appetite to take this on, and hopefully some of the other states can follow suit on getting the data in, so we can learn more, but I did notice a couple of things.

I noticed it looked like most of your older fish were in your core areas, the traditional areas, which makes sense, because we think that they were core there, and, as the stocks expanded, then they're going to be going north and south, and those are going to be younger fish, and so all that makes sense, but, when we talk about fishing satisfaction, if you can go fishing and catch -- You have to stop after you catch one red snapper, and I can easily imagine, at least off Georgia -- I run offshore twenty-five or thirty miles, and I would be done fishing in ten minutes, after the first drop, and so I can't imagine, even though you've got a red snapper, that's going to give you a high fishing

satisfaction. Was there an average time fishing, because we all know all days are different, but was that an issue?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So just as -- Other people online might want to chime-in, but they weren't required, you know, to stop fishing once they got red snapper. They could take the red snapper and take up to fifteen fish in that snapper grouper aggregate, but you saw that nobody really stayed out there to get fifteen fish in the snapper grouper aggregate. It seemed like they were more interested in getting the red snapper, and maybe a couple of other things, or maybe they got the other stuff first, and then they got their couple of red snapper that they were allowed to keep, and then they're kind of done fishing, but I'll see if any of the other PIs online want to chime-in on Charlie's question.

MS. RAMSEY: I was just going to say, for the study fleet, we found that, if people were going out to fish for something else, they typically did that, and then, you know, got their red snapper and went home, in that order.

MS. FOSS: Also from our analysis, there's no difference between time fishing across fleets or groups, like significant difference there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, I guess a follow-up. If they weren't bottom fishing, what were they fishing for? Mackerel or --

MS. MCCAWLEY: We had some of that information in one of the earlier slides, some other things, and we do have the information for what they were taking. I'm looking at Chris, and we saw some of that information early on, and maybe Chloe can answer what some of -- C.J. has his hand up. Go ahead, C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks, and, Charlie, I appreciate the question, and so I agree with you. I mean, I think, you know, the difference between this study here is we were allowing, you know, multiple red snapper to be harvested, and I agree with you that probably people wouldn't stop fishing for just one red snapper, but that is the entire point of looking at the snapper grouper aggregate, right, and so it's not like you're choked out when you get just that one red snapper there, but you ultimately get choked out relative to the snapper grouper aggregate, and that would be the way to kind of mitigate discards along those lines, and so I just wanted to touch on that there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and it looks like the information coming in is additional species that were caught were things like cobia and dolphin, but I don't know if anybody else, Chloe or Genine, wanted to add anything else to that other part of Charlie's question. All right, and so I don't see any hands. Next on my list is Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and I've got two questions. I'm going to start with the first one. Just kind of -- I'm going to ask Charlie's question a different way. When we were looking under the angler behavior, was there any discernible differences by how much time people spent bottom fishing from the control group to the non-control group? Am I asking that the right way, because your comment is there was -- Like there was no discernible difference in fishing time, and I just want to kind of clarify that a little bit, see what you meant by that.

MS. FOSS: Well, I know we have that information. I don't believe we necessarily have analyzed that at this moment, and I will call on Phil, to see if he has anything to add that he's learned from maybe the semi-structured interviews, or from the surveys, and then I'll call on Genine, too.

MS. MCCLAIR: I'm going to go ahead and jump in then, and so, when we look at the time spent bottom fishing across the groups, from comparing control group to experimental group, there is no difference in the amount of time that they're spending fishing. There is a slight increase in the amount of time spent bottom fishing in the southeast group compared to the hotspot, and that might be fish availability. I guess there's a lot of things that could be attributed to, but that's what I'm seeing in the lottery fleets.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so just -- Thank you for that, and so just to be clear that, irregardless of the groups, people pretty much bottom fished the same amount of time, regardless of what group they were in, just so I understand that. My second question is, and I'm sure we're going to go into this a little bit when we discuss the EFPs, is so you had, you know, four-hundred-and-some people a quarter. What was your participation rate among the people who were drawn, and I'll ask that in two ways. One, what percentage of people actually fished, and what percentage of people used up the days that they had? Do we have any sort of analysis on that?

MS. FOSS: That's a great question, and I don't have those answers for you right now, but we can look into that, but, of the 410 applicants that we gave each quarter, it was not 100 percent folks participating, and then someone is on the line.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Genine.

MS. MCCLAIR: Participation was higher in the experimental group, as you can imagine, but, across the lottery fleet, it was about 20 to 40 percent of trips utilized, and then, for the study fleet, it was closer to 80 percent of trips utilized per quarter.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you so much. That was really helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Next up is Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you, and thank you for the presentation. You all have done a large undertaking. Was the bag limit three per person for this?

MS. FOSS: You're saying the bag limit for red snapper?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes.

MS. FOSS: So it was three per person for the lottery fleets that were angler based, and then, for the study fleet, that was vessel, and that was thirty-six for the entire vessel, and that was your bag limit per trip.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Right, and so how about the gear they were using? Were they using single hooks, multiple hooks?

MS. FOSS: Our requirements were hook-and-line, and I believe it was single hook.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So it's all single hook, and so okay.

MS. FOSS: It was especially single hook within the study fleet. I would need to confirm it within the other two lottery fleets, but, moving forward, for year two, we explicitly stated single hook hook-and-line.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I guess we'll get in -- I was going to ask that same question for your EFP that's there. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Clay, and then Andy, and then Jimmy.

DR. PORCH: First of all, thank you for this. I really appreciate the out-of-the-box thinking on it. I'm looking at the slide on red snapper discards, and I think you make a compelling case that the discards are in fact turned into harvest in the experimental group, but, of course, harvested fish have 100 percent mortality, and a large fraction of the discards still manage to survive and live another day.

One of the things that's going to really matter, in terms of predicting season length, is the total number of red snapper killed per trip, and so I wonder if you have some way to compare the statistics of the total number of red snapper that are caught and killed, whether it's because they're released and survived, applying discard mortality rates, and/or harvested, and so looking at kind of something like the control group versus the experimental group. I mean, when I look here, I know it's not a one-to-one comparison, but the control group would have a lot lower mortality rate per trip, which something -- Some variation of that might mean there's a longer season.

MS. FOSS: I don't have that information right here, but maybe Chloe or Genine could tie that in, but we do have a number of validation methods that we will be analyzing, such as the video, and we have the observer information, and so that will be interesting to kind of compare that, versus the reported data that we're getting from the anglers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chloe.

MS. RAMSEY: Just to follow-up on what Kristin said, we have data to do that, and, once we finalize all of our numbers, we can calculate it, but we have not done that yet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I was going to make a similar point to Clay, and so I'm glad he brought that up, because it's really encouraging, obviously, to see the reduction in discards, but then you have to look at, holistically, the total mortality, and so having more information on that will be valuable going forward.

I also want to just commend FWC. Obviously, when we came out proposing the funding for these EFPs, we wanted innovation, and this, to me, is right in line with that. I remember, vividly, meeting with you, Jessica, and your team in my office early on, as we kind of brainstormed some

ideas that you came to us with, and other ideas we shared with you, and you've, obviously, made those happen.

A couple of specific questions about your presentation. If you go to slide 9, and so you talk about the number of fish that were reported and the number of red snapper that were sampled, I believe for otoliths, and I was first struck by the high proportion of fish that were sampled, and so it was like above 90 percent. In terms of compliance, so you had, obviously, declaration and reporting requirements. How do you -- Is this an expanded estimate of harvest, or do you adjust for any sort of non-reporting, misreporting, non-compliance, or do you have any data pertaining to that?

MS. FOSS: So these numbers are what our samplers encountered, right, and so it's not incorporating anything of non-compliance. I would say our dockside samplers did an incredible job trying to meet these anglers at the dock, and so, as I said, or as Jessica alluded to, you know, they had to do a trip declaration, so we at least had an idea of the time they would be leaving and coming back, and they had to report their location, and so all of the study fleet trips were 100 percent met at the dock, and then a large portion, but I think that is some information that we could look into, but the data here on this slide are the exact numbers that we have received from our observers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're still analyzing, as we said, that component of you had the observers on the for-hire vessels, and what they saw, and those captains still had to report in the app, plus that boat was then intercepted by the biologists who were sampling that, and so, yes, I can tell you that there were some differences sometimes in what they reported, and was it mistyped or what, and so then, also, looking at what the observer recorded versus what the biologists encountered when they went to sample the fish at the dock, and so we do have that information. We just would need to dive into it, and I see that someone else online wants to -- C.J. wants to add in here.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks, and thanks for the question, Andy. As you know, noncompliance is always challenging to estimate the magnitude of some of those things, but the good thing about utilizing this app is that they have to declare a trip, right, and then they're required to report the information from that trip within forty-eight hours of returning to the dock.

Sometimes we see that they're not doing that in that timeframe, and so we would send some friendly reminders, but, ultimately, it all gets back towards that 100 percent compliance that we have there, at least relative to reporting in the app, which we do try to make everything else -- Like illegal trips, anything along those lines, obviously, those are not supported within this project here, and that's part of the reason why we give all this information out.

People have to hold those exempted fishing permits and our special activity licenses while they're on the water, in case they get intercepted by law enforcement, to have proof that they're actually doing this here, but that is at least the way that we've tried to mitigate some of these noncompliance issues that are inevitable, I think, in any kind of work like this.

MS. FOSS: Then I'll just add, real quick, that, of the trips that were declared, 95 percent of them reported their data, and so anyone who was out there on one of these trips had to have three things. They had to have a copy of their trip declaration number, a copy of the EFP, and the SAL, and our law enforcement knew this, and they did pull over folks, and they were in compliance, and so that's one way we were trying to account for that, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and one more little piece of information, and so, if there were some big discrepancies, I would say, between what we were expecting versus what the anglers were doing, we would try to go in and do some education, but, if people either continued to not understand what we were trying to tell them, even though we tried to kind of change the methodology to that individual, and like, hey, click on this video, so that you make sure you understand how to do this, and then, if they reapplied in another quarter, we did not select those people that seemed to have some challenges, or didn't really understand how to follow directions in the project.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so a couple of follow-ups, and so, yes, and I appreciate all that, and I think the bigger question isn't so much the people that reported or didn't report after they declared, and it's how many maybe did trips without declaring in the first place, right, and so, understanding that, which I recognize is hard to, obviously, get that information.

Slide 14, you pointed out there were some harvest on control group trips. Was that just based on confusion by anglers, in terms of they thought they were selected for the study, but they really weren't, and so they were harvesting fish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So a couple things. Yes, and they got so excited when they got an email that said you were selected, and then they didn't really read the whole email that said that they were in the control group, and so that's -- We definitely had to change our methodology. We recorded some videos about please read all information in its entirety, because maybe you're in the control group, and not the experimental group, and tried to like re-educate over and over again. Plus, we sent emails out throughout the quarter to give reminders to people.

I mean, we really went above and beyond. I feel like Matt Bunting alone -- It was his work cell phone number that was on the project, and so, whether it was the middle of the night, and people were trying to declare the trip, so they could go, et cetera, or if they couldn't report the data, or they didn't understand that they were in the control group or whatever.

Matt I feel like took thousands of calls to try to remedy some of these problems, and we used all of these as learning opportunities, but, yes, we learned that put the information at the top of the email, and in the boxes or packets of information that people were receiving, to try to be even more clear that you are in the control group, and so, yes, we did have some challenges with that. Kristin, do you want to add anything?

MS. FOSS: I would just say that it was a very low proportion of individuals in the control group that did harvest red snapper, and, when they did report that information, you know, they were very apologetic, and understanding, and we definitely had one-on-one conversations with those individuals.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Next in the queue, I have Jimmy, then Amy, then Judy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just a clarifying question for me, and so you had 1,230 participants, which yielded 5,615 harvested red snapper. When you applied for the EFP, you stated -- How many animals did you ask for?

MS. FOSS: We requested over 11,000, I think, for the year, and the majority -- I feel like the magnitude of the red snapper harvest is coming from the study fleet trips, because they have the largest vessel limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and 11,760 requested, and 5,615 harvested.

MR. HULL: Okay, and that helps me there, and then one -- So private rec reporting on the app was mandatory for everyone, and, yes, I think that's critical. You all did a good job. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Next up in my list is Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and thank you for this presentation. This is a tremendous amount of effort, and we appreciate the transparency, because, the more the other South Atlantic states can learn through this process, the better. Just a couple of questions. Was there a text field to describe the increase in the satisfaction of the control group? That one was a little interesting to see. Was it just the fact that they were excited to be a part of that process, or I was just curious if there was a text field to describe that increase in the control group's satisfaction.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to go to Phil or Chelsey online to try to answer that question.

MR. RODGERS: This is Phil. Thank you, and that's a good question. We did -- So we had a few different measures for satisfaction. The one shown in the presentation was the overall satisfaction. We had some more specifics that had to do with your satisfaction with the number of fish, or species of fish that were caught, and the size of those fish, and also for the species of fish that were harvested, or the number harvested, or the size harvested.

Those more specific measures of harvest were where we could look at the comparison between the control group and the experimental group, and so, in the slide here, we're looking at within the group, and so there was an increase there. Some of our interviews with anglers did reveal that they were pleased just to be a part of the project, and so that's not necessarily explaining all of that satisfaction, but it was a component to it.

Then, when we looked at the specific measures for harvest, that -- Actually, we could see there was a difference between the experimental group and the control group, and so, there, we were able to see that harvesting during participation, which for the experimental group meant harvesting red snapper, we did see a significant increase there in satisfaction compared to the control group.

We don't have the entire picture of why control group satisfaction increased, but we do have some insights from the interviews that just participating in the project was part of that satisfaction, and, also, maybe it helps kind of explain it too, is we asked folks what their reasons, or motivations, were for participating and contributing data, and being able to have the ability to maybe improve the fishery for all were really important motivations, for about 90 percent or more of our participants, and so I think, again, maybe just being able to be part of the project was a good bit of that satisfaction in the control group.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Phil. That was really impressive, and hopefully that will come out in the report, and we can see that detailed data a little bit more. Kind of on that same note, what was the rationale behind removing the control group in year two?

MS. FOSS: I feel like there are probably multiple aspects. One, it added -- It contributed to like confusion with anglers, and so removing that -- We already are collecting a lot of that data with our current State Reef Fish Survey. They're kind of already acting as the control. I feel like those are probably some of the main drivers there, and then it also just kind of helped simplify the project a little, especially on the project team end. Instead of having six different groups, almost, we narrowed it down to three.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I was just curious if you could help explain a little bit of the examples where you've streamlined the data reporting, and, again, just sort of from a lessons learned sort of aspect, and like were you asking questions that had no utility, or was it -- Just anything about that streamlining of data, please.

MS. FOSS: Yes, and so, when we were talking about streamlining data, a lot of it was the questions we were asking within our reporting app. You know, we learned that maybe how we phrased something, a question was quite confusing or misleading, we would, in the reporting app, add like little clarifying boxes, being like this is what we mean, you know, or something like that, and so we removed duplicate questions, and we clarified language. We removed data that weren't really being used, and so such as weather, you know, things like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. You all did a great job. This is really great information. My question is, if you get selected, or in the case of did you win the lottery, what happens if you couldn't go or something -- Could you transfer your winning ticket to somebody else?

MS. FOSS: No, you could not, and so, unfortunately if you were selected, you were selected for that one quarter, and it was not transferable to like your friend or a family member.

DR. SWEETMAN: I will say, Judy, that we do try to be flexible with people, and so, if they've had some sort of circumstance that limits them from fishing within those three months, we can give them an extension, and I think the maximum extension that we've granted thus far has been about two weeks, and so we do try to be as accommodating as we can.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you very much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm looking for additional hands. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I want to go back to what Dewey asked regarding the single hook requirement, and so are you requiring people to use single hooks in this? Now they are, but did they not prior to?

MS. FOSS: So we required it in -- All of them were hook-and-line, and, in the study fleet, they were required to do the single hook in year one, but moving forward into year two, we made it a requirement for all three fleets.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so I guess my question is we've had this discussion about requiring single-hook fishing for recreational bottom fishing. Is the hope that there could be -- Any data that comes out of this, that we could quantify for management decisions in the future. I mean, that's a research need that we have, right? We've had this discussion, and it would be helpful, I think, from a management perspective, to be able to have an idea of what kind of impacts could have.

MS. FOSS: I mean, I think that's something that we could continue to explore, especially looking between year one and year two. Maybe that's something that we could -- It may be difficult to parse out specifically the gear, you know, with multiple other factors, but I know that, in year two, we're asking about it in our satisfaction survey, with the single hook requirement, and so we could maybe get some insight there.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, that's going to be helpful, too. I think anything that we can do -- As much as much discussion as we've had about this, I think any information that we can have would be helpful, but thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: To that point, FWC did a survey, last year, or two years ago, where they were looking at a comparison of single versus double hook rigs, and so we have that report. I believe it was presented during FWC's presentation on fifteen years of data collected for red snapper, but I can dig that up and send that report out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just want to say that I think this is really encouraging, what you guys have learned in just this little initial tease of what all this may tell us is. It's very encouraging for this fishery. You know, I think like the aggregate, and we were not sure where that was going to go, and you guys started at fifteen, and we're saying, wow, that may not be, you know, even what people really feel like they're after out there, and so, you know, we often tend to think of things, when it comes to analysis and how regulation is going to work, in terms of the max potential effort.

You know, I think seeing it in commercial fisheries for years, and we see it here. I think, you know, how much are people going to go out and catch, and how much are they going to fish, and you're showing like, you know, not all days are created equal.

A lot of times, maybe they don't -- People don't get to go fishing as much as they want, because weather is a reality, and they're not really interested, always, in packing that box full with every fish they can catch, and you've got proof of these things showing now, and you've also got some proof that working with anglers, and giving a little bit to learn some things, has increased their trust in the system, which we talked about a little earlier this week, how low that is, but how important that is to actually succeed in the big picture goal of reducing mortality.

While shifting catch from discards into harvest may not be reducing the mortality on an individual trip, the real proof in the pudding is what does that do to the total trips over the fishery over the year, and that's the part that really matters, and so fishermen are more satisfied on these trips, and they may take less trips overall. They may take some of these restrictions that you guys have put

on there, catch a few more of these, but not fish at other times. Net effort goes down in the snapper grouper fishery, and that's a positive across-the-board.

I think you're really showing some things that get at -- As Mel always said, when we started on red snapper, it's a snapper grouper problem. It's not just a red snapper problem that we're doing, and so it's really encouraging here, and I look forward to seeing how all this compares with, you know, what you get out of MRIP and SRFS for the entire year, and everybody else who wasn't part of these programs, and I think it's going to be really informative and give us some hope to making progress in this fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and maybe I missed it, and I do that sometimes, and you landed five-thousand-and-something fish. You had asked for 11,000, and I think I'll look back in the paperwork, and like the two-day season was supposed to be 22,000 that they were supposed to call it in the two-day mini-season, and I don't know what the PSE numbers are around that, how close to accurate that is, but, basically, you know, you can call it 5,000. I mean, you've documented that, and so that's 20 or 25 percent ACL, and so was that in addition to the ACL, or was that part of the ACL? How was all that figured in?

MS. MCCAWLEY: These EFPs were outside the ACL. Other questions for us? This is the opportunity to ask the questions now, because we have all the principal investigators on there. If more questions come up about the EFP, as we get into other discussions, Kristin and I will be here, but I don't know that everybody else will still be online, and so now would be the time, if you have additional questions that you can think of about year one.

All right. I don't see any hands, and so I appreciate the discussion. Thank you to the other PIs that are on the line, and thank you for that discussion. I think that, before we get into the next item, which is the new EFPs, I believe that Andy has some introductions that he would like to make. Thank you.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica, and so I have the pleasure of introducing Annie Hawkins. Annie is in the audience, and she can come up and give a few short words, and so Annie is our NOAA Chief of Strategy, and so we felt it was important for her to talk before we get into the discussion of the EFPs, and then I also wanted to acknowledge that the Assistant Administrator, Genio Pineiro-Soler, is on the phone. He's been listening into this conversation, and so, obviously, you have the Fisheries Service's full attention, NOAA's full attention, with regard to the work on these EFPs, and we're taking them very seriously, and we look forward to the conversations later this morning. With that, Annie, do you want to come up and take my place?

MS. HAWKINS: Good morning, Ms. Chair, director, and members of the council. My name is Annie Hawkins and I'm the Chief of Strategy at NOAA. On behalf of the administration and NOAA Administrator, Dr. Jacobs, we're sincerely grateful to the states for leading this exciting effort on the EFP proposals and to the council for its time and expertise in this process.

We recognize that there's much work to be done to improve the outcomes for recreational management of red snapper in the South Atlantic, and we stand ready to work hand-in-hand with you to achieve meaningful and lasting results. This is a very high priority for our administration.

Simply put, when we began our tenure this year, we immediately shared the concerns that this stock, despite successful progress toward rebuilding, was under consideration for massive area closures and single-day fishery seasons. We were able to take immediate action to withdraw the closure from consideration, but now we're optimistic and excited to turn to the future facing part, through these EFPs and to build on the foundation that the states have started, and that we can build a stronger program based on better and cooperative data with the states.

To review what Mr. Strelcheck said, you do have the full attention of the administration here. We're very supportive of this effort with the EFPs. We want to work very closely with you and figure out how to improve the EFPs, so that we can get these implemented, make them robust, make them sustainable, and really improve the management of these fisheries.

We're here in full support and full partnership with you on this. We're available at the highest levels of the administration to make sure that this effort is successful and supportive, and we're here for you anytime, and feel free to reach out, and we're paying very close attention and here in support, and so thank you very much for your time and your expertise, and we're looking forward to this program.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Annie. All right. I think we're good to dive into the new EFPs. Andy, I didn't know if you or Rick wanted to talk about these, or you just wanted the states -- FWC has a presentation, but do you want the states to just give our presentations, and then go into question answer mode, and I know sometimes you guys do the presentation for the applicant, and so how would you like to do this?

MR. STRELCHECK: I would recommend that each state talk through their EFP, and I encourage the council members to ask specific questions about the EFPs themselves at this point. I would like to make some comments at the end, but I don't want to be disruptive of anything that you may be speaking about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good, and so we have a short PowerPoint presentation about our EFP. Our state management EFP proposal was submitted to NOAA Fisheries on November the 10th, and this has really been a cooperative effort among all four states, and all states submitted at the same time, on November 10th.

There's a picture there of our governor, who held a press conference on that day announcing the proposal to test state management of recreational red snapper, and thinking about how testing and the expanded season decreases effort, landings, and discards for 2026 season, and he did say that it was a proposal, and explained that it needed to be approved, and not that it was the season.

Also, I think that you saw, earlier this week, a letter that went around, and that particular letter was support from congressional delegations for this. You know that there's a congressional taskforce about Atlantic red snapper, and there's been strong support, not just from the congressional delegations of the four states, but our attorney general, and I believe the attorney general from Georgia and South Carolina, and also recreational advocacy groups and anglers, and so lots of support for this, for moving to a new system for state management.

This slide gets into a little bit about what is the need for the EFPs. This is taken from the background information in Florida's EFP, and so we talk about how the red snapper stock is at record abundance and biomass levels, and is no longer considered overfished or undergoing overfishing, but there have been, as you guys all know, significant catch limit constraints, which includes unreliable discard mortality estimates.

You saw, in our EFP, that we were trying to get at some of these estimates, and there have been a number of management challenges, such as these unreliable estimates, that impact the ability to collect baseline data on catch and effort. There've been, as you guys know, and we talked about it in the MRIP presentation yesterday, about some of the changes to FES, that there've been some fundamental shortcomings with MRIP-FES.

We know that anglers are very dissatisfied with the current system, and so, for us, and I think some of the other Gulf states, that state management of Gulf recreational red snapper has been a success, and a lot of anglers in Florida talked about this, and like why can't we share on some of the success like the Gulf, since Florida is kind of straddling the two councils and has this experience, and so we feel like our EFP, and all the states' EFPs, provide the ability to test innovative management strategies outside the bounds of the current regulations.

I mentioned, or I alluded to, in our other presentation that we did some state management workshops prior to submission of the EFP. We held eight workshops in the month of October. I can tell you that they were the most heavily attended public workshops that FWC has had in a long time. Really hundreds of people. I think that the most heavily attended one I believe was in New Smyrna, and we had seventy-five people there, and I think that's a photo there of the New Smyrna workshop.

There were people that were first-time FWC workshop attendees, and it really -- I guess we learned a lot of things, not just about what people want for red snapper, but just that they're really tuned into this issue, really excited to play a role in thinking about what the next steps would be for Atlantic red snapper management.

The way that the workshops were set up, it wasn't just like give a presentation and then stand up and give three minutes at the public workshops. We broke people into small groups. The number of groups depended on how many people were at the workshop, and then we had a series of questions that we asked people, and we did this I would say for over an hour, and so there was no limit to the amount of time that people could comment.

It was more like a freeform discussion with an FWC staff member, and so here is a summary of some of what we heard at the workshop. People were strongly supportive of moving to state management. They, of course, wanted the longest season possible. There was general support for a one or a two-fish red snapper bag limit. There was mixed support for establishing a size limit. This was kind of split between people that wanted to go back to like a twenty-inch size limit and others that felt like no size limit would be beneficial for high grading, et cetera.

There was also mixed support for the aggregate snapper grouper bag limit, and so a lot of the EFP holders were at these workshops. We did specific outreach to those folks, and so they had some insights on what they thought about the snapper grouper aggregate, and then others kind of listened to that, and then provided input, and I would say that a number of folks were in favor of this. A

number of other folks thought that maybe there were other ways to reduce discards, and other ways to kind of run the state management system.

There was also a strong willingness to report data to the FWC. The people that were part of the three research EFPs came with their experiences about using the app, and what they thought about it, and just how excited they were to report this information, and then support -- Or they were supporting also having the same regulations for private anglers and for-hire, because we workshopped should we split the state up, like we did for the current EFPs, and have different regulations in different areas, or should there be different regulations for private anglers versus for-hire, and, really, the support came from kind of the whole state should have the same regs, and private anglers and for-hire should be treated the same.

This is the purpose of our EFP, to conduct a pilot study. We are listing out three years. This is based on -- I believe all states are asking for three years, and this is based on the fact that, by the time the council amendment moves through the process, it might be three years by the time that it's completed and then actually implemented.

In the Gulf, as you heard at the previous council meeting, it was a two-year EFP, with the ability to modify in between years, kind of how we did on the EFP we just presented on, and this would be to test two methods for use in recreational data collection, catch effort and discard monitoring.

We would be using Florida's State Reef Fish Survey, and then, in addition, and right now we're suggesting it be voluntary, a smartphone web-based application during trips where red snapper is harvested, and so this is not exactly the same app from the EFP project, but very similar. It would also be built by FWC. It's on a similar platform, but we were trying to streamline it a little bit more.

We would monitor the recreational red snapper harvest through an extended 2026 fishing season to obtain catch, effort, and discard rates, and so here are some of the specific details that we have laid out in the document.

It applies to both private and for-hire anglers. For the 2026 season, we are suggesting thirty-nine days, and that would be split between a continuous summer season, starting the Friday before Memorial Day and running through June 20th, and so that would be a thirty-day continuous summer season. That's a little bit earlier than the current July season, which was also some feedback we heard at the workshops, and then also adding three fall weekends in the month of October, to kind of test out some differences between the summer season and the fall season, et cetera.

The bag limit that Florida is suggesting is one red snapper per person, and we're also going to continue testing that ten-fish snapper grouper aggregate limit, and we've actually limited down the number of species in that aggregate, and so it's not the full fifty-four species in the snapper grouper aggregate. It is a subset of that, and we would be saying that you only get ten fish, and the red snapper would be one of those fish in the aggregate.

I just mentioned we would have our app, but it would be voluntary in this first year. We want to require a trip declaration. I feel like, the details of that, we're still working out how exactly that would work, and then, if this is approved, we would be expanding State Reef Fish Survey sampling

for harvest monitoring, and so we're incorporating a lot of the information not only from our year one EFP projects, but also from the public workshops that we had.

Then we tried to list out some expected outcomes here to provide reliable baseline recreational catch and effort data of Atlantic red snapper. We're trying to eliminate the dangerous short derby fishing seasons, which were discussed a lot at our public workshops.

Also trying to continue, in this EFP, like in the other EFPs, to reduce discard mortality across the entire snapper grouper fishery. Also continuing to rebuild trust and relationships with the recreational community, and provide a transition, by using these EFPs, to kind of test out state-based management of recreational red snapper, and I'll just add, again, that there's been a lot of coordination and cooperation between the four South Atlantic States, lots of discussion about, you know, how would this work, and what about this, and how are you handling this, and so, in the setup and the submission of these, we've done a lot of coordination among the four states.

With that, we're happy to take any questions about our EFPs, or, if you feel like you need to see the other -- Talk about the other states first, and then come back and ask everybody questions, and it's up to you how you want to run this, and so, if you have specific questions about Florida, we could take that now. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. What stands out to me is, you know, you said that how the trip declaration would occur, and it would seem like, if you required the app, and reporting, then they could use that for their declaration, just like -- I think you did that in the first experimental fishery, but I think that, you know, that would be beneficial, if everyone was required mandatory to download the app, and report, and then they could accomplish the other requirements on the app. Just, I guess, a recommendation from me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy, and we were thinking the app as well for the trip declaration, but, like I said, we're still building the app right now, and so I don't want to, you know, say that we're married to that's how you would do it. I would say we're still working out the details, and so I appreciate all of your comments. Other questions for us? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I like Jimmy's recommendation there of making it mandatory for the app. It seemed like you all have had success under your previous EFPs. My next question would be how many fish do you expect to harvest, and a question that's going to be for Andy is where are these fish going to come from?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it's a great question, and so I don't know, based on the short seasons that we've had in the past -- Let me say that, in the Gulf, Florida uses an effort model to set the season every year, and, when we did the Gulf EFPs, there was some information, based on the various times of year that the recreational anglers had fished over time, and so we could relatively easily set up that effort model, and then we refine it every year, based on data that looks at weather and hurricanes and all these other things.

Unfortunately, we don't have that type of information over here on the Atlantic, because the season has been so short, and it's been really confined to the month of July for many years, and so it's really hard to set up the initial effort model, and so that's why we are suggesting to do a certain number of days.

It was shown in the Gulf, and there's some scientific papers about this, that, once you spread out that effort, that effort actually goes down, and so part of what we're doing is kind of testing out how this was done in the Gulf, and, by extending the season, that effort -- Although we don't know exactly what it's going to be, but we think that it would be less and/or equal to what's happening in that two-day season, but we don't have data for harvest in May or June or in those weekends in the fall. Instead, we are limiting the harvest of red snapper by selecting a certain number of days, so that we can set up the effort model.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Another thing I wonder about is the season is starting in May, and the commercial season would not start until July, and I always hear that, certain times for certain species, about localized depletion, and so -- I'll have a few more, but that's for right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I just wanted to add another component in thinking about the effort, and so the plan is the reason these particular -- Another reason these days were selected is because, in thinking about what the Gulf red snapper season is going to be, this is the weekend that we would set the Gulf red snapper opening.

That's what it was for Florida for the Gulf in 2025, and so we would make sure -- The Gulf days will be more than the Atlantic, but we want to make sure that the Atlantic days off of Florida match up with the Gulf days, meaning that there's overlap on part of the Gulf season with the Atlantic days, so that, that way, you don't have people crossing the state, particularly to fish for Atlantic red snapper, because they would be having the ability to fish on either the Gulf or the Atlantic coast of Florida at that same time period.

We're trying to prevent effort shifting from the Gulf over to the Atlantic, so that there's not increased effort, because maybe the Gulf is not open on those same days, and so we're trying to do kind of everything that we can here, and so those days were very intentional, in order to try to limit people coming from the Gulf specifically to fish on the Atlantic, and so I just wanted to add that. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree that, when you add a lot of days, you're going to have decreased fishing effort. I mean, that's going to be a given. I don't see there is -- But I think total landings are going to be much higher. Who knows what, and, you know, it's all speculative right now, but the landings are going to be much higher, and has Florida talked -- I'm sure they have, but have you talked to the other states, and the agency, on how the data is going to be used to, you know, set future ACLs, i.e., is it going to be the common currency, which was a problem in the Gulf, and it took several years, if I remember, to get it -- To get the data that came in so it was a common currency, so they could use all of it, and so I'm curious how all that works.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we have all that figured out. We kind of need to, you know, test out this first season and figure out what the effort would be. We also have State Reef Fish Survey, which is already MRIP certified. It's already used in other stock assessments. You also have, you know, the Atlantic red snapper stock assessment underway, and so it's kind of hard to figure out how all these things are going to mesh together, and so I don't know that we have all of those answers.

When you do hear from the other states, they are all going to be using an app that comes from ACCSP, although -- Carolyn says no, and so Bluefin. Sorry. Bluefin, and so I'm going to stop trying to speak for the other states, but I don't know that we would need to do some type of calibration in Florida, since the State Reef Fish Survey is already MRIP certified, and it's already being used in the stock assessments, and so I don't know that I can answer for the whole South Atlantic states. Charlie, and then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: I understand that. I mean, Florida is years ahead on data collection than the other states, and it has much more resources to put towards getting the data than the other states do, and, just remembering the graphs, a much higher percentage of recreational fishermen than the other states, and so there's reasons you're going to have those resources, and need to do stuff, but, yes, as the day goes on, maybe we can flesh out some of these answers. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so these are friendly questions, because I support the EFP process for the recreational sector, but I have to ask, and so I hear the EFP is outside the ACL. However, there has been an ACL delivered for the red snapper stock, and so I'm concerned, as a commercial fisherman -- Is the commercial sector's red snapper quota in jeopardy if the overall OFL or ACL is exceeded?

I don't know if you can answer that, or maybe the agency can, and so I have some concern about my sector losing our quota, being caught up, you know, in this project, and is there any -- Could that happen, because there is an ACL out there, even though you are exempted from it, but the agency may say, hey, if it was to happen, and it doesn't look like -- It might not, but you don't know yet how much effort you're really going to have yet, and so I do have that concern, and so that's all I wanted to ask and say. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I don't know that I have an answer for that. I think that that would be some bridge that would have to be crossed later, but it is not the intent of the EFPs to be a takeaway from the commercial sector in any of the years, but it is something that we're trying to kind of run an experiment, pilot this in year one, and, that way, the council would ultimately have this information as they work on that Atlantic red snapper state management amendment. Before you fully delegate anything to the states, the states need to test this and figure out what they can and can't do, before you guys consider full delegation, is what I would say, but I don't know if Andy wants to respond.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I would like to just say that I want to wait until all the EFPs are presented, and then we can provide some overarching comments, but I think what's being touched upon around the table are some things that, obviously, we want to work with the states to continue to refine and improve the EFPs, and it applies to all of them, and not just Florida's.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I saw Tom's hand up, but I would also say, you know, as we're transitioning to the other states, we don't think that any of the EFPs are putting the stock in any kind of jeopardy, and so I just wanted to put that out there. It's listed in the documents, but I just wanted to say it. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Jimmy, thank you for your comments. I'm going to comment more on this later, and I'm going to reserve that, but that is a concern of mine, and it is a big-picture concern of mine. Like we go back to the black sea bass EFP discussion yesterday. When we're having these EFPs that look to have a ton of harvest that are outside the realm of the ACL, I am concerned about that, and I will reserve comments on that for later, but thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions before we transition over to the next state? All right. I don't see any hands. With that, I'll pass it to Carolyn to talk about Georgia's EFP.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to also look to Amy and Trish as we work through this. As Jessica stated, you know, obviously, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina do not currently have a State-Reef-Fish-type survey. MRIP is pretty much the tool of choice for us with the recreational estimate, and so, for us, we're looking at what the state can provide as a similar approach as the State Reef Fish Survey.

We tried to, because we're all kind of on the same starting point, to stay as unified as we could. You know, again, as we were going through conversations amongst the states, initially it was like can you do one EFP to cover the region, which we obviously couldn't do, because of the differences with data availability and ability to look through different lenses for validations.

Then the hope was we could do three, or I mean two, and sorry, and then we ended up in a situation where, because of changes in resources and limitations and differences in regulations, it became obvious that the states were all going to have to go in different directions, but there's a lot of the core is the same.

With what Georgia is proposing, it's what we can do to come up with a way to develop a data tool that will allow for us to validate/calibrate a wave's worth of catch with what MRIP is currently doing, which is why we have asked for one wave. We have not decided what wave is best. That's the input we wanted. Obviously, Florida has chosen a time window, and so we did not have a feel on what was the appropriate wave, and so we're looking for guidance on which wave people would like to see us put the effort into.

The way that we were doing it, conversations came up or a limited group or not, and our request moving forward was to do an open access, with the idea that it is a mandatory reporting tool that has to be done. It's a voluntary opt-in, in the sense that what we're asking of individuals is, if you are going to participate in this season, you have a set of criteria that will allow for you to engage the app to participate.

If you don't want to mandatory report, if you don't want to go through and address all of the stipulations that we've put down, then you will not be participating in the fishery. The mandatory reporting is the biggest key to this for us.

Because we were recognizing the need to be consistent in how the data was collected, we are working with Bluefin. Similar, for those of you who are familiar with the VESL app that South Carolina uses, that's going forward with input that we've gotten from some of our local fishers that have used that app. We felt that that would be one of the easiest approaches going forward. There will be some -- It will be a similar approach, but there will be tweaks to that going along, but the idea is it will be a mandatory reporting going along for that.

As I say, it was going to be a MRIP, because that's back to how MRIP produces its estimates. It's a two-month wave, and so we're asking for a sixty-one to sixty-two-day, depending on which months you pick, so that we can at least compare time window to time window appropriate, and we don't end up with the situation of a mini season compared to a sixty-day season.

Size and creel, as we've done in the past, we're recommending not using the size, because of the issue of discards with that barotrauma, and so we're holding to the one fish per person per day, with the no minimum size, and also the prohibition on the retention of daily creel for captain and crew on any charter or headboat.

Indicated about the reporting, the for-hire fleet would still be reporting through the tools it's using under SEFHIER, and so there wouldn't be duplicate reporting in that effect. Registered users, if you're on the water, and this is a conversation we have with our law enforcement, what would show you being in compliance under the EFP is you would have to have a state Georgia fishing license, our saltwater information permit, and you would have to engage the app to get a hail -- Well, it's basically a trip number and so, in a way, it's a quasi hail-in.

Without those three pieces of information, you are not considered a legitimate trip, and so, with that, we would do follow-ups for closeouts. You can't get another trip number until you close out your previous trip.

We're working the outreach, because, obviously, the success of our program is going to be dependent on how much people understand the importance of them helping us with this, because, if the states are set up to fail, we're going to be right back where we were with this. We need to be able to test it to the best of the ability. We don't want to definitely over-tax the system, in terms of the resource, and, because of where the status of the fishery is, or the fishes are right now, we don't feel that there's a high risk for one year.

Additionally, we're going to be adaptive. Outreach, like I said, that's what we're really pushing for, is for folks to understand that our success is going to be tied to their willingness to participate. The fact -- I know people have expressed some concerns about the three-year ask from the states.

We right now have other things that are going on that could dramatically change what happens in year two. We talked about, back at our June council meeting, that Georgia is working on an endorsement, a landings endorsement, for some offshore species, one of which is red snapper. If that comes into fruition, there will be a different mechanism by which we're identifying the universe of anglers that are participating in the fishery, and so that could have an impact in what happens in 2027, but, right now, we don't have that.

We don't know if it will get signed into law early in the year or later in the legislative session, and so that's -- Again, there's a couple of things layered going on there, and so 2026 may not look like 2027.

As far as the idea -- I know the questions about what we're expecting to catch, and the difficulties are, even if you go prior to when the fishery was restricted greatly in the early 2000s, the PSEs for our estimates are abysmal. We've never had a year that's past the PSE below 30 for the State of Georgia, and so we really have no way to estimate what those numbers would look like. With that,

is there anything -- I'm looking to Amy and Trish. Is there anything I forgot that I probably need to bring up that's a shared thing amongst us or --

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Carolyn, and, as she indicated, Georgia and South Carolina's proposals are in fact very similar to one another, and the foundation of our EFP application is also in line with North Carolina's, minus the participating anglers. As it stands right now, South Carolina doesn't have a mechanism to identify those offshore anglers from our licensed saltwater anglers, and so this first year of the EFP will give us some really strong baseline data on the number of anglers.

We ultimately need to be able to collect better data than what is currently being provided through the MRIP sampling. As Carolyn indicated, some of the percent standard errors that are coming out of the estimates of harvest and/or effort in the offshore red snapper fishery in South Carolina is -- They're either really, really high PSEs, well outside of that 50 percent use in management, and we're talking several of the years that are well over 100 percent, and so double what we're not supposed to be using, and we're using, as well as many years where, unfortunately, anglers weren't intercepted, and so there is no -- There is no estimate for several years, and so we're basing that as -- Not that it's a zero.

We know it's not a zero, but there's no other number to compare it to, and so this EFP will really allow us to have that baseline data in order to be able to look. Do we think that a wave will be what we do in year two? We don't know. We're going to learn a ton in year one, that will then be applied to year two.

This is like a giant science experiment, in my mind, that we're going to go out, and we're going to do year one. We're going to meet those goals, which is to identify the number of our anglers that are participating in the red snapper and overall snapper grouper fishery. We're going to improve data, because we're going to have this developed electronic reporting system in play with our private anglers.

We're also going to work directly with our for-hire fleet, who already has a reporting requirement, to enhance their current reporting requirements, and then ultimately collect that data that we can then use to figure out the next step that we'll do in subsequent years, knowing that it's likely to look different in year two and three from year one.

The reporting aspect of it is really important. We have heard, from our recreational anglers, that they want to be a part of the solution, and so having them engaged in mandatory electronic reporting will be key. They've been asking for it, and now we're going to give them the tool to be able to do it, and we're excited about that.

We are going to have several levels of validation, but I think the biggest point that Carolyn mentioned that we're going to come out of the gates with is our outreach. We have a very captive audience. They are ready to listen and participate, and we're going to utilize our industry folks. We're going to utilize the existing relationships we have with our anglers in our state, and really propel this mandatory reporting requirement, and be able to answer some of the questions that we have no answers for at this point.

I think it's really important to note that the fact that we're actually answering questions, and doing the acts that our fishermen are asking us to do, and that's a huge push for our EFP. Carolyn did a really good job of actually talking about ours.

Again, VESL is going to be used as the tool. VESL is being used in Florida, South Carolina, and a Bluefin application in North Carolina, to collect commercial data. VESL is being used by the SEFHIER program, and VESL is being used by South Carolina DNR to collect our for-hire data. We have an established relationship with them, and we're excited to see this component in the private recreational sector come out that you have to declare your trip before you go.

We're going to get a ton of information in that trip declaration, and so, if you declare a trip, and then you don't report, I then have a tool to then go to you. If you report, and you didn't declare, I then have a tool to go to you from an outreach component. If you are intercepted, and you don't have that trip declaration, I have a tool to be able to access that angler. Again, we're going to make changes in year two, and we'll figure out that based on the information we get in year one.

I know we've already seen a couple of comments coming out about certain questions. I actually appreciated the conversation, Dewey, about the single-hook rig. That's something that we didn't consider, that perhaps we should, and I took notes on that.

I liked the idea from Florida indicating the little asterisks in their reporting mechanisms to make sure that we're defining our data fields specifically in VESL. That's already being used in several of the components, and it's an easy thing to add, to ensure that the reports we're getting are answering the questions appropriately.

There were some comments about the fact that this is not going to -- In some of the comment letters, that it was not going to improve data collections, and I disagree with that statement. I think our stakeholders want to be, again, engaged in this idea of elevating reporting requirements to that sector, and this is going to be able to have them be accountable, and be a part of the process. I'll turn it to Trish to see if she wants to add some stuff.

MS. MURPHEY: North Carolina can almost ditto South Carolina and Georgia, but not quite, but so, similar to South Carolina and Georgia -- I mean, we are pretty close. There are a couple of differences, you know, but the main thing is the three states are piloting this recreational data collection program being developed by Bluefin Data.

I think we're collecting all the same variables, and so hopefully, further down the road, as we learn more, and know more, that calibration will also be simpler. You know, it's going to be mandatory reporting for those, for the private sector, and this is -- Well, let me just go to the differences. Basically, that's the similarities to South Carolina.

The difference for North Carolina is that we are limiting our participants to 100. We're just not able to do open access. I think we'll learn a lot from this first year with our 100 participants, just actually getting a characterization of our fishery for red snapper off North Carolina. I mean, it's a boom or bust right now, with the two-day season, or the one-day season, you know, and so it's -- We can't really characterize that, but hopefully we'll be able to characterize fishing behaviors, efforts, you know, locations and stuff. We'll get a better figure on our participants.

Those 100 participants, they will make up of private rec, and they will make up of charter boats, and they will make up of headboats. That breakdown of those three groups has not been determined yet for that 100, but I think we're going to be looking at either a way to break it down by, you know, looking at effort, or the number of vessels or whatever, but we're going to try to have that 100 reflect what's in North Carolina waters.

We're specifically asking for Wave 4. I know the other two states are asking for a wave, and waiting on input on that. We're asking for Wave 4. That's the same wave that the two-day season happens, and that's in hopes of trying to kind of get a better handle on comparing a two day derby fishery to, you know, a longer season, and we can do that over time. That's the hope anyway, to see how that fishing behavior changes, and how does the effort change, and how does the participation change.

I think we saw, even from Florida's work, not all of the -- Even though they were able, they didn't go, and so, you know, for whatever reasons, we may see that as well, and so I think this is going to give North Carolina a first opportunity just to see what our fishery could be like, and, also, if you think about it, one of the reasons was capacity as well.

I mean, we have no -- To do this 100, we have no people to do this. We have no funding to do this, but, in trying to work with the other states, and cooperate with other states and also help inform the amendment that's upcoming, you know, we're jumping in to do this.

The way we're going to deal with the 100 participants, we have a scientific or educational collecting permit, and so the division will hold that permit, me, and we'll have each of those 100 participants will be considered collectors, and they will be requested to sign an attestation form stating that they will report on that app.

There will be a private rec. There will be -- You know, they're going to have to declare a trip, but, also, because this is on our scientific collecting permit, they will also have to notify DMF, and so, for private recs, we'll actually have two verifications.

For the for-hire sector, they're going to also have to call DMF to report that they are going out and the location that they're going to fish. We're looking to use the SEFHIER data and the headboat survey to get the data from them, from those two. They won't be required to use our app, but they -- We will know they're out there, and so we will know to look to see that they submitted their data in SEFHIER or headboat.

I did say this was a lottery, right? Did I say this was a lottery? Okay, and, you know, again, we're just trying to build a foundation so that, in year two, we can come up with -- We'll learn from this year one, to better design our EFP for year two. Looking long-term, I'm hoping to have a permit in place, because we do have some rules that we can create a permit through proclamation, and so, in that case, if we do this second year, we'll actually have a universe, and that's a big -- I think that's a big piece of this whole thing, is we just don't have a universe to know who to sample.

We'll also be using -- Trying to verify, using our state surveyors out on the -- You know, out at boat ramps. We also, and I think North Carolina, the same with South Carolina and Georgia, they've got the observer program that's going to be having observers out on the charter boats, and so we've got the same thing, and so we'll be able to maybe put observers on some of those that are

in the lottery, that win the lottery, to verify those, and so we think we've got some verification that we'll be able to make use of in this as well.

The last thing is, I know -- You know, there's some concern of how this is going to impact the stock, and North Carolina is pretty much at the northern limit of the stock, and, granted, the main reason for our limitation of a hundred is really more about staff capacity. It also is -- You know, it also, secondarily, is going to be conservative towards our stock off North Carolina, as far as effort, and so I think I pretty much covered North Carolina, unless -- Amy, do you have anything to add, or did I forget something?

MS. DUKES: No, Trish, and I did want to add a couple of the differences as well for our EFP. It is specific to our anglers fishing in federal waters. We have state regulations already in play in state waters for red snapper, and so this would be able -- Our recreational anglers fishing in federal waters would be able to retain one red snapper per person per day, and we're going to match the state minimum size limit of twenty inches, and so that's a little bit of a divergence from Georgia and North Carolina. We are also following the captain and crew on for-hire vessels would not be able to retain their fish.

The idea would be though, over time, for South Carolina to have the ability to issue a permit, or way down the road, a future license. There are still conversations being handled internally if that can occur in 2026 or not, and the permit would be an easier lift in the beginning, maybe with the transition to a license in the future. As you know, the authority and the regulations in South Carolina are applied to the department through our general assembly. We're trying to leverage authority we currently have in play, with the idea of maybe a permit can be utilized in 2026, but we're still working through those processes.

We also want to acknowledge our for-hire fleet, who have been doing such an excellent job over the last couple of years with their reporting, and so we are wanting to make sure that it is a SERO-permitted charter boat/headboat that is going to be participating in this EFP. We already have established relationships with them. They already have a really good record for their reporting requirements, and so that's something that we also wanted to highlight a little bit too, but we're happy to take any questions that you guys might have.

MS. MURPHEY: Just to build off Amy, the company -- We have similar things. We are going to put an application out to private anglers, as well as an application out to the for-hire fleet, to apply for this lottery, and Amy hit on things that I should have. You're going to have to have a recreational fishing license, be it an annual or a lifetime. The for-hire is going to have to have the federal permits, you know, for snapper grouper, so that they are reporting to the SEFHIER or the headboat survey.

We're also -- It's going to be one person. I'm sorry. One red snapper per person per day. There's no size limit, as well as my EFP team, as we've been working through this and trying to implement -- We may be tweaking some of this.

I mean, we were talking about potentially some vessel limits as well, and this is, again, trying to get back at, you know, also being conservation-minded for the red snapper fishery itself, and, again, all four states have worked together. In fact, I've got to thank Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina for all the help they've given me, because this is my first EFP ever, and they've been very

helpful. I mean, the application, we're basing it off the Florida study fleet, and then Carolyn and Amy and myself have put our heads together several times on this, and so it really has been a group effort, and so I think all four states have demonstrated that we're committed to try to do this, and to do this right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, states. We have hands going up. I have Kerry, Charlie, Tom, and Dewey, and then there's a hand online from Doug Haymans. Okay, we'll go to -- Do you want to go -- Sure. Stand by. Doug, did you have something you wanted to add here?

MS. MARHEFKA: Can I go while we're waiting on Doug then?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. I think this question is primarily -- Because, Jessica, I think I know the answer, based on everything you told us earlier, but, for the other three states, and forgive me if this was mentioned, and I know that there will be some -- One validation methodology is through dockside sampling, but I'm wondering if there is any other -- That's, obviously, only going to validate catch, landed catch. I'm wondering if, in this EFP, or if in the near future, next year's EFP, if there's any provisions for what is the validation methodology for released, for, you know, disposition, discards, et cetera.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like Carolyn has her hand up.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and there was one thing that we had talked about, about the question of like the APAIS. Like, if there's a boat coming in, and an APAIS interview is going on, knowing that an add-on from the APAIS side is harder, was to add a check-off on the angler side of were you interviewed today, so that, that way, we would have a way to go and say that they had also received an APAIS interview, and so there was that checkpoint that we were willing to try to pull in from the app side of it as well.

MS. MARHEFKA: But that's just for landed catch. What's the validation methodology for discarded catch? Is there any?

DR. BELCHER: Well, to the same level, they would be reporting that, but, yes, as far as we also do have -- Which was a forget on that, and I apologize, and so we do have a carcass freezer program that we've used in the past for the short seasons for carcasses, so we can get biological data, and so there is a biological data collection component, but we are currently finishing -- Well, we're halfway through year one of an at-sea for-hire observer program and so that -- In at least the for-hire section, we'll have that ability to get that information, but, yes, the private angler, it's kind of more, if they're reporting through their app, and you have an APAIS interview that would match up with that, that would give us that ability to validate there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and same thing for Florida. For-hire observers, but then also in our app. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, yes, to build upon that, and so, again, APAIS intercepts in South Carolina, the charter observer program that's been going on, our law enforcement will also be able to help verify trip authorization codes, through their onboarding

efforts, and, you know, the idea with the trip declaration, although it's not going to get to specifically your discards, because we are asking about landed red snapper as well as discarded red snapper, and including fate, and not necessarily too much depredation, or perhaps some treatment questions could come in the future.

Again, we wanted to keep the first year simple, and so the questions that we're asking are very straightforward to red snapper, very straightforward to these trips, but the idea could be that, in subsequent years, we add additional species, we add things like did you use any best fishing practices with regards to depredation, or with regards to barotrauma, and did you have any depredation, and things like that can come in the future, but it is things that we're definitely thinking about ways to build and make them more dynamic as time goes by.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Next up is Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and maybe I missed it, but, you know, I know Florida has a lot of data collection that is already working with the agency, and so I'm guessing to say those numbers are fairly certain, and probably have good PSEs on what the catch for the mini-seasons were, but I don't know about the rest of the states.

Do they know what they've caught in the mini-seasons, or are the PSEs through the roof, and so, i.e., we're hearing that it's going to be a decreased effort, but, if we don't have a starting point, you know, even if we say, all right, we worked two days, had a two-day mini-season, and the catch levels were X, and we want to go to a sixty-day mini-season, and catch levels are going to be 10 percent of X, or some -- Use some kind of commonsense or something, but, if we don't even have a starting point, I see that as being problematic, and so am I -- Did I hear that correctly?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So Charlie, I think part of the problem is we can speculate on what we think is going to happen. The bottom line is fishing pressure is out there already, right? We're not -- They're not completely off the water. It's not like there's going to be this huge rush of people to go out and fill a void that's been there, right?

It's just a question of what they're doing with the red snapper when they get it, and so the effort is the same, in that it's directed effort that's different, whether or not they're going to go out to target, and so that's part of our issue, is like do you find that, on a given day in July, and say there's 10,000 trips that go out, are all 10,000 of those going to be red snapper trips, or are they diversified across the thing, and the idea would be is that, if you have two days of extremely heavy pressure, because those are the only two days, but you offer them sixty days to go, you're going to find that that pressure isn't aggregated on those two days.

It's going to spread itself out over the sixty days, but, like I said, the hard part for us is we can sit, and we can extrapolate based on what we know at-hand, but that's not any more realistic than what the MRIP estimates are producing, and, currently, what the states are doing, or at least for Georgia, and we speak for Georgia, is we have carcass recovery. Carcass recovery is fewer than 200 animals a year, and so we know the number is going to be higher than 200 animals, but we also know that MRIP, based on what the PSE is, is extremely inflated, and is not realistic as well. That's the

struggles that we have with providing numbers, which is why we chose not to put numbers down on that paper, because we don't know what it's going to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'll go back to Charlie, and then the other states, if they wanted to respond.

MR. PHILLIPS: That I understand, but I would -- My commonsense tells me, if you couldn't catch red snapper, except for two days, and now you've got a sixty-day season, or whatever it is, there will be more directed trips, more effort. The effort, total effort, is going to go up, because you now can catch red snapper that you could not catch before, for another fifty-eight days or something, and so I think effort is going to go up, but -- I would think that would be a commonsense kind of follow-up on the way things are going, but, anyway, yes, and thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The Gulf has shown that's not exactly the case, and so we've got those peer-reviewed journal articles from the Gulf that that's not exactly the case, but I'll look over to Amy, and then Trish, to respond to Charlie's questions as well.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and you kind of hit it there. There are some documented papers in the Gulf that show that the effort is actually then not necessarily increased, but then spread out along that season, but you really hit on it, that there isn't viable data being caught, or being captured, right now, and so this will give each of us an opportunity to collect that baseline catch and effort data, that we can then use as a reference point to be compared to the MRIP wave estimates. We don't have anything to compare right now, and so this is an opportunity for us to sort of hit the ground running, get some of that baseline data to be able to answer some of those questions that you and I both have, but we don't have the data, and so I can't answer that question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I get it. I get it, your concerns there, but one of the things that jumped out at me, based off the papers that have been mentioned, is, you know, they've got a two-day season, and, those two days, that effort was out the roof, right, and so now, if the weather is bad, they're not going to go. I mean, I can't say it's going to even out, but the thing, and I think it was in Jessica's talk on the first EFP, is you saw that -- Yes, maybe the number of fish went up, but the number of landings went up, and the number of discards went down.

The thing that we're dealing with now, that I always come back to, and I'm going to just talk total ACL here, which will include commercial and rec, but the total ACL for red snapper is 509,000 fish, right? 475,000 of those fish are considered discards. We need to fix that.

We actually have 509,000 fish for the whole fishery to use, but they're being discarded, and so this -- That what has been driving this fishery, and I think -- That's kind of been my big focus on this, is I would really like to be a little counterintuitive, and increase the season, so at least we're -- You know, we're catching the majority of those fish that would normally have been discarded, because I did the numbers, and I think it's in my EFP, of, you know, what can be landed is like just 7 percent of that 509,000, and, you know, here's a way to try to see if we can switch that management tool, and so we've got to test it this first year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I've got other hands that have gone up. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I've got several questions here. The first is for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, what I'm going to call the open access states, and so I'm assuming in order -- If you're for-hire boat, in order to participate, you have to be federally permitted?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Not in Florida. State-permitted boats are allowed to participate as well. It just limits the area with which they could fish, and so they can't go into federal waters. They could only fish in state waters.

MS. DUKES: For South Carolina, that would be correct.

DR. BELCHER: The same for Georgia.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so we're going to have this thirty to sixty-day season. Is there any concern that we're going to have people in the for-hire industry buying permits and jumping into this?

MS. DUKES: It's actually a great question, Tom, and one that we talked about, and it's specifically outlined in the South Carolina EFP. I can't comment on the other two, but I'm pretty sure it's there too, but you have to have, in your possession, your SERO snapper grouper, as well as your South Carolina DNR charter boat/headboat permit prior to January 1, 2026, and so the timetable is ticking.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, but the control date is in the future, and so people know about this, and we may see people jump into it. Okay.

MS. DUKES: Perhaps, but then they would be properly licensed, and then be having to be required to report.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Georgia.

DR. BELCHER: So it was discussions around our table, and we have a very, very small for-hire fleet, and so the concern within our shop was that it would not dramatically go up, and it was requested that we did not put that in there. Initially we had that same language, but it was requested that we remove that language.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to say that North Carolina has the same control date as South Carolina.

MR. ROLLER: I've got some North Carolina questions I'm going to get to. I'm saving those for last. So Amy, you mentioned that there's going to be enhanced for-hire reporting, because, obviously, if you're relying on the SEFHIER data, it's very different than your app. Are you going to have trip declarations or anything, or anything different for for-hire?

MS. DUKES: Not necessarily different, but the directed outreach to our federally-permitted for-hire boats that also hold the South Carolina will be definitely a dedicated outreach tool for us to be able to do, and remember, yes, we are relying on SEFHIER, but you in South Carolina, if you're

federally-permitted, you're reporting to the South Carolina form, which meets the SEFHIER requirements, and, so if you're out of compliance with me, you're definitely out of compliance with SERO, and I have the ability, and my officers have the ability, through our compliance mechanisms now, to be able to help streamline that, or to truncate that, as little as possible, and so there are reporting requirements.

We have affidavits. We put that information to law enforcement. They then have the ability to go out and work that affidavit list. If folks are delinquent, they have the ability to write tickets and things like that. That already exists on the South Carolina side, and it's almost a bonus for the SEFHIER side.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. Thank you. I'm going to move to North Carolina. We've had a lot of discussion about this already at a state level, and so, with this extremely small and limited EFP with a hundred people, I mean, anyone can apply in the state, right, whether you don't own a boat, own a boat, for-hire, headboat, and is that correct?

I look at this 100 number, and given that we have hundreds of thousands, millions, of licensed anglers, I wonder if the people selected are even going to go that much. I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if you got five or six people fishing in this thing, and so I guess that's why, when I looked at a hundred, I was so shocked to see such a low number. Is there any concern there? I know you mentioned that, Trish. I was just curious if you had any feedback.

MS. MURPHEY: I don't have any concern with the hundred. I know -- I mean, I've had a few people say --

MR. ROLLER: I do.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, tell me --

MR. ROLLER: I'm going to -- I'll go to that. I meant -- I'm just asking for your feedback.

MS. MURPHEY: Talk some more about that. I mean, it was really -- The number-one drive was that it was capacity. We just don't have the staff, the infrastructure, the funding to do this, and remember -- Folks, just also remember that we just started a mandatory reporting application December 1 for five of our state fish, and so we've already got something going on that a lot of our staff are already having to, you know, work on, and so we've got that going on as well, and then this is going to be on top of it, and so the hundred was just manageable. I guess that's the best way to say.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, your rationale there is fine. I mean, like, you know, to remind the council, our state had our state commission meeting the week before Thanksgiving, and we did have discussion on this, which I am a commissioner for the state. I asked our state director, Director Rawls, to give some feedback on this, and I asked about if access was a concern, and she said access was not a concern for our state.

I believe that Director Rawls also stated that, if they were going to pursue an EFP, at least we would get something out of it, which I guess I just had a little disagreement on it, because I would also remind everybody that our state is undergoing a very interesting reporting process, where

we're going to require recreational anglers to report the harvest of every red drum, speckled trout, gray trout, striped bass, and southern flounder. I mean, those are some of our most harvested species, of which the red snapper is, obviously more of a rare-event offshore species.

My concern here, with our state EFP, is the massive gulf of difference between the three states and our state. We have these open-access programs, and we have a state that's saying we don't have enough resources, because we don't, to do any more than a hundred people, and I guess just as -- I mean, North Carolina is one of the biggest recreational fishing economies in the country, outside of Florida, and I guess, just given all the discussion and whatnot, I was hoping that there would be some funds made available.

I was hoping that there would be some funding that would come in before we do this, particularly as much attention has been on it, and my concern, given that it's so small, is that I know angler outrage in my state is going to be massive, and I'm worried that this is going to prompt legislation at the state level, like we've already seen in a bill last year. I mean, quite frankly, I can't support our state's EFP, whatsoever, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Tom. Next up, I have Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you, and thanks everybody for their review of everybody's EFPs. There's a lot of work that's gone into this. I'm still wondering on the federal part of it, of where the fish are going to come from, the localized depletion with some of the start seasons, versus the commercial. The commercial only gets twenty-eight-point-some percent. We already have to pay, through the stock assessment, the recreational discards, and maybe that will get better in the future, with some type of new accounting.

I also wonder, given that everybody talks about their PSEs, particularly the red snapper, are the states, in the future, going to be talking about every other species that's got the same PSEs, and there's probably quite a few.

For North Carolina's 100 anglers, you talked about headboats. There's like -- There could be some headboats that have fifty people, and so would that one person on that headboat keep a red snapper, or would that headboat with the fifty anglers count as one permit, and so, basically, I'm asking -- Is it 100 rods, which are the anglers, because, when you mentioned the headboat, or a six-pack charter boat, that's -- How is that going to work, because that's -- They carry definitely more than one rod, and so how is that going to work?

MS. MURPHEY: Well, believe it or not, Dewey, when we were sitting down and discussing this, and figuring out how we were going to implement this, that came up, and so we are playing around with trip limits on -- Or vessel limits too, and so, I mean, I know maybe if -- I think the way it's written in the EFP right now, it's, if you have seventy rods, you can get seventy red snapper, but, because we talked about that, we are actually considering vessel limits.

What those vessel limits will be, I don't know. I actually just had talked to Andy yesterday, to see if we can even make tweaks, you know, in our EFP, and he said we could, and so I'm right there with you. We get it. The DMF staff have already discussed it, and so that would be an option to get at your concern.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, another concern is the 100, the limitation of 100, and so that would - I don't know, and it seems like the EFP is kind of incomplete, where I guess you're figuring it out as you go, because, if you only have 100, it would be more than 100 anglers that would be fishing, and you've also, at 100 anglers, at sixty-two days, that's 6,200 fish you're accounting for, and it appears like that would be more than that, even though I guess the amount -- You know, the major of the project is to reduce the discards, and so I guess we'll just wait and see.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Dewey, great questions, and I kind of wanted to circle back to a couple of them, and so, right now, as far as the charter boat and the headboat bag limits would apply, it is one fish per paying passenger, and so it's not going to be based on the number of rods on the boat. That's already --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: (Mr. Hemilright's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. DUKES: I'm so sorry. Just kidding. I'm sorry. I missed that. Can I also just go back to a couple of your other questions then? You talked about other species. You're absolutely right. Other species are very much at the forefront of all of our minds, but this is an opportunity to start that data collection with the one species, with this idea to be able to expand to two.

In addition, Florida has SRFS, that specialized data collection program, and it is an excellent program. It is one that other South Atlantic states, including myself and Georgia, and I will speak for Georgia, have been considering for our long-term data collection plan. Again, I said long-term, and so perhaps this EFP, the mandatory reporting requirements for red snapper, this idea that it could be expanded to other species in the future, is all a lead up to this long-term plan of we recognize MRIP is not the right answer, but we also recognize MRIP is not going away, and so then how do we work with MRIP to make sure that the estimates coming out are more robust for our states and more representative of our fishermen?

A specialized data collection program like SRFS being expanded in our states is a tool that we are currently looking at. That comes with a lot of money that needs to come into the state, additional personnel, and capacity is not there, and so we're going to have to build the infrastructure for that, but these are things that are currently going on in conversations right now.

That also is really key when we talk about the calibration concerns that are coming out of the Gulf. If we get ahead of those calibration concerns, and we work together to mimic the data collections, then we don't have those calibration issues moving forward, again in that long-term, but I appreciate that question, because we are thinking about that, and that kind of gets back to this idea of we've been formulating these EFPs for months, and you guys have had a couple of days, and so I very much appreciate these questions, for us to be thinking about that as we move forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given all this work is done, would all the states be amenable for further consideration of, in stock assessments, each sector's discards coming off each sector's allocation, instead of the commercial having to pay for amount of fish to catch coming off the top? Do you all understand what I'm saying?

So given that, in the spirit of cooperation, I'm looking at -- We're looking at our fisheries, and this is probably outside of the EFP, which it is, but we're looking at holding on, and fighting for every fish, and I look at why we're -- This continuation that's been going on for years, and we're also going to probably go on for a few more years, about the amount of fish that the recreational, or, I mean, the commercials could have been harvesting, giving access to the public, that we've had to pay the price, let alone with our fishers, and so, while we're looking at this stuff, this is important.

It also should be like fair and equitable, but I'm not -- I don't hear no angst, and then we're going to have seasons starting that have potential -- Most of the time, we always hear it from the -- I've heard it a lot during dolphin wahoo, but localized depletion, and, to me, I look at that as another avenue of fair and equitable in this outcome, and I also have some questions for Andy, when we get to that point, but I would just be curious of what you all's states, since you're here and talking, and what's you all's thoughts on the stock assessments and each sector's discards coming off of their ACL, and not off the top in the stock assessment, and I'll wait to hear from you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I saw hands going up. Did you want to respond to that? Go ahead.

MS. MURPHEY: It's not to respond to your concerns of discards off the top and stuff, but you had said earlier that you didn't like the hundred either, but you didn't say why.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Excuse me, and I didn't like what?

MR. MURPHEY: Didn't you say you didn't like the hundred number?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, I just think it's inequitable compared with the other states, and, if you're looking to get a sample of something, a hundred is not going to give you the sample that you need to further do something for the State of North Carolina, and I might be wrong on that, and I know we have limitations of the dollars and staff and all that, but, at the end of the day, it's the data you're wanting to collect, to show something in the future, and, the hundred, you ain't going to show much. It's a very small subset.

MS. MURPHEY: It is a very small subset, but MRIP is a very small subset too, and, actually, our hundred might -- I mean, I don't know, but our hundred might be a bigger subset than what MRIP is currently getting on red snapper, and so, I mean, I can offer that as well, that hopefully our subset will be bigger and we'll just -- This first year is a test, and hopefully we're going to learn a lot from this first year to apply to the second year, but I appreciate, you know, your thoughts on all that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I had both Clay and Andy's hand. I don't know which one of you wants to go first.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. A couple of points, Reinforcing the one that Amy made about, you know, the federal MRIP folks working hand-in-hand with the states. I think that's going to be actually critical moving forward, so that we can come up -- Combine resources to come up with the best way to get essentially effort in federal fisheries, and I look forward to seeing that happen.

To that point though, one of the big challenges we learned in the Gulf is that, you know, all the states came with their own scale to the table. It's kind of like going to the grocery store, and they

have their scale, and then you brought your scale and you're trying to get -- You know, buy a pound of tomatoes, and, you know, they might not like that so much.

We had a lot of arguing back and forth between the states, et cetera, and so it would be really helpful, as soon as possible for the states to adopt the same methodology. That's ultimately where most of the Gulf states are going now to use the same type of methodology, particularly Mississippi, Alabama and Texas. I mean, Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, and that's somewhat similar to Florida's approach, and so we're making progress there, but I just worry a little bit that we have a bunch of independent programs, that only operate during part of the year, and then we are in the same situation we were in with the Gulf.

The other thing is to Trish's point, and certainly the goal is to reduce the discards. The concern I have is that most of the discards actually happen during the closed season, and so, even if you have a sixty-day open season, that leaves 300 days of closed season, and so I'm just wondering -- As the states constructed these EFPs, did you actually have any information that might suggest that if you had a longer open season, say sixty days, then fishing would decrease in those remaining 300 days in the snapper grouper fishery? In other words, you know, if you got sixty days where you could take, you know, red snapper, would you be less likely to go fishing for reef fish in the other 300 days?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: To that Clay, we didn't get that far into the details on that stuff yet, because, I mean, we were kind of put in a situation where we had a time crunch, and so we tried to economize. Like I said, we recognize that this doesn't answer every question that people would like for it to, but we did the best we could focused on moving forward with red snapper, but things that we have going on in the background will hopefully address some of that other stuff. It's just, right now, we haven't had the capacity to be able to look deeper into that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Dakus.

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I certainly feel compelled to share a Gulf perspective, and, representing the state of Texas, and I totally understand that this is a different perspective, and, as Nelson Mandela said, where you stand depends on where you sit, and we are in somewhat of a different economic environment, but I would -- As you all are engaging in this discussion, I would compel you, and encourage you, to really think through, you know, what this looks like for you now, what that looks like for your various sectors of the fishing community within your state.

I can tell you, and this is -- Ever since 2017, this has been like a -- I'm looking at Clay and Andy, this has been like a marriage, with all kinds of ups and downs, but, at the end of the day, this has certainly benefited our state.

Speaking from the state resource perspective, as I manage our coastal fisheries, the benefits of being able to set those seasons, opening and closing, and monitor those real-time landings through the season, and being able to work with our partners and close those seasons when our projected allocation is projected to be met, and what that has enabled us to do is enjoy longer seasons, and I think what we've seen, over time, is that pressure has distributed itself over those longer seasons,

as our anglers are no longer experiencing that PTSD that they did when we had those shortened seasons.

I think we're seeing that, Jessica, across the Gulf, and so that's an added benefit, and something we haven't talked about here, but certainly this is big in Texas, is the economic benefit that we've been able to realize through that component of the fishery, that benefit to our local coastal communities, the hotels, the restaurants, the fuel and tackle sales that we're able to capitalize on as a state and our coastal economies.

One thing I did hear is the discards. That's certainly a consideration, not only within the South Atlantic, but within the Gulf as well. I would, and I mentioned this in my liaison report yesterday, and it's something that we took very seriously within the Gulf, is we extended that DESCEND Act.

Additionally, and I'll give kudos to the State of Florida and to the State of Texas, is we also implemented a rigged and ready and must use within those state waters. We took that very seriously. That is something that the states have the control to implement through their various respective commissions, but, again, I know this is a challenging discussion, but I will advocate and encourage you to see the light at the end of the tunnel, because it's worth these tough discussions as you approach this EFP arena.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dakus. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I want to first start by saying thank you. I mean, I think this has been a great discussion, and there's probably still questions around the table. I've been trying to sit back and kind of absorb what everyone is asking questions about. Some of the things that the state representatives talked about answered some of the questions that we've had about your EFPs, and so that's been beneficial.

You know, bottom line, we all have a stake and an interest in improving red snapper management and improving data collection, right? We want that. That's a common goal. We share that goal. We also, and I appreciate the states -- We've all sat around recognizing that anglers are frustrated, right? The last thing that I want to do, and what I look least forward to every single year, is when I have to come out and announce the short fishing season, right? That is not something that I enjoy as the Regional Administrator.

I get a lot of angry phone calls. It's frustrating that we have this waste in this fishery, and these discards, and so we share, obviously, this goal of trying to do something different. You know, we can't even really celebrate the success of our rebuilding plan right now. Fifteen years into this rebuilding plan, we've made this tremendous success. This year was the first year that we can officially say we've ended overfishing in decades, right, and yet anglers aren't getting the benefits.

The EFPs, obviously, are coming from a good place, in terms of trying to resolve some of that frustration and anger, figuring out, obviously, how we can turn some of this waste into, you know, beneficial fishing experiences, and so, you know, in going through my notes, and kind of preparing for this meeting, you know, there's some other things that, you know, we've really been challenged by, and I think relate to these EFPs, that we need to continue to take into consideration.

The overlay here is that we've been under a very challenging legal environment, right? We've had four lawsuits on red snapper, and so we need to be very thoughtful and careful and strategic with regard to how we design and approve these EFPs going forward, and some of the questions that were asked today I think really help to shape what changes, or potentially discussions, we can have with the various states.

We've also had new research emerging, work on the State of Florida, observer coverage with all the states, the South Atlantic Research Program, and all of that is pending science and information that's going to benefit us. It just hasn't come fast enough, right, and so I'm excited about that.

We sat around this morning and talked about the EFPs, and I'm really proud of that effort that, to me -- Dakus about this marriage, right, and it's this partnership that the Fisheries Service recognized that we needed to do something different, and the states came in and said we want to test some things out, and now we're reaping the benefits of that.

We've heard a lot around the table this morning about how the states have partnered together. That's fantastic. What we're missing right now is the state and federal partnership, right, about the conversation around these EFPs. That really is a missing component, and I feel like a missed opportunity between when these EFPs were being developed and, obviously, today, right? We want to work with you, right? We want to, obviously, continue to refine and develop these EFPs.

In the Gulf -- I mean, Dakus has mentioned the success of the Gulf. In 2018, we laid the foundation for the Gulf EFPs by moving forward with state management. The states, like you're doing, got together and were coordinating with one another, and, in 2019 and 2020, we ran these EFPs, and so, if we can lay a similar foundation, right -- To me, what we want to do is set ourselves up for success.

We don't want a Band-Aid on a bigger -- You know, we need a bigger solution, that's going to work not only today, 2026 and 2027, but out into the future, and so we want to make sure these EFPs really align with, obviously, getting to full-fledged state management, if that's what the council desires to pursue, and so, with that said, I think it's important to note a couple of fundamental differences and things that I think we're going to have to work toward.

First of all, with the Gulf, they developed a state-specific allocation strategy, right, and they essentially divvied up the private angling red snapper catch limit. Right now, we're seeing the EFPs. You're proposing, obviously, fishing seasons. There's been some discussion about how it would be very difficult to, obviously, estimate that catch limit, but really where I think the opportunity lies is what Trish mentioned earlier, which is we have this enormous total ACL that combines commercial and recreational discards and landings.

How do we meet our mandates of preventing overfishing and maintain within that ACL, but increase the proportion of fish that can be landed and reduce the portion of fish that can be discarded, but, with that said, we, obviously, have to figure out ways in which we could ultimately achieve that, and so, going forward, just to kind of give you a sense of kind of where things stand, we're reviewing the EFP applications for legal sufficiency, as well as to determine compliance with both our exempted fishing permit regulations, as well as the Magnuson-Stevens Act mandates.

There are specific requirements as part of EFP regulations that all applications need to meet. If they're not in there, we need to ask for them, obviously, from the states, and formalities, obviously, kind of from an administrative review standpoint, but, once that's -- Well, and then the other thing I want to emphasize is typically what we do is we deem an application complete, and then we give it to the council.

Given the urgency to want to implement EFPs in 2026, we gave the council the EFP applications as they stood. We haven't provided any input or comments back to the states at this point. What typically happens, especially for a complex EFP like this, is there's plenty of back and forth that we want to work with the states on, right, and so we foresee that happening. We want to, obviously, coordinate on that.

The other aspect of this that's come up, and where the Gulf had a substantial leg up, and I was talking to Dakus about this, is two of the states had already implemented new state management data collection programs. The three others have been testing them for three years prior to EFP development, right, and so Florida is well positioned.

The other three states, right, you're standing up something in the midst of also trying to implement an EFP, which is not only challenging, but an opportunity for us to work together and try to collaborate on developing a system that's going to work for not only near-term and short-term needs, but those longer-term needs as well, right?

We don't want to stand up something that, in our view, is going to be ineffective, and we should learn from the lessons from the Gulf, and try not to recreate the same problems that we experienced in the Gulf, because what's happening in the Gulf is those programs are evolving, and changing, and getting better and more refined, based on what we learned from this experience, and so, with that, where we're at now, obviously, we have a lot of work to do to pull these off if we're going to start in May of next year.

The Fisheries Service has to work with the states to review and deem them complete. We have to do a Federal Register notice. We have to go out for public comment. There's potential that we could sit around this table in March, in Jekyll Island, and have further discussion of the EFPs, if that public comment period is open, but we are trying to drive toward working with the states to come up with, you know, finalized EFPs that could be implemented before those May fishing seasons, or whenever the start dates ultimately begin, and so I just wanted to share that perspective. There's certainly a lot of great ideas that have been formulated in the EFPs. There's some things that we see as opportunities for improving, and we'll look forward to coordinating with the states.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I had a couple more hands, and then I'm going to try to wrap this discussion up, and so we don't want to decide anything right now. We are past our lunchtime. I didn't want to end this discussion and then come back and continue it again, rehash it after lunch, but so I had the remaining hands up were Kerry and Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. Andy, I think you alluded to it in the answer you just gave, but I just want to ask it outright. We had a discussion yesterday about black sea bass, and needing a number of fish that we're going to be -- That seems to be part of the legal requirements you mentioned of an EFP. Is it the case that the legal requirements of an EFP need an actual number of fish taken,

and, again, I think we just would be -- Some of us would be more comfortable if we understood the criteria in which it is acceptable to take fish outside and potentially far above the ACL.

MR. STRELCHECK: So two points to that. So kind of look at the ACL both as a landed ACL, but a total ACL, right, and so there's a lot of fish that are discarded that we're counting toward the total ACL right now, and then we have an overfishing limit even above that, right, and so our mandates, obviously, are prevent overfishing, make sure that we're continuing to rebuild the stock, and so we need to meet those Magnuson Act mandates.

The other question you asked about, the quantity of fish, if you look at the federal regulations at 50 CFR 600, they identify that you -- When you submit an EFP application, you should identify the species that will be part of that EFP, as well as the quantity of fish that you would expect would be harvested under the exempted fishing activities, right, and so those are in the regulations and part of, obviously, our EFP process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Andy, I want to thank you for your comments, and, specifically, you mentioning that the council -- Like we're not even taking the moment to celebrate the success of rebuilding this fishery. We're in a really unique position here. We have a fishery that is recovering, and we have a lot of fish in the water, and we have an opportunity to try to get that right, to bring access, and also hopefully maintain that fishery for the future.

As someone who is involved in -- As a fisherman who participates in state, interstate, and federal fisheries, who is involved in the state and interstate management, there's not a lot of examples of this.

I spend most of my time dealing with collapsed and non-existent fisheries, or fisheries that I have access to that there aren't any fish, like cobia and striped bass, and so here we have something that has been successful, even though it's been controversial and difficult, and I hope we can get it right going into the future, and so this is -- Most of us here know this, but I just -- I think it's important for the conversation, but I'm kind of looking to Clay here. What is the Gulf ACL for red snapper, versus the South Atlantic total ACL?

MR. STRELCHECK: So the Gulf ACL for private is over four million pounds. The South Atlantic ACL, the equivalent, is like 263,000 pounds for recreational. That includes both private and for-hire.

MR. ROLLER: So four million versus about two-hundred-and-some-thousand pounds. It's just -- It's important to note that how different that is, right, and how many more fish that the Gulf has to work about, which has been my concern here, and so we just seem to have the cart way before the horse in this EFP process.

Now, I want to go back to a comment that Dewey made regarding our state, and I hope I get this right, our state EFP, is that there just wasn't a lot of equity in the a hundred people, right, and what I find kind of interesting about this is, when we talk about North Carolina, and the recreational component, it almost seems like it's a little bit of an afterthought, because we're such a small

percentage of the overall catch, right? I think it's like less than 1 percent, which it's not much, and I don't think -- I think that's relative to the access that we have.

We just have to travel a little bit farther, and it's a little bit windy, and maybe we're not catching them up, and we're not catching -- They're not being caught in MRIP, due to, you know, the more rare-event species, but we have the biomass, and maybe not so as other states, and so I just had the last five years of the commercial landings polled to look at the percentages of catch from different states.

You know, Georgia doesn't come up, because it's confidential, but, if you look at the commercial catches, Florida catches 81 percent of the commercial quota, South Carolina is 5.8 percent, and North Carolina is 13 percent. You know, that's a much larger component, right, then when you look at it compared to the recreational side, and so I'll just leave that there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I mean, I feel like we could have this discussion all day. I'm trying to figure out, you know, what other questions and stuff people have. We are now twenty-four minutes past lunch, and, of course, we will, I guess, have this discussion again at Full Council, to try to figure out what type of letter the council wants to send. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm wondering -- I mean, to me, this is -- We haven't got the final package of the EFP that's -- We're getting a draft. It hadn't been finalized by SERO, or NMFS, or whoever, and so, you know, I'm just wondering what the letter to comment on -- I mean, three quarters of it looks great, but we've got other questions, and I don't know, and so I wonder, you know, about the finalization, or when something is ready, or completed, for us to look at.

We had an instance where we had a couple EFPs in Mid-Atlantic, and they came to us to look at. They were incomplete. It got sent back, and they worked on it, and they came back to us, and I'm just wondering, and what do we write the letter for? Like, yes, it looks good, or our concerns, or something like that?

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I think it's going to be probably hard for the council to come up with a consensus-based letter, right, and so what I would see as valuable to the Fisheries Service, to the states, would be laying out, obviously, what you view as the positive pros for the EFP proposals, as well as any concerns, things you would like them to consider, modifying, changing, and then any other questions specifically you have for the Fisheries Service that we could, you know, help address as the EFPs are developed, but, as you point out, there's going to be a public comment period. There's going to be further discussion of these down the road, and whether it overlaps with the next council meeting or not is to be determined, but, right now, to me, given we're early, but moving quickly, would really benefit from getting some input now.

MS. MURPHEY: Go ahead, Carrie.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, since Jessica is out of the room -- No, I'm just kidding. I mean, it was because she's out of the room, because I think she would come up maybe with this idea as well, and I wasn't trying to be sneaky, and maybe a path forward right now would be to sort of wrap up

this discussion, and I wonder -- We'll have public comment, and that might spur us to think about more questions.

Hopefully maybe staff can -- I assume is already compiling some of the thoughts and concerns we've had, and can potentially -- Eventually, you're going to have to help us come up with a list anyway, and maybe that could get started, and then, when we go back into Full Council, or at the end of this committee is when we -- Based on what we hear at public hearing, based on the conversation we have here, is where we finalize sort of what we might want to be included in the letter, the way Andy described it, because he's right.

I think we're going to have to have a letter that says here are the positives, and here are some concerns we have, and I feel like we can't finish that as a council maybe, because I suspect we're going to hear some things tonight that will spur us to think as well. Just a thought.

MS. MURPHEY: I saw John walked up, and so I'll get John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, between, you know, Andy pointing out that the agency hasn't accepted these as final yet, and intends to provide feedback to the states, and I think that he gave some appropriate guidance on what a letter at this stage would include, and I think we should come back at Full Council. Everybody has a chance to think about it, and I see maybe doing -- As we have in similar letters before, up on the screen have a list of just bulleted pros, cons, questions, and let's try to work through that fairly efficiently.

That can become the content of the letter. I don't think that -- You know, we're certainly not at a point of saying consensus yay or nay, given where, you know, Andy says they stand, and I don't think that that's necessarily required, because the council doesn't approve these anyway. It's up to the agency to approve them, and so all you really need to do is provide that kind of feedback. Given the discussion that we've already had, hopefully folks can get their thoughts in line and come in and be ready to just say these are my concerns, these are the things I like, and these are some questions I have, and we can knock that out fairly efficiently.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and just I would ask, to make that process more efficient, and to make sure that I -- Because I couldn't capture everybody's concerns and questions, and so I would invite you to just email me your concerns, your questions, and we'll tally them up. I'll make a nice little table, and we'll have that in the draft report.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to guess that this will actually be very helpful to the service in going through these, right, and so I think, again, here's our first opportunity to collaborate with the service on this, which is what Andy is asking, and so I think this sounds like a great way to cooperate and get these the best that they can be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, if Myra can email us her draft, and let us add to it, rather than her just getting a bunch of stuff that they don't know if it's on her list or not on her list, it might be a little bit cleaner, maybe. No? Okay. We can do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. With that, thank you for that discussion. I'll turn it back to the chair, but I'm thinking that we're coming back at two.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I guess that was my thought, is two o'clock. Is everybody good with that? Do they still need that hour-and-a-half, and, again, we need to go long, we can go a little longer in the evening.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have public comment.

MS. MURPHEY: That's right. I'm sorry. We've got public comment, don't we? Is 1:45 doable for folks? Okay. Let's try.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to go ahead and get going. Thank you for taking a more rapid lunch break there, so we can get back to it. I'm going to try to move the discussion along this afternoon, because we need to get through both black sea bass and blueline tile before our hard stop at 3:45 for public comment, and so, on black sea bass, the first order of business is Chris is going to provide the comments from the Snapper Grouper AP, and so I'm to turn it over to Chris.

MR. KIMREY: Hello, everyone. Chris Kimrey, for-hire sector, and so I suppose I'll start this with sea bass. I pause because sea bass is something near and dear to me, and there's a lot of concern from the AP on Amendment 37, because it seems drastic to people in my area, which is Morehead City, North Carolina, the coast of North Carolina, northern South Carolina.

It's a general consensus from the AP that we haven't seen this decline in sea bass that this amendment is following, and so, you know, from the recreational side, we definitely oppose an eleven-inch size limit on those, because of the potential for an increase in discards, due to people fishing through -- If they're only allowed to have two to three bass, they're going to try to get two to three bass as big as possible, and so we oppose that thirteen-inch.

People like myself from North Carolina are in stark opposition of the February and March spawning closure. Not only is that the best time of the year for us to fish, but it's absolutely one of the only near-shore species we have, and it's my understanding that that's probably going to happen, but I just had to get it on the record one more time how much I disagree with that.

You know, not only, in the northern part of the South Atlantic region, do we appear to have a good healthy bass population, but that time of year is the best time of year to fish them, and it's some of the absolute cleanest bottom fishing we do throughout the course of the year.

You know, on the other side of that, some of the commercial guys were a little hesitant to agree with me on that, because of the decreased commercial value that time of the year, and an effort to close it for those two months for them could increase the potential for better earnings other times of year, if they're able to catch those fish.

As I look through the slides that Mike has put up here, which I'm trying not to read off of these slides here, and let's see. Off-season repair and fewer trips, and the one more thing I'll touch on

with that fishery, and, again, not that it's probably going to matter, but, you know, and, several years ago, when I saw this coming down the pipe, I, along with a big majority of the AP, we started voicing our concerns, because of the imaginary line in the sea bass fishery at Hatteras, just south of here.

I've asked questions to everybody that's in the know on the annual survey trips about the DNA, and I learned that the previous DNA study was somewhere around twenty years ago, and I'm hoping that, sometime soon, they'll be able to comprise some viable data to see if that southern and northern stock are mingling, because, in the northern section above Hatteras, all the way to the Mid-Atlantic, it seems that sea bass are thriving.

I mean, you know, with social media, we see what's caught up there, even without knowing the science behind it, and it seems to be thriving. If those two stocks are merging, it seems like where I'm at in North Carolina, which is a big part of the AP members are in that same area, whether it be the for-hire charter boat, regular for-hires, or even the recreational guys, we're at a huge disadvantage, because of the lack of bass south of us, and that's one of the things that is -- It's just a catch with this management.

We're all concerned about it. We also understand how the region is designed, and how the management is designed, and so, you know, we understand why this is coming. It doesn't mean we agree with it, or even think it's viable. It's just sort of is what it is, and so, with that being the end of my rant, in an effort to keep things moving, does anybody have a question for me that I may have missed?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chris. Just one clarifying question. Did you say that the AP was in favor of an eleven-inch size limit or not?

MR. KIMREY: Absolutely not, I don't think. Overall -- So, for the eleven-inch, you know, if you take the science and compare it to the psychology of a fisherman, okay, me being in the for-hire sector full-time for eighteen years, and many years part-time prior to that, I understand how your general recreational angler and many of my for-hire clientele work.

If you say, okay, we're taking sea bass, in the Southeast region, from seven fish to two fish, but we're going to drop the size from thirteen inches to eleven inches, most anglers, if they're like I can only have two fish, even though it's eleven inches, they're not going to pursue eleven-inch sea bass. If they can only have two, they're going to pursue eighteen to twenty-inch bass. They're going to go after those jumbos, and the whole reason that I think it was presented to the AP from the council, the eleven inches, is in an effort to reduce dead discards, or discard mortality, in the sea bass.

Now, like in the State of North Carolina, we have lots of areas, particularly the Morehead City area, where there is a ton of released mortality in sea bass, juveniles, I mean tiny fish, from inches up to eight or ten inches. It's mostly in state waters, and so, you know, I'm not saying there's not a lot of that, and, of course, once you get past the three-mile line in federal orders, you still have a lot of undersized size bass, and, even with the implementation of circle hooks, and trying to teach best practices and such and such -- I understand that the proposed eleven-inch was in an effort to

reduce that dead discard release mortality, but we feel that thirteen inches is a better number. It's maybe a little tougher to achieve that, but it takes away that, you know, desire to fish through a whole bunch of, you know, smaller fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chris. First of all, congratulations on your officially being the chair of the Snapper Grouper AP.

MR. KIMREY: Bear with me as I stumble through this.

MR. ROLLER: You're doing great. I really appreciate you, and I also appreciate you bringing -- For this fishery in particular, the North Carolina perspective is a big deal, and you and I have fished around each other our whole lives, for the most part, and so, first of all, before I ask you a couple questions here, you raised a really good point, that I have harped on here at the council, is regarding all the discards of juvenile fish in coastal North Carolina. I was wondering if you could tell the council a little bit about what you see as a fisherman there, like where people are fishing from and like kind of what is the point of their fishing activity in which they're having all these discards.

MR. KIMREY: I can only speak for about one-third of the North Carolina coast, because that's my range, and, for those of you that don't know me, I spend 200-plus days a year on the water. I'm a full-time for-hire. I do a little bit of commercial fishing, and I have. I've been in Carteret County my entire life, other than my military service time, and, these particular fish, sea bass, I have fished for commercially, for-hire, and recreationally my entire life, since I was a ten-year-old child with my dad commercial fishing these, and there's a bunch of fish that are caught in state waters.

Now, a lot of the discards that Tom and I are referring to, we see in areas -- Morehead City has a deepwater port. It's one of the state ports, and there's areas that you're a half a mile or a mile from the inlet and you have fifty feet of water, and so sea bass congregate in those areas.

Unfortunately, those same areas are places that people use high-low two-hook rigs to target spots and croakers, sheepshead, all this stuff that there's no circle hook requirement, and you use tiny pieces of bait, and so we have a huge -- I would be scared to count the number of juvenile sea bass that are caught just in that one little quarter-mile square area around the North Carolina state port, but, if somebody was to count those, the dead discards probably from that area would shut down the whole Southeast region, and I'm not exaggerating, and we don't catch them just there.

We catch them in our marshy areas, on Oyster Rocks and points, and I spend a month-and-a-half in the Neuse River every year. We catch them up there, and it's twenty miles, or twenty-five miles, from close to the ocean, and sea bass are up there, and so there is a ton -- To summarize and move on, there is a ton of juvenile dead discards. I'm sure, from J-hooks, little, tiny J-hooks, and little, tiny cut bait, and there's no telling. It's a lot.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for that, Chris, and so, you know, obviously, you know, over the whole region, this fishery has seen a decline in landings, and, in our area in southeast North Carolina, we have not seen that decline. I would argue that I've seen a decline, but nowhere near what everybody else has seen. The fishery is still pretty good. It's going to be a tough pill for us to swallow.

I mean, what sort of discussion did you have regarding like what's the worst bad pill, right, and like three fish versus two fish. I see, obviously, you recommended the three fish, and, I mean, we've got to have some closures somewhere, and it's a hard place to be. Like what's that tough pill, do you think?

MR. KIMREY: So, for me, and this varies, and, even in the for-hire sector, it's going to vary depending on your operation. I'm fortunate. I have built my business as a one-man operator on a center console that can fish from backwaters to fifty miles offshore, when the weather is right, and so I'm very flexible.

A lot of operators, like the headboats and the guys that are specifically doing trolling and bottom trips, are not that flexible, and so, for me, a two or three-fish bag limit is okay. I try to be conservation minded. I try to teach my clientele to be conservation minded. Every time one of them gets on the boat from season to season, I tell them what's going to happen, and I prepare them for the next thing that's going to be taken away from us, and I don't say that because I disagree with management.

I say that because that's where we are in the Southeast region. There's too many people, and not enough fish for a lot of these stocks, and I get it, and so two or three fish for me, and most of my clientele, is going to be okay, but that's going to vary as far as how, you know, hard the pill is to swallow for other operators.

You know, for me, the absolute worst part of this, and I'm not going to say we're a niche, but we're a minority, is that February and March closure. That, to me, makes me want to spit fire. I mean, it's terrible. That's the best two months where we're at to catch them, and it's the absolute cleanest bottom fishing that I do throughout the course of the year, and I do a bunch of bottom fishing, everywhere from, you know, fifty fathoms to the backwater, and, I mean, there's almost no bycatch. There's almost no release mortality. We're fishing shallow, and we're using artificial lures. We're mostly catching big fish, and you all are about to take it away.

MR. ROLLER: But the consensus was a slightly lower, shorter season for the three-fish limit seemed to be the preference, right? Like was there any talk about like having a much shorter season for four, or is that seemed to be where everybody landed?

MR. KIMREY: So, yes, that's where we landed as the lesser of all the evils. I'm not going to say the lesser of two evils. I'm going to say the lesser of all the evils.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Chris.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks, Chris, and I was on the council when we went to thirteen inches, and a lot of the rationale was, if you're only going to have a handful of fish, have big fish, so you've got at least a little bit of meat in the cooler, and then, as we were just about to finalize it, then the science folks finally came back and says, oh, you're going to discard so many fish that you really -- You would be better off having a higher bag limit, and a lower size limit, and you're not going to hurt the stocks as bad, and, you know, commercial is eleven, and was there any discussion about an eleven-inch size limit, but still keeping the -- But having the bag limit up at five or six or

something, so you kept the discard mortality from being as high as it is? Was there any discussion on that kind of a balance?

MR. KIMREY: There was, you know, and I can't say entirely, but I would have to say the majority, given the way our vote turned out. Really, and I remember when it went to thirteen. I remember, when I was growing up, it was a ten-inch limit across-the-board, you know, commercial fishing and recreational, and you could keep a pile of fish back then.

I remember when it went to twelve, and I remember when it went to thirteen, and apparently you were part of that vote, and I, you know, I think, in general, most people don't have a problem with that thirteen-inch bass, but the reality is, and I'm speaking off of personal experience, and there's no science to quantify my next statement, but the mindset of anglers, especially in the recreational sector, is changing, and, you know, I really feel like that the best option, and the AP did as well, was to give up a couple of fish and have that bag limit at three, versus two, or six at eleven inches.

You know, the reality is, if you can only keep a couple of fish, you're probably not going to target them. Other than in the spring of the year, I'm not going to say they're a bycatch, but, you know, they're part of your mixed bag when you're little hook bottom fishing, and so you're going to be fishing through a bunch of fish, whether you're keeping six eleven-inchers or three thirteen-inchers, and I think that's the mindset, but, if you take it to two fish at eleven inches, you know, I think there's a potential to increase the amount of discards, and so that was what we decided.

Like I said, it's the lesser of all the evils, and not two evils, and there was some discussion about aligning commercial and recreational sizes. You know, it's really hard, for a lot of the recreational sector, to choke down the fact that the commercial sector can keep those smaller bass, and, I mean, those of us that spend a little time pondering and researching understand where that size limit came from on the commercial side, but it's my understanding that some of that has changed too, and so there was some talk about asking the council to align the size limit for commercial and recreational, you know, and so I don't think we pushed forward a motion, but we definitely talked about that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chris. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Hi, Chris. Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries. I appreciate your comments, and congratulations on the AP chair appointment. You've mentioned lots of heartburn and concerns about the February and March closure. Obviously, when we're looking at bag limits, the higher the bag limit, the earlier the season would close, and our projections indicate, like with a four-fish bag limit, we would close in October, versus, a two-fish bag limit, we would close in January. Did the AP discuss the fact that we could be closing well before that February and March closure, and did they have concerns about a longer closed season?

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, Andy, and, yes, we did talk about that, and that's one of the considerations I left out, and that's sort of why we landed on the three-fish bag, because, if we had the bag any higher -- You know, access is, you know, for everybody, no matter what sector you're in, and access is always the problem, and so, in an effort to stretch out access, that's sort of how we landed on the recommendation of three fish at thirteen, because we did consider, you know, the projections on the closure with the decreased ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions for Chris? All right. I'm going to turn it -- Thank you, Chris. I'm going to turn it over to Mike to start working us through the document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to bring the committee's attention to you have three attachments that are included related to this item, and so you'll have the decision document.

That's what we will be walking through kind of in a more detailed view, but you also have two other documents that I have available, ready to pull up if we need to reference those throughout the course of the discussion, or if you want to have those up, you know, for a visual at any point in the discussion, and those are the draft amendment and the draft codified text. Both of those are available on the council website. They're in your briefing book, but I have them ready to pull up, should we need them in this discussion.

Regulatory Amendment 37 is at its kind of final stage at this point, or final scheduled stage. We have the purpose and need defined for this action, to address declining landings and abundance, and to do so in a more immediate fashion than what would be afforded through other mechanisms while the stock assessment that was completed, the SEDAR 76 update, is undergoing further revisions and incorporating the updated MRIP-FES numbers, and so that was kind of the purpose set forward for this amendment.

It was out of the recognition from the council that the previous iterations of the assessment had identified the need to reduce fishing mortality from harvest and dead discards, due to the decline of black sea bass from the perspective of fishery-dependent as well as fishery-independent data sources.

For today's meeting, we've heard from Chris for the advisory panel recommendations. I'll give a brief summary of the public hearing comments that we received. When we went out, we held two public hearing webinars, as well as took written comment on this amendment, and so I'll give a brief summary of that and direct you to where you can find those comments.

Then we'll go through the actions review, your preferred alternatives, capture any additional discussion that you would like to have, or any changes you would like to have at this stage. When we do that, I will also ask for you to look at your draft rationale, and, if you have any pieces of information that you want added to the document to support the rationale for your decisions, then please include that in your discussion, and we'll try to capture that here, and then, finally, we don't need the kind of the final vote for approval for this.

That would be taken up in Full Council, and that is drafted within this document, and so you'll be able to see it, but I just wanted to kind of note the process, that the final approval would happen in Full Council, rather than in committee.

Moving into the public hearing summary, we conducted webinar hearings on November 3 and November 12. We accepted written comments from October 20 through November 14. There was one comment that was received during the webinar hearings, but this commenter did note that they also submitted a written comment, and so they provided some information during the hearing that kind of correlated with what this commenter submitted in writing online.

We received twelve written comments via the online public forum. There's a link within the decision document for you to view those. Those are available on the council's website. All of the comments that were received online were from the recreational sector, with five of those commenters specifying that they were from the for-hire component of the recreational sector.

I'm going to mostly go through the comments related to the actions here. There were additional comments beyond the proposed actions that were also provided. Those are summarized here at the bottom paragraph, addressing the actions that are included in the amendment, and so one comment specifically addressed Action 1, in reference to the annual catch target, and not necessarily preferring an option, but this comment did state that the black sea bass season in their area extends from April to at least October, and so that's necessary for the function of this commenter's headboat business.

One comment specifically addressed the spawning season, supporting a closure in January, February, or March, and possibly into early April. This was the same commenter that stressed the season in their area, and they needed April through October to be open for the function of their business.

Five comments addressed the bag limit option. There were three that opposed a two fish bag limit and supported a higher bag limit, considering three fish or four fish. There was one that had a higher priority of a higher bag limit, rather than keeping the recreational sector open past October. There was a comment proposing a bag limit of about five fish, and one noted that a bag limit would not be worth the cost. A low bag limit rather would not be worth the cost of fuel and gear.

One comment noted the seven-fish bag limit that's in place may be too much for what the fishery can handle right now, and then there were five comments that addressed the size limit. Two supported keeping the thirteen-inch minimum size limit, one of those noting that there were thinner fillets, less meat overall, in smaller fish, and there were three comments that actually supported consideration of increasing the minimum size limit. Some of the numbers that were suggested were fifteen or sixteen-inch limits, and so that is the public comment summary, and I'll pause here to see if there are any questions about comments that were received or comments that we heard during the hearings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions? I don't see any hands. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so now moving into the actions and alternatives. First of all, Action 1, and Action 1 would establish annual catch targets and revise the accountability measures for black sea bass, such that they would manage to the annual catch targets rather than the current annual catch limits that are in place.

As a reminder, you all went the route of establishing annual catch targets, because, with the incorporation of FES information into the new stock assessment, there was a concern about potentially having to address allocation. If you switch the data metric that's used for the recreational sector, that would slow down the process, and there was a high priority from the council to be able to get this action in place for effectiveness in 2026, and so that's why we're addressing annual catch targets rather than changing ABC and annual catch limits.

There also were concerns with the assessment information and a request from the council to have it looked at again with incorporation of the new MRIP-FES information that will be updated in 2026.

We have three sub-actions. The first one addresses the establishment of the annual catch targets. The second sub-action would address the accountability measures for the commercial sector, and the third sub-action would address the accountability measures for the recreational sector. Thus far, your preferred alternatives for each of these sub-actions would be Preferred Alternative 2, and so, under Sub-Action 1a, that would be to establish a commercial annual catch target of 48,557 pounds whole weight and a recreational annual catch target of 63,143 pounds whole weight.

With these numbers, these were derived as a 50 percent reduction from the most recent five-year average of landings by each of these sectors, and so that's how those numbers were derived. I would definitely point folks to the June 2025 meeting minutes, as there was a lot of discussion during that meeting on kind of where the rationale for these annual catch targets was begun.

The next sub-action is to address the AMs for the commercial sector, and, the change that is going in -- You'll notice a lot of the text is the same in Alternative 2 as Alternative 1. The difference would be that the fishery would close for the remainder of the year if the annual catch target, rather than the annual catch limit, is met, and so that would be the big change, and you all have selected Preferred Alternative 2 for that sub-action, and then, finally, Sub-Action 1c, you selected Preferred Alternative 2, in which case the season for the recreational sector would be set according to the annual catch target.

This is a little different than kind of a quota-monitored fishery, so to speak, in the sense that the season doesn't go until the quota is hit. The season's end date is set at the beginning of the season. The National Marine Fisheries Service announces the season end date at the beginning of the fishing year, which that is April 1, and it is not a calendar fishing year, and so what would happen, presumably, if this goes into place next year, and we're able to get the amendment put into places, the Fisheries Service would announce before April 1 what the end date of the season would be, and the recreational season would go until that end date, and that's when it would stop.

It wouldn't be based on where the landings are. It would be a set start and end date, and so that end date would be based on a projection to get catch to the annual catch target, rather than, right now, it is set to be projected against the annual catch limit, and one of the things to note is there hasn't been -- It's gone the full calendar year for many years now, because the recreational catch has not approached the annual catch limit.

What is projected, with the lower annual catch target, is that there's a possibility that the catch would be projected to hit that target, and so the fishing season, the open season, would not be the full calendar year, as it has been in previous years, and so that is a summary. You've all seen the effects. You reviewed the effects summary at your last meeting. That's included in the document, for you to take another look at if you want to review that again, and it's also included in the amendment document. For now, I can pause and see first if there are any questions, and then if there's any additional discussion that you all would like to add related to Action 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mike, for the presentation, and so, just as a clarification, with projections, we do try to use in-season data, when it's available and so, as the season was long enough, we would try to grab data from the season and then project, based on additional data that we don't have available to us, and so, as an example, if it opens April 1, and we're kind of projecting an October closure, we should be able to at least grab the first three months of the season, and have that available by August, so that we could then refine our projections based on quota monitoring.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other questions? We already have preferred alternatives here. I'll be looking around the room to see if we wanted to modify those. It looks like people are shaking their head no, and so I think we're good here. I don't see any hands. I think we're good to go to the next action, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next is the spawning season closure for South Atlantic black sea bass. Alternative 1 has the current situation of there is no spawning closure in place, and then this is set up as Alternative 2 addresses the commercial sector, and Alternative 3 addresses the recreational sector, and your subalternatives are each month by month what you can use to build the spawning season closure. You can select multiple subalternatives if you want a closure that is lasting multiple months.

Right now, you all have selected as preferred a closure from February 1 through March 31. That would be Subalternatives 2b and 2c, as well as 3b and 3c. That closure would pertain to both sectors during that time of year.

Some of the rationale that you have tied to that, given that it is intended to be a spawning closure, and is intended to provide protection to the stock during this time of their annual life cycle, and that's why the council has gone with selecting both sectors to be closed at the same time. There was some consideration of the commercial sector has its highest landings in January, and so maintaining access for the commercial sector in January, as well as the recreational sector tends to pick up their landings in the springtime, and so being able to have an opening in April for that sector, and so there was some consideration of that in setting those start and end dates for the spawning closure, and a lot of that is captured within the discussion, as well as the amendment document.

So, at this point, you can kind of look through the effects summary, and the associated discussion, and we also have the decision tools for both the recreational and commercial sectors. You went through those in your last meeting, and the AP reviewed those in their meeting. You also have those in your briefing book on the website as well. Those same links are provided to you there.

This table just summarizes your preferred subalternatives associated with some of the other items that you've selected, and so, for example, the subalternative that's been selected for the commercial sector is projecting no in-season closure. There wouldn't be a closure other than that February through March 31 date, and then the recreational sector is addressed later on, as it kind of has added layers with the size limit and the bag limit.

All that information you've reviewed, you have a draft rationale that is kind of been a bulleted form here. It's in more of a paragraph form in your amendment, and so I'll pause here to see if there are any questions, if there's any additional rationale that you would like to provide, or if there's any additional discussion on your preferreds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. One issue I would like to raise relative to the closed season, and you guys discussed this in September, and I think, based on my review of the minutes, the last bit of conversation was primarily between Jimmy Hull and Kerry Marhefka, but you decided not to prohibit fishing for black sea bass.

If you look at your closure language, it prohibits harvest and possession, okay, but you discussed that it's a spawning season closure, that any closure should result in some increase in biomass, and, ultimately, the decision was, in my view, explicit not to include a prohibition on fishing for.

I would say, as a general matter, given discards in the snapper grouper fishery, and certainly for this stock, both commercial, and maybe particularly recreational, given those discard concerns, that any closure you create that explicitly does not prohibit fishing for is at least subject to the argument that it's going to increase discards, right, and you're going to -- In your conversation, you felt like prohibiting harvest and possession is going to prohibit most people from going fishing there anyway, because they're not going to be able to keep the fish.

That being the case, adding another prohibition just on fishing for shouldn't have much effect, because it isn't going to -- You know, people aren't going to be inclined to go out there and fish anyway, and so it closes, in my mind, a legal vulnerability without much additional impact.

One other thing I will mention, if you look in the section of the regulations where this closure would be codified, and that is in 622.193, we are not entirely consistent, but we do generally prohibit fishing for a particular species during the spawning closure for that species. Thus, my strong recommendation, if you haven't gleaned it already, is to include the language to prohibit fishing for the species during whatever closed season you select. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so, back on this action, is there -- Would the committee like to modify the preferreds, change the rationale, make any changes here to what we have? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I agree with the argument. If you can't harvest them, you're not going to be targeting them. I am very cautious about who is going to decide we're fishing for black sea bass. You could be fishing for flounder, or any number of things, and it opens the door to all kinds of misinterpretation, and so I would be very hesitant to go down that path.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm right there with you, and, based on the looks around the table, it looks like the other committee members feel the same way, but, back on the other preferreds, anything that we want to change here? You heard from the AP. Do we want to change anything in this document on Action 2? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I don't want to change anything. I just want to provide the rationale. I understand this is going to be very difficult for North Carolina, but, if we're going to have some part of the year closed, we need to find the best benefit we can, and having a spawning season closure appears to do that, and so I want to provide that rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Anything else? Any other discussion on this particular action and alternatives? I don't see any additional hands. I'm going to pass it back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so Action 3 addresses the recreational bag limit for South Atlantic black sea bass. The current bag limit is seven fish per person per day. There are alternatives considering one fish, two fish, three, or four. Your current preferred alternative is to select two fish per person per day.

There's some discussion associated. There is other states -- Or states within the South Atlantic region mostly have a seven-fish-per-person-per-day limit. Georgia does not, but there has been some discussion about the potential differences between state and federal regulations and how this can affect the efficiency of enforcement and managing the stock.

Previous discussion that you have had related to this noted that over 60 percent of the trips for recreational anglers harvest one, or fewer than one, black sea bass per person, and so that was some of the information associated with the selection of your current preferred. You also examined information looking at the season length associated with a two-fish-per-person-per-day limit, versus other limits, and your discussion, in the September meeting, centered largely around prioritizing the length of the season, keeping the season open for as long as possible, over the potential of an additional fish for the bag limit.

That has been a bit of a summary of the discussion so far, and that's kind of captured in your rationale, and I'll pause here to see if there are any questions about your discussions on this action or any additional discussion or difference of rationale or preferreds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: If we're going to change anything, I think we need to have a discussion here looking at the bag limit, just per the AP's comments. To go back to our discussion at the previous meeting, you know, we beat this horse pretty good, and, you know, part of the rationale, if I'm remembering correctly, is, when we looked at these days, we know those winter days are important, particularly for North Carolina, whether it's December or January and that two fish gets us there, and so that's our tradeoff. Do we want to end it right around Thanksgiving, or do we want to get that December into January fishery? That's a hard tradeoff, and I don't know -- There's no good answer here.

I'm leaning towards two, but you could make me change to three real fast, and so, you know, I'm looking for the rest of the committee and what their thoughts are. I'm looking at Chris, if the AP specifically looked at this, and had any discussion on it, and so I'm on the fence, but still leaning to keeping our preferred alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I think I have to support Tom on this. I know I had a conversation with a headboat captain, and he basically said, when the temperature got below fifty-eight degrees, they were all over the place, and, if we went with a shorter season with the three bag, he would totally miss that timeframe, and so I think I get where everybody is coming from, you know, the three, and it did kind of sound like some folks were more concerned about -- Typically, everybody

seems to be wanting the longer season, but, in this case, it doesn't really seem to play out that way with black sea bass. They kind of sound like they wanted more, they wanted three, but, anyway, I would say we need to stick with two, so we can at least let those guys get those fish when that water temperature gets down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: To that point, that's a really good point, the water temperature, when we hit that about fifty-seven or fifty-eight degrees, and that usually happens around November 20, any given year, and so that gives a good six weeks in there, right, and I know two is a really small number, particularly with these fish, but that's your tradeoff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for those comments. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I do want Chris to kind of weigh into this a little bit, and so I'm struggling a little bit with this one, too. This is the one that I listened to the comments of the AP. I heard the back and forth. It was not a unanimous decision. There were probably about half that really were thinking two, half that were thinking three, and then, ultimately, it came back to that three, and, as a council member, we hear access and opportunity, and so, when I think access and opportunity for the recreational sector, to me that says longer season, and so that's why I'm leaning a little bit more to that two fish.

The folks that were definitely louder were the for-hire fleet, because I get it. A for-hire fisherman, if he has an opportunity, or she has an opportunity, to keep three fish, it's a little bit better of a trip for them. I think this idea of different bag limits for recreational sectors, separate bag limits throughout the seasons, is something that we should be able to continue to discuss, but not in this particular vehicle. That is a great 56 vehicle for us to talk about that.

Do you feel, in the interim, that a two-fish bag limit would be a palatable decision for the council to stay as their preferred two fish? Do you think that's going to be palatable, for you as a for-hire captain, palatable for the AP, to come back and say they didn't go with my three-fish decision?

MR. KIMREY: Well, that word "palatable" is subjective, I suppose. For me, no, if you want an honest answer, but, again, here we are. You know I wake up every morning, look at my phone, figure out what I'm allowed to keep, and take my people fishing. I am a law-abiding citizen.

Now, when it comes to access, and I can only speak for my area, but there are a few others from my area that showed up here, and I wish I would have known they were going to be here, and, if you want a vast knowledge of sea bass fishing where I'm at, there's a couple of them back there that can drop it on you quick, but, for me, definitely everything comes back to access. I mean, absolutely, and, you know, I hate to be the little crybaby up here, but we're losing access to everything, especially in the State of North Carolina, you know, and I could go on this long tirade, but I'm not going to do it. I've been known to do it, but I'm not going to today.

When it comes to bass fishing November and December, it is my opinion, and this is not based on any poll from the AP, but it is my opinion, and I would rather have access to those bass, three bass, from April 1 through October than to be able to catch two bass until December, and we've got a

bunch of head boaters in the back. I guarantee you they're running more trips in April and October than they are in November and December, and that's where that three fish came from, and I pushed.

You know, I pushed a little bit. Like I said, when I first sat down for my first ever at council as chairman of the AP, and this fishery is near and dear to me, and I've paid close attention to this since it first started coming down the pipes, and I would rather be able to catch three until October than to catch two in November and December, and I think the recreational sector and the for-hire sector mostly feel that way, but I can't say for sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm not trying to rush this discussion, because I think it's really important, but we did not get a lot of public input at the public hearing, and so I think, for me, what I would like to do is hear the public input we get during this next public comment period, and come back to this motion, because I feel like that will help us make a more informed decision. We, obviously, have the AP input, but knowing that we're going to, most likely -- It looks like, with the crowd in the back, that we're going to hear from them, and I would rather make my decision after I hear from them than before.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and sounds great. Just for clarity, we don't have a motion on the table, just action. I just wanted to put that out there. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So Kerry, thank you for that. I agree with you. Like, you know, and, Chris, you raise a really good point, you know, particularly when the magnitude of fishing trips come. December is a really weird month in particular, because of the holidays and whatnot. It's a weird business month. It's also a weird month for fishing, you know, and it's kind of all over the place, but, you know, where I'm leaning now is actually, you know, moving to three fish per person, and so we could maximize the - You know, have a little bit better access during that period of the year.

However, I still -- I'm going to go with what Kerry says and kind of like just put a post-it-note on this and come back to this at Full Council, maybe after we hear a public comment, but I'm leaning -- I'm leaning towards the three fish now, given the discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. I appreciate that discussion. With all that being said, let's leave this action as-is for now. We'll readdress after public comment, and I'll turn it back to Mike to go through the size limit action.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair, and, just for the benefit, just because I know that there can be a lot of things going on, for the benefit of the public that are in attendance here, as well as in attendance online, this amendment is going final within the meeting, but the final action that the council will take, the final vote on it, is within Full Council, which would happen on Friday of this week, and so today is not the final day of that vote, just so that everybody can know, and you're absolutely welcome to provide your comments when we do the public comment session this afternoon.

Moving next to the final action of the amendment that is being considered, the recreational minimum size limit for black sea bass, the preferred alternative at this point is the current recreational minimum size limit of thirteen inches total length. The other alternatives that were

considered were twelve inches or eleven inches, considering the range of potentially having it equal to the eleven-inch size limit of the commercial sector.

Most of the commentary surrounding this action to this point has been around the idea of keeping the season as long as possible. For the recreational sector, when it was evaluated, what it would look like going down to a twelve-inch or eleven-inch size limit at a two-fish bag limit, when that combination was put in, there was a very drastic drop in the number of open days for the recreational sector, and so that's why the council has, up to this point, preferred thirteen inches as the size, and so, at this point, I guess I'll see if there are any questions or any additional discussion related to the size limit action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments or questions? I see heads nodding no, and just making sure. No, and it doesn't look like we have any additional comments on this action. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess process-wise, I wanted to direct a question towards the NMFS end of the table. Andy, for processing this on your end, would it be any faster for the council, if they are deciding their preferred is a no action alternative, for this action to be moved to Considered but Rejected, as opposed to staying in its current form?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes. If you're going to choose the no action, we would recommend it be moved to Considered but Rejected. That will help speed things up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But still I don't know that you want to do anything yet. Do you want to wait until after public comment, and then we'll come back to that, and our intent would be to readdress all of these after public comment. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: At this point, then we've gone through all of the actions. I do ask that you all, in between now and when you revisit this in Full Council, please make sure that you take a look at the draft codified text, and make sure it is to -- You know, to your needs, and in line with what you all are thinking, especially as we move there. Once you get to that discussion, there may need to be some redeeming of the text if you divert from any of your preferreds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. All right. Thank you for that discussion. I'm going to kick us over to the blueline tilefish catch level discussion, and, while Christina is coming up here, the first item would be to turn it over to Chris to give us the AP recommendations on blueline.

MR. KIMREY: All right. Blueline tilefish, and so Mike put this in here to keep everybody's blood pressure down. There's actually a potential for increased catch. Thanks, Mike, and so there wasn't a lot of discussion at the AP on blueline tile.. Everybody was excited that the potential to keep more fish was there on both sides.

The one thing that some of the AP members on the commercial side did recommend was, you know, if they're going to increase -- Have a hundred-pound trip limit increase, that it might be a consideration to try to align that to have access year-round. You know, let me just read the slide.

Commercial members stated that an increase to the blueline tilefish trip limit from 300 to 400 pounds may be appropriate, but would more strongly recommend considering an increase of a 100-pound trip limit from January through April to 300 pounds, resulting in a 300-pound trip limit all

year, and so, you know, it would lower the other months by a hundred, but it would spread it out so they have access year-round. That was pretty much the most predominant part of our discussion. Other than that, we were just happy that maybe, especially for the recreational side, we'll have a little longer blueline season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any questions or comments for Chris? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I was kind of wondering. That January to April season, the reason why that was 100 pounds, did you all talk about that? In Amendment 27, the tradeoff was to give snowy grouper 70 percent of their quota in the first half of the year, and the second half 30 percent of the snowy grouper quota. That Amendment 27, if my memory serves me, that trade-off was it. Also, on the part of the January to April, increasing the 100-pound trip limit to 300 pounds, has any analysis been done to see how many times that 100-pound trip limit was met during that January to April time period?

MS. WIEGAND: I was going to say, to my knowledge, it probably would have been done for that amendment, but nothing recently, because this trip limit is not being discussed as part of the abbreviated framework amendment, but, should something like this be discussed in the subsequent blueline tilefish amendment, that analysis could certainly be done.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I brought it to you all before, because the tradeoff was the first half of the season, giving more snowy grouper, and that's why they kept it at 100 pounds, and so the folks to the northeast needed less snowy grouper during that time, and more blueline, and so that was a tradeoff right there for that, and so, you know, I think, in a further amendment, you would look at analysis done to see how it's been operating, something like that, which I brought that up I think at the last meeting, to look at an analysis of increasing the trip limit of, you know, possibly to 400 pounds in the second half, but, you know, you would do that looking at how many times it's been caught, and what has happened, and so I think a full analysis would be a good thing in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that discussion. All right. I don't see any other hands up or questions for Chris. I'm going to pass it to Christina. Christina, are there documents for this now, and can you tell us where they are?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so there are two documents for this up on the website now. There is the amendment document, which we'll use to walk through in place of a decision document, because this is a relatively short amendment, and then there's also codified text. It's Attachment 5a and 5a in your briefing book under the Snapper Grouper Committee.

All right, and so, to get us started, I will just give a very, very brief overview to set the context. You guys have already had the stock assessment presentation from SEDAR 92, but, just as a reminder, because it's relevant for some of the discussion we're going to have, though blueline tilefish is a single genetic stock along the coast, it is broken up into two areas for stock assessment purposes, because of data needs. You've got the northern area, which is Hatteras north, and then the southern area, which is Hatteras south to the jurisdictional line, and so those two stock assessments were done.

You guys received a presentation on that in March, or it was completed in March of 2025, reviewed by the SSC in April and May, and you received a presentation in June. The SSC supported data-limited approaches for both the northern area and the southern area, and so those don't produce overfishing limits, but they do produce ABCs based on total removals, which I'll talk about it again in an assessment.

For that northern area, there was a jurisdictional apportionment done between the area from Virginia north and then the area between Virginia and Hatteras, and you'll sometimes hear that referred to as the sliver, and that was based on SADL, or the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline, survey data that resulted in 70 percent of the northern ABC being allocated to the Mid-Atlantic and 30 percent to the South Atlantic. That 30 percent allocation for the sliver is then added to the ABC for the southern area to get that total ABC recommendation for the South Atlantic, which was 326,800 pounds.

The council did reach out to the Mid-Atlantic Council requesting a meeting to sort of jointly address that jurisdictional allocation. The Mid-Atlantic Council came back and agreed that a joint meeting would be appropriate, but recommended moving forward with the jurisdictional allocation as-is right now, because it had been jointly agreed upon by the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic Council SSCs.

This council agreed that it was worth moving forward at this time, with the intent to be to have a bigger conversation after this amendment has gone into place to talk about jurisdictional allocations between the Mid and South Atlantic, as well as sort of any other larger actions that this council may want to take relative to blueline, and we will talk a little bit more about the rationale for moving forward with this when we get into the council's conclusions.

You can see your values right here in Table 1.3.1, that ABC for the sliver, or the area between Virginia and Hatteras, and then the ABC for the area south of Hatteras, getting you that total ABC. One of the things we haven't brought to you up until this point is a note that those ABC recommendations, because it's a data-limited assessment, were presented in total removals, and, because they were presented in total removals, a portion of that recommended ABC needs to be attributed to dead discards. This should be somewhat familiar. You've dealt with similar issues for scamp, snowy grouper, as well as golden tilefish.

Staff at the council worked with staff at the Science Center to determine what the appropriate proportion of discards were, using data from that SEDAR 92 stock assessment, and so, in looking at the area, that sliver area, for commercial discards, based on location of fishing, it results in about 90 percent of discards for commercial in the sliver being allocated to the area north of Virginia, and just 10 percent being allocated to that Virginia-Hatteras area.

Similarly, for recreational discards, the number of discards reported in each area was converted to pounds, based on the average weight of recreational landed fish, and then those estimates were combined with the southern area estimates and averaged across seven years, and so 2017 to 2023, and that resulted in an average annual discard estimate that's equal to about 3.9 percent of the recreational ABC, or just a little shy of 13,000 pounds.

I just wanted to note that a seven-year average was chosen because it captures recent trends in the fishery, is post sort of any major changes in blueline tilefish management, and, because discard estimates can be incredibly variable, a longer time series was a little bit more appropriate.

The second thing I want to note is that, while it can be done, we did not look at separating out discards by sector and then taking them off, and that's because the current allocations for blueline tilefish are based on a landings stream, and, if we wanted to adjust it so that we would do sector allocations, and then take discards off the recreational and commercial sector separately, that would require a larger review of sector allocations, sector allocations cannot be changed through an abbreviated framework, and so that would change this amendment to a plan amendment, which would then not allow it to go final at this meeting and go into place for next year.

That can be discussed with this larger amendment that's meant to come after this first amendment, and so, since this is sort of new information being presented to the council, before I go over the effects and the council conclusions for this amendment, I do want to pause here and see if anyone has any questions about the analysis, which, if I can't answer, Chip should be able to answer, or any questions on why.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that you got it that something could be done in the future, what is that breakdown of recreational and commercial discards from each sector? You know, the commercial side of it, when you're fishing for blueline tilefish, there's not a lot of discards, because, once the season is closed, you're done. You don't go back there to fish for something else, and so you don't have the discards. I would just like to know that as a FYI, what is attributed, and, given the state of MRIP, and our PSEs and different things, I would just like to know that before we move forward.

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely, and I don't have those numbers off the top of my head, but I believe Chip is working on pulling them up now, so we can get back to you.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That would be fine. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I have concerns, because I thought that the recreational discard PSEs are, for blueline, sometimes over 50 percent, and sometimes over 100 percent, and so this seems to violate the policy in using this for management purposes, and so, yes, and I just have a lot of concerns here. I just don't think we should be doing it. I mean, it feels like taking discards off the top is also, to me, if they're already accounted for in the assessment, like double counting, like a double hit, and then, the fact that the PSEs are so high, it just doesn't make any sense to me here, and so I'm just not in favor of doing it this way.

MS. WIEGAND: So Chip or Judd can correct me if I misspeak, but, to my knowledge, the discards are not accounted for in the assessment, which is why the ABC recommendation is total removals, and so discards have to be accounted for after. The discards are accounted for in the total removal ABC number, and so that total ABC number of total removals needs to be broken out into the removals that are dead discards and the removals that are landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But I don't understand why it needs to be broken out.

DR. COLLIER: So the reason that it's breaking out the discards is because, like Christina said, the total removals is there. That was used to establish the ABC, and then, because discarding is going to occur, both in the recreational and commercial fishery, a reduction from the ABC to a landings-based ACL needs to occur as well, unless we are able to track the fishery that includes the discards in it, and I would caution against that, because, right now, we don't have a great system to get number of discards, either in the commercial fishery or the recreational fishery.

A single-year estimate would be used to monitor that fishery, and I would caution against that. As you said, PSEs are very high, and so that seven-year average reduces the impact of those high PSEs. It's averaging over a longer time series, which should give you higher confidence that the number coming out of that is going to be more reflective of the removals in an individual year, just due to sampling variance that could occur for a data-limited species. With the lack of ability to track the discards on an annual basis, we suggest that you remove the discards from the total catch ABC, in order to get a landings ACL, and use the landings to monitor the fishery.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll say, just to add to that, that would stick with the precedent that was set when you were working on snowy grouper and scamp, which also dealt with the same issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I guess I just -- Because the PSEs are so high, and we say we don't want to use that for management, like how can we trust the data for what we have to take off the top here? Like it just -- It's like we shouldn't use discards for management, but yet we're going to force ourself to use discards for management, and it's almost like we're saying we need to put in a management uncertainty buffer, because the PSEs are so high, and I guess my question would also be isn't there a scientific buffer already in place between the OFL and the ABC, or there isn't, and so the OFL equals the ABC equals the ACL?

DR. COLLIER: There is no OFL for this. It's simply average catch is what was used to determine sustainable harvest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: So, Chip, I'll just make sure I've got it straight, and so you're suggesting that we take this 12,742 pounds off the ABC?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Off the ACL.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Off the ACL, and is that what you're suggesting, the ACL or the ABC? Anyway, is that what you're suggesting, is, if we've got to do something with discards, that that's the number we're talking about?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, that's correct, and, to Jessica's point, you're right. If we were looking -- This is when you're thinking about monitoring this, and you were to say 2026 discards were X. If you had a single year, then you would be relying on that year's PSE, but, because we have a seven-year time series, using the average of that, if you look at some of the approaches that MRIP has reviewed for us in the past for data-limited approaches, some of those included just averaging over a longer time series, in order to get your PSEs down to an acceptable level. This is essentially what that is doing, in order for management -- It's looking at doing that for a longer time series, and hopefully reducing the PSEs for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, when you average it out, what are the average PSEs? What do they come down to?

DR. COLLIER: I am not sure what they're coming down to. I would have to -- I think that would be a custom analysis that I have not looked into, and MRIP is working on this data-limited approaches for us, and hopefully we are going to be getting something fairly soon on the best methods to do that. This is kind of, once again, another Band-Aid for this fishery, to get something in place pretty quickly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy, and then Dewey.

MS. DUKES: Thanks for the information, and I do appreciate the extra opportunity to kind of go through it, and I think I'm just struggling with Jessica, in the way that we just picked the seven-year average, without actually being able to see the numbers, and it's just a little frustrating, and is seven years the most advantageous? Should we do ten years?

DR. COLLIER: So a little bit more reason why we're recommending seven years, and so 2017 was the last time major action took place for blueline tilefish, and so, with that, I believe that's when the season was established for blueline, and so you're going to be changing the discard rates outside of that, and so I don't see going beyond seven years, right, because there were actions that the council has taken to really change that, and, if you shorten, then you're increasing risk of potentially having more of a biased PSE, and that's where we came up with seven years as potentially the best option to go with.

MS. WIEGAND: I'll say, and just as sort of a reason why staff and the Science Center worked together to get this done is, again, because the desire was to take final action at this meeting, and so, without this number, or a delay in sort of determining this value, it would likely not get the new blueline tilefish catch levels in place in the timeline that the council wanted them to be in place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I appreciate that. I just -- I didn't have a lot of chance to digest this, because it just came out, and so it's a little -- It's a little jarring, and I don't know that I agree with it. Dewey, you had your hand up.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I understand the timeliness, and the fish need to be put in the bank. We shouldn't have to -- This should be like plug-and-play after a stock assessment, and the SSC gives a number, and we shouldn't be having two meetings to figure this out, but we need the fish. We can put the big asterisk by this, as we've got a lot of things on the table that has got big asterisks by this going forward, and the fish need to be in the bank for both the recreational and commercial industry.

We can have another discussion of this, but when you're -- We don't -- Both industries don't get much fish many times. This should be like already sitting there, plug-and-play, and it shouldn't be having to take an abbreviated framework, and we can talk about how to change that in the future, if that's possible, and so, even though I don't like it, we've got other fish to fry right now, and we need this in place sometime in the 2026 season, so folks can go fishing. We only get access to a stock assessment about every eight years, and we need the fish, and so let's continue on, and we

can always have another conversation of how we're going to do something better, but getting fish should be plug-and-play, and not a two-meeting abbreviated framework. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm not sure how to get us out of this situation. I could try to come back with some more comments in Full Council, because I think that commercial discards aren't even used, because they're -- The data is just so crappy, and so we're just relying even on recreational discards, and so that -- Okay.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The commercial discards are negligible. It's not -- You know, if you look at this, and this is getting split in half, 50-50 just about, the way I look at it, we ain't got 50 percent of the discards, but, besides that, let's get it done, and we can have the conversation later. It is 12,000 pounds, and so it is twenty-one trip limits, at 300 pounds, and so it is some -- You know, it's giving up some fish, but as we want to make sure that we fight for every pound of fish that we have available to the commercial industry, and I'm sure the recreational industry, also. Let's continue on and have the other talk. Let's get this done and get it finally -- Get it sent to SERO for their timeline, or possible implementation in 2026, sometime before end of June, where the money is in the bank, and our quota reflects our ACLs. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate the discussion. I'll try to ask more questions of Chip off to the side before we get to Full Council, and I'll turn it back to Christina. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I appreciate the comments, and, you know, ideally, what we would have is an ABC that already has accounted for the discards, and due to the shutdown, and other factors, obviously, our teams have been scrambling last minute to resolve this. I feel like we've come up with a workable solution.

I realized that it's not perfect, and that there's a lot of uncertainty around the discard estimates, but I would argue there's a lot of uncertainty around the recreational landings estimates as well, right, and so we need to be thoughtful about having an assessment that's using some uncertain data.

With that said, what Chip had done, smoothing some data over a course of a longer period, I think is helpful, when you have some of these rare-event species, and it kind of minimizes those peaks and valleys that you have, in terms of the estimates, and so I would certainly encourage the council to ask questions, try to, you know, get some more information from Chip on the side, but to move forward, obviously, with this adjustment. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so, with that, I did want to briefly scroll through the effects that were put together. These are probably, as you would expect, biological effects, and increasing catch levels is expected to not result in any negative impacts, since catch is constrained to the ACL and AMs, and, in theory, prevent the ACL from being exceeded, to the extent possible.

Similarly, recreational, and there are landings tables in here, if you want to look at the commercial and recreational landings, in both CHTS and FES units. One of the things I will note is, when you compare the FES landings, converted landings, to the proposed recreational ACL, their results are sort of expected to be neutral. It wouldn't necessarily be an increase or a decrease.

It's hard to compare, because we have that switch from CHTS to FES, and so the old recreational ACL is not directly comparable to the new recreational ACL, but, for both the economic and social effects, it was noted that the commercial ACL would be seeing an increase, and that is meant -- It's anticipated to be beneficial, in terms of additional landings of the species, and additional revenue, from an economic standpoint, and from fisheries access and opportunity to fish from the social standpoint, and, again, for the recreational sector, they're considered to be roughly equivalent, and so there's not really an estimated change in economic benefits to the sector.

For the social effect, it was noted that it's anticipated, based on historical landings, that the recreational sector would be able to continue to fully harvest the ACL, and so, with that, what I really want to go over is the draft conclusions and your rationale for moving forward with this action.

The standard here is you're addressing the SSC's updated ABC recommendation and best scientific information available. The big thing we wanted to discuss in this council conclusions is the decision to move forward with an abbreviated framework, which, of course, cannot address sector allocations, and this is a conversation that the council had on the record in December, and, based on an analysis that Chip presented, it was clear that there was a relatively small difference between recreational and commercial landings relative to current sector allocation percentages.

As a result of that analysis, the council felt that the benefits of implementing that increased ABC were greater than the potential benefits of waiting for a more prolonged process that could address things like sector allocations, and some of the stuff you all have discussed here today, and so that was why the decision was made to go ahead and move forward with this abbreviated framework, with the intent continuing to be to work with the Mid-Atlantic Council to explore jurisdictional allocations through a separate process, and then also consider long-term changes to sector allocations and other needs for the blueline tilefish fishery at that time, and so that is the rationale that is currently on record, but I wanted to make sure that everyone around the table felt that that accurately captured the council's rationale for moving forward with this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion here? This is basically articulating -- That paragraph there is basically articulating what Christina said as we started the discussion, and recapped, and then she kind of reiterated it again here. It's just typed out there. It seems like we're onboard with it, but, also, you'll have a little bit more time to look at the document before we get to Full Council.

MS. WIEGAND: So that's all I would need from you at this time. Similar to black sea bass, a note that the codified text is in your briefing book, and to please look that over before Full Council, and then the intent would be, should the council want to move forward with this, we would do the final motion at Full Council post public comment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's take a ten-minute break. Remember that we have a hard stop at 3:45, but a ten-minute break while we juggle the agenda around a little bit.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Since we're trying to figure out what we can squeeze into this time, we're going to bring Chris back up here, and we're going to go over AP recommendations for items that are not on our agenda this week, and so I'm going to pass it over to Chris.

MR. KIMREY: This will be our other discussion topics from the AP, and I am going to read this slide, just to jog my memory and get everybody thinking about it. Commercial trip limits on sale, and changes in enforcement throughout the region could have strong negative effects on commercial fishermen. Day boats need to be able to drop fish off after hours and turn back around quickly, and I'll stop at this bullet.

It's my understanding -- It's my understanding that there was an issue, I believe in Florida, where a fisherman was coming in, either on a weekend or during closed business hours from the fish house, and trying to turn around quickly, and there was some kind of issue with enforcement, and maybe Mike could explain, or who could explain? Let's let Kerry do it.

MS. MARHEFKA: Poor Mike, and I'm going to take him off the hook. My understanding is -- Well, the council actually knows all of this, but, quickly, I will just say that a fisherman was cited for, and I'm probably going to get like the very specifics wrong, if anyone is listening, but the gist of it is he came in, delivered his fish, but the fish house was not open. The fish was removed from the boat, but the fish house was not open.

He went back offshore to fish again, but, because the fish house was not open, it was therefore considered not the -- It depends on how we look at it. It was not the sale, and it was landed. It was removed from the vessel, but it was not technically --

MR. KIMREY: Sorry. Bill of sale, real quick, Kerry. Bill of sale, and that's where this circled back to. Sorry, and I didn't mean to interrupt, but it was a bill of sale issue. Do you remember, and is that --

MS. MARHEFKA: I remember, and, I mean, I don't know if that's the specific term I would use, but what it comes down to is the definition in the federal regulations of the end of a trip. If it's the end of the trip, what sale means, and so, therefore, how the trip limit is defined and when you can start a new trip again.

MR. KIMREY: Got it, and so not bill of sale, but it had to do with the end of the trip and when he could go back fishing, and what defined the end of that trip and starting the next trip, and the concerns were -- It's my understanding also that, if that particular enforcement episode was right, deemed right, that this could be problematic for other places that have been doing the same thing for a number of years, and so we bring this up because we're trying to avoid that potential problem. Sorry about the whole lack of proper terminology on that.

The next bullet, with the loss of waterfront landing areas and trip limitations, fishermen need flexibility to sell their catch efficiently. Some fishermen need to travel long distances to get the best price. Lower flexibility on sale process limits their ability to shop around. The definition of sale needs clarity.

Often, larger harvests are initially taken on consignment, and the money is not exchanged until the sale is inspected and priced, and that goes right back to that -- You know, that's a continuation of

the previous few bullets. Just because you've offloaded the sale, you should not be limited as to when you could fish again, or offload your catch rather, to start your next trip, and the last bullet is several recommendations for potentially revising regulations in the report. Does anybody want to add anything to bring that back to perspective for the people that may be listening that didn't understand all of it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Chris, I think that probably what's important, and I sat at the meeting, and so I had the privilege of hearing the entire conversation, but if you could just speak to the fact, again, that, while this was an isolated incident, in this case that happened in north Florida, and particularly, I think, in this case, it happened during the open red snapper season, but, if the interpretation of this rule -- Right now, this rule is not being interpreted the same way throughout the region.

You all had a discussion of, if this rule becomes interpreted the way it was in that instance, what the effects would be, because are there multiple fish houses that are closed on Sunday, and all of these things here, and if you can just sort of make sure the committee understands that, while this is a small issue in one area, it has the potential to be a bigger issue for fishermen throughout the region, if that's your recollection of the AP comments, which it is mine.

MR. KIMREY: That is my recollection. I'm just having a hard time putting it into understandable words, but, yes, and sometimes examples work better for me as an explanation. The creek I fish out of, there's a commercial guy, and he literally sells all of his fish to one of our AP members. It's an hour-and-a-half drive with no traffic, and he does that every -- He's a full-time bottom fisherman, and he does that every trip, and, a lot of times, he gets in in the middle of the night, or late at night, or whatever, and, during snapper season, if the weather is right, they immediately want to turn around.

He might have several trip limits of fish, which puts him inside of the law, but, with this example, you know, without a defined region-wide definition of what is an offloaded fish, that terminates that trip and starts the next trip, there could be the potential for this same thing to happen to him, just because he offloads on his dock, packs his fish, gets on his boat, and leaves again, and he's not going to do that trip, three hours round trip, any more times than he has to. Even if he's catching his fish legally, without a definition of when that trip ended and the next one starts, it could be a problem, and so that's what this is all about, trying to avoid that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Last thing, just for clarification, you said he could have several trip limits worth of fish, but what -- You mean not on the boat. You mean they have been offloaded at different times, and then consolidated to make that hour-and-a-half trip, and so the place he might have several trip limits worth of fish is actually in the vehicle to go, you know, or on the dock, being consolidated, but never on the vessel, correct?

MR. KIMREY: Absolutely. Never on the vessel, and he is probably the most law-abiding snapper grouper fisherman I've ever met, and he will do whatever he has to do to stay within the law, but sometimes, in this episode, with this particular enforcement person, you know, it kind of opened a

can of worms, and that's why we're seeking a proper definition, in an effort to avoid this being a problem region-wide, for everybody that is just trying to make a living.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Law enforcement? Matt.

MR. WALIA: This is Matt Walia, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and so I just wanted to provide a couple of things on clarity on that. I've talked to some of our folks as well from that, and so a trip is defined. It's there in the regs. It starts when you leave the dock and you come back to the dock. That is a trip, and so there's no ambiguity between that. That's when a trip ends.

The sale is in there as well, and that includes possession until it's made to the dealer, and so if that vessel, the vessel owner, is in possession, whether it's on the boat or some sort of combination of possession of landing and storage, and so I get that some of these guys may be further away.

This officer -- The intent of the law is for a vessel not to possess more than the daily trip limit., and so what we need to see is the accountability of the dealer, whether it's a transaction, some sort of accountability that we can see showing that that fish was transferred over. If that's it, then the vessel now doesn't have that daily trip limit. When that next day starts, you can go out and fish, and so I know there's some possibilities we can look at when the fish house is closed on the weekend, but, in this scenario that's being explained, that was still in possession of the boat. It was not sold to the dealer. Therefore, he was still in possession of the daily trip limit.

What we're really looking for is that accountability from the dealer. I think it came up at the last meeting, in September, about, even if it's closed on the fish house, there can be some sort of transaction electronically, or phone records, something to show us, because that's there in the regs as well, that, if we go to a dealer, and they possess multiple trip limits, they need to show us records that they have of when that fish was offloaded and when the transactions occurred, and so, that way, it's off the vessel, and the owner's responsibility, and then we can see that tracking from the dealer, and that would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, this is an important conversation. I'm trying to figure out how we have this -- Flesh this out, and when, because this will determine very important decisions we make when we look at the council's workplan, because, Matt, I appreciate that, because that's sort of how it had been handled to my knowledge, like in my state.

If you came in on a Sunday, and your dealer wasn't open, you know, you would put your stuff in his cooler, and maybe fill out your trip ticket, that showed, you know, when your trip ended, so that you had that on your end, and the fish was left on the physical property of the dealer, but you didn't necessarily have the payout slip from the dealer, and that had been considered okay.

If what you're saying is that that is okay, and that everyone throughout the region will be accepting that as being okay, then we don't necessarily have to go through all this, you know, rush, this regulation change that we're getting ready to rush through, and so it's really critically important, because, just to be clear, the council's intent of a trip limit is, when that fish is offloaded from the vessel, that's the end of that trip, and, therefore, that's the amount of fish from that trip, and then you can leave again when that fish is off the vessel.

MR. WALIA: When it's in possession of the dealer, and so a vessel can still put it in a fish box on the dock, but, if they don't make that transaction, they are still possessing that daily trip limit. That's what we're saying, and so the officer -- I do know, particular to northeast Florida, our local officers talked to all the offshore patrol vessel officers associated in Florida and FWC, and they were all clear, and they're enforcing it the same, and so it seems like there's some confusion thrown out that it's getting enforced differently in different regions, but, to my knowledge, the best I know, everyone is enforcing it the same.

That's something we can bring up again at the LE AP, if needed, but, yes, I would say -- I mean, this level of accountability is something, and we need that, right? Without effective monitoring, and there's no VMS, and there's no pre-landing notification messages coming in, and so we have a really difficult time in knowing when and where these boats are coming into, and so that's why it's critical to get that accountability from the dealer, before a vessel goes back out and tries to get their next limit, to avoid any confusion kind of what's getting brought up and possessing multi-trip limits. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so there's other hands going up. I have Shep, then Dewey, then Andy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those of us who follow the regulations, the text of the regulations, it's not really the definition, or it's not the definition of trip, which is contained at 50 CFR 622.2. The language that requires trip limits, or it says commercial trip, and I'm reading from 50 CFR 622.191, but that's the section that says that trip limits are limits on the amount of applicable species that may be possessed onboard, landed, purchased, or sold from a vessel per day, and, as far as I know, that language has been consistent throughout the time that this region has had trip limits in the regs. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, I kind of forgot what I was going to say, but I think I was wondering about -- Like couldn't you unload on a dock, and take a picture of your trip limit in your thing, and send it to your dealer? It's got a timestamp, but I'm not sure -- Listening to Shep, here's the regulation, and so it's your arrival. A trip is ended of arrival at the dock, or unloading of your catch or something. I mean, it's either -- Is everybody clear what the issue is? It seems like, between Matt, Shep, some other people in northeast Florida enforcement, and I don't know. I still don't understand what the -- Never mind.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, first, I think, in answer to your question, Dewey, I don't think everyone is clear with regard to their understanding of the issue, right, and so we are having different people interpret the issue differently. What I was going to share is, you know, we want to make sure we have enforceable regulations for law enforcement, right, to avoid bad actors. We also want to provide flexibility, where we can, to the commercial fishing industry, to allow economic activity, right, and so that's the balance that we need to figure out here.

We, I think, discussed yesterday, OLE talking about this topic, and I think it would be really important to get some feedback directly from the AP with regard to, obviously, law enforcement of these provisions.

Like you're suggesting, Dewey, whether it's a photo, whether it's some other documentation, accountability, and what could that look like, and is it different than what we're doing currently that could meet both law enforcement needs as well as the fishing industry needs, and I will say the bigger concern I have is this isn't just isolated then to the South Atlantic, because the same definition applies in the Gulf, and other portions of the region, right, and so we have to kind of think about this holistically as well with regard to any sort of regulatory change.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I don't know what the next steps are, but Amy.

MS. DUKES: Myra, yesterday, we looked at the list for the Law Enforcement AP, and I am pretty sure this is on it, correct? Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think you were asking about next steps, and it's clear to me, based on the end of this discussion, that we're back to where I thought we were going to be, which is we need to make changes to the regulations, and so it seems like we're on track for that, to have the discussion of where that happens, if this is not the place, and I believe that we're supposed to have that discussion, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I have it listed under Other Business, and this is listed as an item for the Law Enforcement AP, and so we need that input, also. All right. I appreciate this discussion. Sorry. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So I just want to bring up part of the definition for sale or sell is listed as attempting to transfer or sell or barter, and I'm curious, and I know there's an enforcement challenge that's with the attempting part, but that's also in the CFR, and so it seems like we're overlooking that definition, but using another definition, and I just want to get clarity on -- Is that definition of sale or sell that's in the CFR -- Does that matter in this case, or is it based on how the definition is written in another part that's superseding it?

MR. GRIMES: Can you -- What section did you read from? I mean, that's the applicable definition. That would be a definition of sale, but all I said is it's sold from a vessel per day. In my view, there must be some way for a vessel to come back and actually conduct the transaction and get -- Sell the fish and get them off the boat when the fish house is closed, right? Maybe you have some arrangement in advance, and you can create some paperwork.

What I heard from enforcement is that they're looking for some accountability, some trail to show that that transaction occurred, right? If you don't have that, you have no evidence of a sale, of an attempted sale, or something else. If some individual did attempt a sale, and had some evidence, and presented that in the case of, you know, charges, or questions being raised by enforcement, I'm sure they would respond accordingly. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Shep, and I appreciate this idea of some sort of documentation accountability, of actions that are happening in my state, because this is a business decision for a dealer to be closed on a Sunday, or to have normal hours, and so if a boat, which isn't going to have a business decision that's going to be accountable from an 8:30 to 5:00 capacity, there is a mechanism in play.

I want to make sure that the mechanism that's in play is in fact legal, and is providing that accountability, and so how it's been happening is the cooler is open, the boat comes back, they offload into a vat, they put a piece of paper on top of that fish that says vessel name, date, what have you, you know, and they turn around, load up ice at three in the morning, and turn and burn, and they're back fishing, and then the dealer knows it though. There's a text message record. Is that an accountability, of, hey, so and so, I just offloaded a bunch of fish in there in your cooler, and I'll see you in three days?

MR. WALIA: So, I mean, the main part of things is we need records on when that fish was landed somehow. You know, you may want to look into does it need to be a secured lock box, instead of an open cooler, so people aren't stacking up, but the main goal is so a vessel does not have multi-day limits in their possession. That's the intent, is it involves the vessel, so we can show some sort of accountability and records that that fish was landed and transferred to someone, and that suffices the law that's written in there for the regulations, if that helps.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We are less than one minute away from our hard stop. We are going to have to push this discussion to Other Business. Can we flip to the next slide for the AP, to see what that is? Okay, and so, Chris, can you just run through this last slide on the other discussions from the AP?

MR. KIMREY: Yes, and so we've already talked about the elections. I was elected chair, and Haley is in the back. She took my seat as vice chair, and then our last bullet is recommended greater consistency among federal closure timing announcements, particularly noting the delay in announcing the closure of commercial red snapper in 2025, and, you know, I think everybody knows what happened there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. Thanks for running through that really quick, and so, with that, I'll turn it back to the chair, but I think we're on a break to try to get set up for public comment.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Yes, and thanks everybody. We'll break until four o'clock, or a little before, so that we're ready to start public comment at four, or public hearing at four.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 10, 2025.)

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DECEMBER 11, 2025

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Hilton Garden Inn Outer Banks/Kitty Hawk, in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on Thursday, December 11, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. As we're getting started here, we're trying to figure out, for this added webinar council meeting that would occur in January, the dates of availability that people are supposed to send. Is it truly January 22 through 29? The 22nd is a Thursday, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: That is correct, and so we could -- I mean that there's nothing wrong with a Thursday, and so we could do it that day. We could do it on the 23rd, the 26th, Monday, and the 27th is open, and the 28th and 29th is when we have the Habitat AP webinars, and that's in the afternoons, right, and so that whole week of the 26th in the mornings is wide open.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right, and they would just email you their availability.

MS. BROUWER: Yes. We can do a doodle poll, and that's fine.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see thumbs-up and everything, and so I think, Myra, that you said we're looking for a two-hour block.

MS. BROUWER: I mean, I think, at the most two hours. I think you guys can knock it out in an hour-and-a-half or less.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. We're going to get going back in Snapper Grouper Committee. We are on Snapper Grouper Fishery Management -- Okay, and there's a bunch of side conversations, but I'm going to keep going here, and so we are in Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision, Amendment 61, and so, instead of going straight to Chris, we're going to let John Hadley do a little bit of an overview, and then we'll go to Chris, to give the AP recommendation, and so I'm going to turn it over to John.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so what I'm bringing up is Attachment 5b in your briefing materials, and I just want to give -- Thank you, Jessica. I appreciate that, and I just want to give a brief overview, to orient everyone on Amendment 61. Again, then turning it over to Chris for the AP recommendations.

As everyone may remember, Amendment 61 seeks to evaluate species managed under the snapper grouper fishery management unit, to better align the management obligations that you have with Magnuson-Stevens, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, with sort of some of the potential data issues, and the potential stock assessment issues, that may be seen with, you know, some of those fifty-five species, and so the amendment is really looking at seventeen species specifically, and with the potential to either remove those species from the fishery management unit or perhaps designate them as ecosystem component species and, in that case, full federal management measures may not be necessary.

You're doing this with the intent to reduce regulatory burden and free up capacity to dedicate to other species within -- That are in need of federal conservation and management within the snapper grouper fishery management unit, and, again, really looking at three major options here. One is

either maintain the species under full federal management, two is remove the species from the FMP altogether, or three is designate them as ecosystem components.

With that, I have a couple summary slides here from the Snapper Grouper AP's most recent discussion of this. They discussed this, had a pretty lengthy discussion on it, and a couple summary slides that go over the AP's considerations. Excuse me here. Technical difficulties.

The next slide will include a summary table, and so that's sort of their consensus, because they had a long -- As I mentioned, a very in-depth conversation on it, but they came up with a consensus set of recommendations that's captured in a table, and so, without further ado, I'll hand it over to you, Chris.

MR. KIMREY: Thanks, John, and, yes, we had a lengthy and pretty good discussion about this, and I think we all learned a lot. We didn't realize that there were so many of these species that have never really had a stock assessment, and, to summarize, we came up with a table. We voted not necessarily species to species, but we kind of fumbled around and ended up with a list for our recommendation.

Most of the stuff either had to do with -- Even though we understand it's unlikely in the near future that some of these species will have a stock assessment, and there's any real management that can go on, a lot of them we were scared to completely remove from the FMU, just because of the potential for overfishing if there's no SG permit requirement and things like that, and so, John, if you would throw the slide up there, and this goes -- This is the whole list, and this is different than the one I was talking about.

This is the list we came up with, and I'm sure that you've all seen it, and we'll see it again, and, again, through the discussion, our biggest concern with, you know, some of the stuff, is, even though a lot of times they're incidental, even on the commercial side, the potential to target them commercially, you know, and outside of a true commercial fishing situation, if they're removed from the FMU, somebody with a commercial license could just keep lots of them, and so we were really scared with, you know, the queen snappers, and the cubera, and you see the list going on down. A lot of the other stuff is lower value commercial, less desirable on the rec side, and we just decided to put on the other side of the list, and that's the simplified version of a very long discussion we had.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. Instead of going to questions, I'm going to let John Hadley start talking about the document, and then, as we go through it, maybe if you have questions for Chris, we can go back to those AP comments, but we also had four council members there at the AP meeting as well that can kind of help describe the discussion. In the decision document itself, in addition to that nice table, there's some comments that are on specific species that are underneath the table in the decision document, and so thank you, Chris. With that, I'm going to turn it back to John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so I'll move further down in the document here, and, really, the intent here is just to orient the discussion, sort of to tee it up, and provide a reminder of what was discussed and requested at the last meeting, and so, at the September meeting, you reviewed the decision document for this, and it included information, a lot of background

information, on ecosystem component species, sort of what that means, what that entails, how other councils have addressed it.

Additionally, you reviewed how different state agencies may be able to manage species, both in state waters and potentially in federal waters, and the different sort of mechanisms to do so based on the governance of each state.

Another note is you also approved the amendment for scoping, and so we'll get into a brief overview of the scoping comments that were received, and, also, you had a request for this meeting, and so I'll go over that briefly, because it will make a lot more sense once we get into the decision document, but you requested a discussion of developing ecosystem management objectives as they relate to ecosystem component species in the FMP, which will sort of be the first big ticket item that we get into.

You also requested information on the extent of measures that can be implemented for EC species in relation to retention limits, sort of how restrictive these measures can be without being considered for conservation and management, and then you wanted to revisit the list of species to include in the Amendment 61.

I also wanted to remind you that you did pass a motion to initiate an annual report of commercial landings for all unmanaged species and ecosystem component species in the region, and so that will be an annual report that will come to you for the first time in the fall of 2026, and so looking -- Staff is looking to develop that through the first part of next year and present a draft to you in the latter half of the year, and, really, the idea here is to sort of use the Mid-Atlantic's template on their report for unmanaged species and apply that to the South Atlantic region.

For the objectives for this meeting, I'll run through here, and I'm happy to answer any questions before we get into the big-ticket items, but I'll review the scoping and AP comments, and really the ask of you today is to provide feedback on the draft ecosystem management objectives, provide feedback on the species that you would like to consider in Amendment 61, and it certainly can remain -- All seventeen species can remain in this amendment, but we did want to have a discussion on that, and feedback on measures that should be further considered in the amendment, and so I'll take a quick pause here to see if there are any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so I'll start off with going over the summary scoping comments that were received, and so staff prepared a scoping document, and also a presentation. These materials were provided via the council's website, and there was a public comment period that was open from October 27 to November 14 of this fall, and the scoping materials are still on the website.

There were two written comments that were received during the comment period. Both of these are included in your briefing materials, and so, if you want -- I would encourage you to read those in full. However, I'll provide a brief summary of the two comments that were received. Commenters noted that they felt there was not sufficient reason to remove all seventeen species from federal management, or reclassify them as ecosystem component species, noting that some of them did not meet the criteria to remove the species from federal management. They noted that

several species are caught in the recreational fishery. Also, eliminating annual catch limits and accountability measures may increase the risk of overfishing.

It was noted that states do not manage some of the species, and others rely heavily on federal rules to be able to manage those species, and removal from a federal management plan would reduce catch and discard data collection, potentially.

In the comments, it was noted that, if the council proceeds with this amendment, there was a preference for ecosystem component species designation over full removal from the fishery management unit, and noting that ecosystem component species could still be continued to -- Should still be continued to be monitored, and data collection efforts applied to those species. Finally, both commenters urge the council to select the no action alternative and retain all species under full federal management, and so any questions on the comments that were received?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Next, we will jump into a discussion on ecosystem management objectives, and so these -- You know, these are -- This is the first time you're seeing this, and so this is a -- Please keep in mind that these are draft.

We're looking for your input on these, but I'll start off by noting the definition of ecosystem component species, and so these are stocks that a council, or the Secretary, has determined do not require conservation and management, but desire to list in an FMP in order to achieve ecosystem management objectives, and so that last highlighted point was what was discussed at the September 2025 meeting, and the committee noted that it would be beneficial to identify ecosystem management objectives that could be addressed in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan through the designation of ecosystem component species.

Since those objectives do not currently exist, staff has come up with a draft list in the following table for you to review and modify, and so I'll go over these kind of a little bit of a high level, but I do want to introduce them, and, again, you know, we're really looking for, you know, does this cover subject matter, and is this a subject matter that you would like to consider, and are there other objectives that you would like to consider in relation to ecosystem management objectives and ecosystem component species.

Draft Objective 1 looks at sustainable fish populations, and so the idea here would be to account for both single species and multi-species interactions. Objective 2 examines ecosystem structure and function, and so promote healthy and resilient ecosystems that consistently provide ecosystem services, including fisheries, and then also conserve biodiversity and trophic linkages.

Objective 3 covers governance and data collection. Three points here are to monitor and manage catch and discards of target and non-target species in the snapper grouper fishery, promote data collection, monitoring, and scientific research, and encourage interagency and regional collaboration.

Then, finally, Objective 4 is integrate environmental variability, which can include adapting to the impacts of environmental variability on species productivity and habitat suitability, and promote proactive and adaptive approaches to respond to changing ocean environmental conditions, and

so, again, a couple of discussion questions there, but I'll hand it over to the committee, but, you know, we're looking for, you know, feedback on do you feel like these draft objectives are appropriate for the FMP, and are there other ecosystem management objectives relative to other objectives relative to ecosystem component species that you would like to add?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. I had a question for you, and so how would these objectives work? So, like in the FMP, we have some like goals and objectives, and then, also, inside the Snapper Grouper FMP, you would have like goals and objectives specific to the ecosystem component species, and is that how it would work? It's kind of like an overarching thing for the whole FMP. This is just the component that would be for the ecosystem component species?

MR. HADLEY: That's a great question, and I think we could have further discussion on that. I think, right now at least, these would be sort of ancillary to the overarching FMP goals and objectives. They would be specifically ecosystem, and so they could either be added to the FMP goals and objectives or a separate set specifically for ecosystem management objectives, but, you know, as far as the avenue of these making it into the FMP, I think that process would be similar to how you've recently updated your FMP goals and objectives, where you discuss them, you finalize them, and then this amendment would be the avenue, so to speak, where they would become part of the fishery management plan.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Well these look pretty good to me, but I'm looking for some comments and feedback on these. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, yes, John, I think that you do capture quite a bit in these draft objectives, and I apologize for not going back and looking at it myself, but were there draft objectives articulated for the current EC species, and then, in relation to that, how these play into that?

MR. HADLEY: To my knowledge, there weren't specific ecosystem management objectives in the overarching FMP goals and objectives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so that was part of my thing. Since they don't exist now, this would be creating them, and so you would have kind of like the overarching things for the snapper grouper species, and then like a separate section there that would be like here's our goals and objectives that have to do with the ecosystem component species inside snapper grouper. That's kind of -- That's why I was -- I had the same question.

MS. DUKES: Thanks. That helped a lot. I appreciate that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, John, and then we'll go to Jimmy.

MR. HADLEY: So, just to kind of keep in mind on, you know, how these may be used, you know, I think that the idea is that, once these would be established, they would be tied into the council's rationale. If the council does add additional ecosystem component species, that would be captured in the council's rationale for that, and sort of tying back those management decisions, or those management decisions, to these objectives, and so that's kind of how they would be -- Almost a guiding document, if you will.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so, just looking at this, the first bullet point of our Objective 3, monitor and manage catch and discards of targeted and non-targeted species in the snapper grouper fishery, and so, just thinking of like one of the recommended removals to EC was banded rudderfish. Currently, that's on our vessel logbook. It's there, and so I would assume that it would remain there, so that we can collect. That's how it's -- It's just going to remain, and so -- Okay. I'm just talking that out, and trying to think about how you're going to do that, because, if you shift it over to ecosystem, is there going to be another page for ecosystem, or it just remains in with the rest of the species that we're trying to gather that on?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and you're hitting on some of my questions as well. I have some other questions too about kind of how this would work, but Andy had his hand up. There's lots of hands going up, and so we'll go to Andy, and then maybe I'll ask my questions, and then we'll go to Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so Jimmy is kind of hitting on one of my broader concerns, right, which is these objectives are comprehensive, broad-based, and they pretty much cover everything that wouldn't be themed in need of conservation and federal management, right, and so we're either going to have ecosystem component species or we're going to have federally-managed species.

Then the question remains, and Shep and I were just talking about this, is what's the purpose of the ecosystem component species, because a lot of what I'm seeing in here I feel like would be things we would be doing for species in need of conservation and management in the first place, and have we really changed anything, other than we don't have annual catch limits, potentially, to have to set for these species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I asked John to go to this table, because this kind of helped me during the AP discussion, and I guess I can use this to ask my question, and so, if you look across the top, and this is kind of getting to what you're asking, Andy, and, if you go across the top, you have like status quo, maintain federal management, and so everything would kind of stay the same.

You have remove from the FMP altogether, and then you have these four categories, or three categories, of ecosystem component, and I guess one of my questions is making sure that we can do this this way, and like so Number 3 was ecosystem component, with no other management measures, and 3a is ecosystem component and require the current federal permit, and 3b is ecosystem component plus some type of reporting, which is what Jimmy was asking, and so I guess that one of our questions is, or one of my questions is, if you put things --

Since we don't have anything defined for what is ecosystem component, and what is required for that, I assume that we are allowed to put something in ecosystem component, but still require a federal permit, or still require the reporting that Jimmy is bringing up, because that's technically not a management measure. That's part of the question, and so Shep, and then I'll go back to the list of hands.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Well, the term "conservation and management" is very broadly defined in the Magnuson Act. It's going to include reporting, permitting, all of those, and so those are viewed, in and of themselves, as conservation and management measures,

but I don't think -- I would not frame the question that way, right, and I think the question is, if you designate something as an ecosystem component species, how much can you do to regulate that species that's not in conservation, or not in need of conservation and management, but keeping in mind that you already regulate the larger fishery that's targeting, or not targeting, but incidentally harvesting, those species, right?

While I have the mic, if I could, if you think about something Dewey has repeatedly raised before this council, it's the fact that he has to report everything he catches to GARFO, because he has a GARFO permit, right, and so, all of those vessels that are out there operating with the South Atlantic commercial permit, we can require them to report, and I think we do, in some instances, require them to report everything that they harvest, regardless of whether it's a managed species.

You don't need to have an ecosystem component species in order to report on it. You're already getting that, right, if it's managed or not, at least from the vessels that are already permitted, which is the vast majority of the activity out there. In terms of permitting, you would have to justify how that permit is needed to pursue an ecosystem management objective.

As I have advised this council in the context of bullet and frigate mackerel for dolphin wahoo, and other discussions with this, I think that's a high hurdle, because requiring the permit is requiring the permit to harvest that fish, and so I think that's a tricky rationale to build, but that doesn't mean you can't do it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I'm going to go back to my list. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I initially raised my hand to say to Jimmy that, technically, as Amy likes to remind me, it doesn't matter if it's written on the logbook form or not, we're supposed to report every single species that we catch on a trip, and so, in theory, everything would still be reported, but I guess my additional comment, that has since come to the top of my head, is I'm starting to feel, honestly, more and more uncomfortable with a lot of this, because, for me, the only two options are -- I actually really like the AP's list, is sort of where I land, minus white grunt, which I would move, but I'm not comfortable really with anything other than 1 at this point, or 3a, and so that's just where I'm standing at the moment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so, for me, I'm trying to think back of what are we trying to gain here, and if we go back to the purpose and need of doing this, and I would like to read that again, and then I thought it was because we don't -- We can't conduct enough stock assessments to get scientific information to manage these, and so we were going to remove them from the fisheries management unit, so that we weren't required -- They wouldn't fall into the requirement of having to conduct a stock assessment, because that's our biggest weakness.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's not just stock assessment, and so I just want to go back, and maybe John can, John Carmichael can, explain this better than I can, but, before the ACLs were required, you know, with one of the reauthorizations of Magnuson, and so, when the original folks set up the Snapper Grouper FMP, and they threw everything and the kitchen sink in there, basically anything that people could possibly take, and then, in the management system we have now, where we have

to have these ACLs, and not just are we going to have a stock assessment for something, but we just don't have the data to really tell us much about some of these species.

It's almost like, to me, we're just kind of hurting ourselves thinking that, sometime in the future, twenty years from now, or thirty years from now, that we're going to magically have the data that we need to adequately manage some of these species, and so, when we were talking about the recreational permit, the federal recreational permit, and what species are going to be required for that, and then now you saw these state EFPs, and thinking about, as states set up state data collection programs, should states really have all fifty-five species in their state permit, because that's kind of unwieldy.

As you heard from Florida's EFP, people are very confused about what is even in the list of fifty-five species. We're literally arguing over the phone with people who are taking grunts, and they're saying this is not in the fishery management plan, and we're like yes it is, and they're like show me the regs, and they are saying, but I was taking these, and I was using them for bait, because I didn't think they were in the FMP, and so you've got people that are fishing certain ways, and you've got states trying to do state data collection programs, and they can't really do those programs that the council has really asked us to set up, because we're doing this instead of a federal recreational permit. You really can't do that for fifty-five species, and so you've got a lot of challenges here.

I agree with you guys that not requiring the federal permit is a pretty big hurdle, because then those species could be taken by state boats that don't have the federal permit, and so it's kind of a way around the commercial permit, but let me turn it to John Carmichael to speak a little bit to this.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Jessica, and I think you hit on a lot of the good points, and why we're here. Just a few things to add is I remember talking, one of the earlier times when we pulled some species out of the FMU, and there was discussion of historically how did things get in there, and people who were on the council way back then, when they first did this FMP, said, well, we just tried to be all-inclusive. We didn't know a whole lot about the fishery, and we didn't know a whole lot about these species. We tried to get everything we could think of that anybody could catch, because, way back then, that seemed like a reasonable way to go.

Along comes SFA, with hard quotas on everything, which was not how this council managed for twenty years, but that changed the whole ball game. You have quotas on these things. You have ABCs set by the SSC, an extremely frustrated SSC, because, for a lot of species, they don't even have accurate landings, and what are we supposed to do, is what the SSC asks, and we don't have information to set an ABC that prevents overfishing, and we have no idea what overfishing means.

I remember telling them that tough, and you have to do it. Carolyn was like how? How? You know, and where's the red-face test that we don't have enough information that we can say we can, and I'm like, well, the lawyers say you have to, and so the buck stops with you, and come up with a number. They came up with a number. They're set on the third highest, and it seems to have worked to keep things like at the average that they've been.

You can't count on that in the future. There's a new ABC control rule, and we could come in and the SSC gives you much lower ABCs across-the-board, just to be precautionary. All kinds of things could happen in that regard, that you could suddenly find yourself with real management consequences on these fish.

In fifty years of Magnuson, they've never been assessed, and they're never going to be assessed. What's the future for us? Right-sizing the management program to match the resources of the agency, to use the vernacular that people love of right-sizing.

Our FMP for snapper grouper is not right-sized to the resources that we have. We've assessed, what, fifteen of the species, but they're 80 percent of the landings, and so, you know, when I hear things like, oh, you know, these fish, people are going to run away with them, and conservation, and being precautionary and all that, I just have to say like I think people are kind of fooling themselves, because we have no idea whether we're being risk-averse or risk-prone for any of these species, because we have no information on them.

They're like an albatross around our neck for the regulations, as Jessica mentioned, for everything that we have to deal with as a staff to keep up with catch levels and recommendations, and, you know, what are the rules, and our table of ACLs is exhaustive, because we've got all these species, and we know -- What do we know about these species? Very little, and so, you know, what we were trying to do with this was to try and right-size the FMU, to get the species that drive people to fish, that, if you manage those species, and you did it well, then the others are unlikely to be run away with, and, as long as you have reporting of them, you'll know.

You know, that was -- To me, that was always part of the initial desire on this, is that, if you do see something suddenly showing up, and being caught a whole lot more, then maybe you can look into it and say, hey, this is a fish that we really probably need to bring back into the fold, and maybe we need to put some regulations on it, or something of that nature, and that was certainly all the intent that we have, and like I know, in the SEFHIER reporting, those guys have to report every fish, every trip, wherever they go.

If a boat with a South Atlantic SEFHIER, you know, a South Atlantic for-hire permit, goes through the canal and goes to Alaska and fishes, guess what? They got to report to SEFHIER their catches in Alaska. You know, it is all inclusive, and so the for-hire guys are covered across-the-board, and it sounds like the commercial guys probably largely are too, because you have a permit, you went fishing, and you've got to report everything that you caught on that trip, and so I feel like the reporting part is pretty well covered, if you leave those with the permits and stuff, and most of these species are probably, you know, going to be covered in that regard, but yet we won't continue to look at -- You know, it just looks bad that we have so few species that have been assessed in our FMU.

I think, realistically, you know, if I thought there was a chance that any of these things would get better data, and would get assessed in the future, then I might feel different about it, but I just feel like, you know, all the years I've been looking at this, and these species, and there's been no progress. We don't know life history for many of these species. We don't know ages for many of these species. We don't have surveys for many of these species.

You know, the reality is we're just shooting in the dark, and we're hoping that we set something, based on highly-uncertain landings, that we feel good about ourselves because we have a catch level. I don't feel good about that. I don't feel like -- I think it sets a false sense of confidence that we're actually doing management. That's just, you know, my personal perspective of looking at this, and I think it's very difficult.

I think we kind of do ourselves a disservice by dragging these along, and I think that the real problem, to me, is there's no middle ground in Magnuson, as we've always talked about. It's either, you know, all or nothing. You're either expected to have ACLs, and manage it like it's Georges Bank cod, or you're, you know, not supposed to have any conservation and management at all, and what we were trying to do here was maybe -- Can we craft out some middle ground, where we can have something in there that puts some protections on this fish, and we're able to monitor them, and, if things start to go south, we can step in and put in some regulations, without having to feel like we're under that, you know, full burden of everything.

I know it's -- You do feel like we're going out on a limb a little bit for some of these stocks, like what will the future hold, but I think the fact that these things haven't developed into amazing fisheries in the last forty years under the Snapper Grouper FMP -- You know, as long as we're getting data, I think we would have time to react if something did suddenly change.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate that, John, and I guess I will remind people, and it's hidden in the document, but we talked about, and maybe it was two meetings ago, this nice document that the Mid-Atlantic produces, that looks at everything that's coming in commercially. It's looking at trends, and so we are asking for that to be produced annually.

I don't know what month we're going to get that document, you know what council meeting of the year we're going to look at it, but that document, to me, is going to help us track some of these trends in some of these species, and, if something is going up, or down, I think that that can be useful, and so, to me, part of this is also we said, when we discussed the innovation plan, that we wanted to take more risk, and we wanted to truly try to look at some things differently.

I feel like, based on previous discussions, that's how we got here, is to try to look at this a little bit differently, and so I'm hoping that there is a middle ground here to push some of these species into ecosystem component, that we can define, you know, what does that mean when they go to ecosystem component, and that's the middle ground, and then we further define that for us, for this council.

Kind of that's how I would explain it. If we have any, you know, from staff, any ideas about that Mid-Atlantic report, and when we're going to get it, but I agree that these species are going to get reported, and then we're going to be tracking them in that report, that we're going to get annually, and so we can continue to stay on top of the trends.

I felt like that was a lot of what I heard at the AP, were people throwing out like, well, wait, in X year, off of this state, this particular species became important, but I don't really take it that much anymore, or whatever, and so I feel like that Mid-Atlantic report is going to give us some of that information, so that we can have our finger on the pulse for some of these species, but we're creating additional challenges for ourselves by including them in the FMP right now. It's just my opinion, and so I'm going to go back to my list of hands, and, also, if you want to speak, please put your hand up, and so I have Tom, and then I have Clay. Okay. I'll go ahead with Clay, and then we'll come back to Tom.

DR. PORCH: Okay. Can you hear me?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, we've got you.

DR. PORCH: Great. Okay, and so I agree with most of what John and others have said. I would point out that part of the bottleneck with stock assessments is actually the SEDAR process, because it's so thorough, but you just maybe don't need SEDAR for all these species. For example, we could do an assessment for white grunt. It never makes the SEDAR schedule, but we could do a separate assessment through the Science Center, and then just let the SSC be the review body.

Some of these other species, we might have some decent information from our SERFS survey, you know, our trap-video survey, or maybe even the new South Atlantic Deepwater Longline survey, and we could do an index-based adjustment to ACL, and so it's not really strictly true that we couldn't do some kind of assessments. We just maybe don't need to do the full-blown SEDAR assessment for a lot of them, and so I would certainly recommend taking white grunt out, because it doesn't really fit the criteria for an ecosystem component, since it does form a substantial part of landings, and, at least in some areas, they do target it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to go back to my list of hands. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: My thoughts are all over the place here, given the conversation. It's interesting. You know, and I look at this as a historical concept, in a historical context, looking at fish that were removed previously, and, you know, those made sense to me, and I think that the council, in the past has really looked at this FMU.

I understand the points about the difficulty in having management and whatnot in the future, and how this large complex is confusing, and it can be frustrating for our state managers, but nobody -- Where else in the country do we have a fishery like this, where you can go and you can catch a hundred different species, and you can catch them in small amounts, right?

When we've talked about the holistic management of snapper grouper species, it's for that reason. It's because we are in a discard-driven fishery, unfortunately, and that remains my concern here. If we were to remove some of these species, and that's the big question here, is what does ecosystem component management look like, and so we're reporting it, but what does that look for the recreational fishery, right?

I mean, one thing that scares me is removing some of these entirely, and having to deal with the state management process to put limits in place in some of these fish. Like I look at Atlantic spadefish, and that's not something that I want to go through on the state level, and so I ask, and, I mean, is it really -- Are these really that big of a burden to us, because it really hasn't seemed to impact us that much.

I think, if we really go down this list, the biggest takeaway I have from the AP discussion, from discussion here, is I don't think there's a consensus on a single species that should be removed. You know, I do look at what the AP came up with, and I agree with most of that. I would probably pull out about half of those, you know, just from some considerations.

Like, you know, you look at sand tilefish, and do you really want people fishing for a species in 300 foot of water, next to bluelines, and increasing discards of one of our other most important

species, and I don't know. I'm just -- The more and more we talk about it, the more and more uncomfortable I get moving forward in any capacity. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just want to indicate that, just because it's out of the FMP, that's not going to change the discards on it, or, if it's ecosystem component, that's not going to change the discards on it, and so I just wanted to put that out there. I have Trish, then Kerry, then Amy, then Charlie.

MS. MURPHEY: This one, I have been struggling with this. I keep going back and forth on this. To be honest, sometimes -- You know, I sit -- You know, one day I sit here and think are we trying to fix something that ain't broke by removing these, because, you know, granted, I know we're not getting -- We don't have the data to do assessments and stuff, and then, from listening to Clay, I guess there's things we can do with some of these.

Then I understand where you -- Then, you know, I understand where John and Jessica are coming from, about we don't have -- You know, we've got these ACLs, but it sounds like where the heck do they even come from, because we didn't have -- So I get that too. I mean, I -- To me, at least for me, the compromise would be at least go with the EC reporting, and so my understanding is you don't have to have a permit.

We're talking about -- Or what the AP is recommending is they're actually recommending you would have to have a permit to catch them and report them, but, listening around the table, it's not really necessary to have the permit, because they report everything, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I think -- Let me try to explain that and, and Kerry is next up in line, and so she can speak to it, too. I think that -- So, first off, the reporting -- What John is saying is that the reporting is going to happen no matter what, and so kind of take the reporting off the table. I think that, if you get down to what are the concerns, especially kind of as the AP talked about it, or as we've talked about it around this table, the concerns are if you don't require the permit.

Think about commercial, and commercial is limited entry. We're going through this process with the whole two-for-one, you know, all of that with the Commercial Subcommittee, looking at that, and so then, if you took away the permit requirement for the species, then it's essentially anyone with just like a state commercial permit could go harvest it, and so the harvest could essentially go up, because you don't have a limited universe of people that could only access these species.

That's me trying to explain kind of what the AP is saying, is that there are some species that might be in the middle ground, but can the middle ground, what we're talking about ecosystem components, still require the commercial permit to harvest, because otherwise it could be more of a free-for-all for those species, and does that help?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and that does help, because, originally, when I was going back and forth, I was with have a permit and report, and so, you know, to me, the compromise would be have the permit and report. I do want to say I feel very strongly that white grunt needs to be -- To stay in the FMU. I spent time talking to our biologists about it. I looked at data.

Now, granted, I looked at MRIP data, and I know the PSEs on these were not good, but, I mean, we're seeing increases in recreational white grunt. You know, we see them on the headboats. I

think they're the fourth-highest species on the headboat data that we had those presentations a few meetings ago.

White grunt was apparently important enough to at least make the SEDAR list, and so, even though it fell off the SEDAR list, it was on the SEDAR list. That just infers important management needs for that, and so I would like to see white grunt stay on, and, to be honest, I would like to see tomtate stay on, and that's -- Again, I think that's the third-highest caught on the headboats, and we're seeing increases in tomtates in recreational as well.

Then, as we go through time, and the species we do manage -- You know, black sea bass is going down. You know, the abundances are going down, and it's going to cause people to shift, and I think, also, in North Carolina, we were seeing -- I think it's blackfin snapper is what people go after, because they can't catch red snapper, and so it's become kind of a niche fishery in North Carolina.

I see that they are recommending keeping it in the FMU, but I think we kind of need to think a little bit in the future too, as, you know, the regulations that we put in place on the species we do manage creates folks switching targets to these other fish that we would not be managing, but, if I have to go with a compromise, I can live with what the AP recommends, but I would like to see white grunt stay in the management unit, and I would really like to see tomtate stay in the management unit, and so that's for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Trish. I'm going to keep going through my hands, and so next up is Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you, and, Jessica and John specifically, I sense your frustration. I feel it, and I understand why you're frustrated. Every point you made makes sense, but I want to tell you why I made the comment I made, because, in the interim between when we started discussing this and this meeting, I've had several conversations with fishermen who have state permits.

They're usually charter commercial guys that are fishing in the general vicinity of the inshore, sort of what would be the snapper grouper waters, and don't want to, or cannot, buy an SG 1 and are like waiting with bated breath for this to happen, so that they can enter the fishery, and what we have to remember is the interactions with the species, you know, the discards that may occur with the species that are in the SG 1, you know, permit universe, and so it has freaked me out.

It freaks me out more than -- I think I'm more emotional about that than you are about taking it out. Not that it's a competition, but that's sort of why -- I didn't come out of the blue and just be like, oh, all of a sudden it hit me that I don't love this. I think we're going to get some guidance.

You know, to the extent that the permit can stay in there, and that's legal, and it clears the hurdle of being allowed to move it in there, then I can be comfortable with that, but I just wanted to give you some context, which I didn't in my first comment about what has changed, and so please don't think I was being flaky, because I could be, but I got new information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, John Carmichael. I see the list of hands going up.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I don't think that at all, Kerry, and I appreciate that, and I just wonder -- Like but it sounds like, as you concluded, that the AP proposal here may address your concerns, because I think this seems like a pretty good proposal that addresses a lot of folks' concerns on this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that, the reason I made the comment I made first is because I felt like maybe what I was hearing, maybe from Shep, and I don't -- Is that we might have some hurdle to have it be an ecosystem component and require the permit, and that gray area is where I get very nervous.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, but this might be a spot where we try to push the envelope and say, hey, we want it ecosystem component and require the permit, but I've got a lot of hands here, and so on my list, I have Amy, Charlie, Andy, Dewey, Tom, Shep.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'll build upon what Kerry said. If we remove these fish from the FMP, she's right. State-only commercial fishermen can then go and target and retain these species, and it's those species interactions, and those discards, where we're not going to get any information from a state-only commercial fisherman, and I can see lots more effort.

I can't quantify "lots", but I can see additional effort being placed on these species if they were removed from the FMP, and then they have tons of species interactions with fish that are going to remain in the FMP, and so, to me, it's a little counterintuitive. I worry about adding additional effort.

We sit here and we talk about how we want to -- We do want to provide potentially a true commercial snapper grouper fisherman effort to be there with this two-for-one, but then, if we take them out of the FMP, we're almost allowing somebody else, who has no snapper grouper permit, or not even the desire to get into the actual commercial fishery, that wants to dabble in commercial fishing, to be able to target these species, if we're removing from the FMP.

Then, from a state management hat, holy crap. If they're out of the FMP, then the states need to consider putting management measures in place for these, and several of us, states, have very large obstacles to get over with our general assembly, and figuring out which ones are going to be the most important are going to be it's going to be -- It's going to be a difficult hurdle for us, and so I look at this ecosystem component as a potential middle ground.

It's not exactly a middle ground, and I understand that, and I see the pros and cons for doing it, but, if you look at the current EC species, that are already in legislation, or in regulation, several of these kind of co-mingle with them, and seem to align with them, and so, with the exception of white grunt, kind of moving out of the EC and putting back over, because we too are seeing more sustained, and some increased, landings in our recreational fisheries in South Carolina. I can get behind the recommendation from the Snapper Grouper AP. I feel like it's a little bit of a middle ground, and it will at least give some guidance moving forward, without adding outside additional effort from the commercial world.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. I'm back to my list. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just sitting here listening to all this, and with my fingers crossed, thinking please don't make the cure worse than the sickness, and I'm afraid we're almost in that path, and I'm sitting here thinking nobody in their right mind is going to go target sand tilefish, and, if we do catch tomtates, how in the heck would we manage them?

I mean they're not targeted. They may be bycatch, and you may catch a lot of them as bycatch, but how would you manage them, and so I just think we need to -- To Clay's point that they could do some simpler type assessments, and I'm going to call them assessments, you know, on this other stuff, these porgies, queen snapper, that may be the way to go, but then we consistently hear how shorthanded they are, and how they can't get to what we really need, and so I'm skeptical about putting more work on them, even if it may be easy work, and maybe, at some point in time, he can expand upon that, but I'm really concerned that we do not want the cure to be worse than the disease.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so great comments coming in. We've still got a long list of folks to go to. I'm going to make a suggestion, so that people can react to it, to try to move the discussion along, and so it seems like, of the comments that we've heard so far, we're really kind of honing-in on this table, and trying to say what we agree with and don't agree with, based on what the AP came up with, and so maybe, as you're providing your comments, and we've already heard some already, about like, hey, I agree with this list, but we've heard pull white grunt back to it sounds like status quo, and then I can't remember what -- Maybe we heard a vote, if you will, to pull sand tilefish to a Number 1, status quo.

Maybe this is kind of how we tackle this discussion, and this amendment, is to, when you give your comments, you give an opinion about if you agree with the recommendation from the AP or not, and so think about that. I have Andy next up.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm going to actually recommend an entirely different approach, because I just -- I appreciate all the comments around the table, but I feel like this is very haphazard, and unorganized, and people are throwing out opinions and perspectives without a holistic, thoughtful approach in terms of how we're going to address this.

We started down the path of John giving us the ecosystem component species, and we got the AP recommendation, and then we jumped right into this table, and now, all of a sudden, we're just -- Everyone is commenting on it, without any organization, right, and so, to me, it's not which ones do we want on the list, and which ones we don't, and where do we move it in a column, but it's which ones are truly in need of conservation and management, and what criteria are we using to base it on, and are we using that same criteria consistently for all of the seventeen species that are on this list?

If we don't think it's in need of federal conservation and management, do we think it needs to be an ecosystem component species, yes or no? If it needs to be an ecosystem component species, what are the requirements that we're going to apply for that ecosystem component species, and, if it's not going to be an ecosystem component species, are there any ramifications for not including it under federal management or the ecosystem, right?

To me, we have to get back to the why, right, and are we -- What are we doing to consider these species and include them or not include them in our FMP? What are the intended consequences, or unintended consequences, and make sure that that's clear and consistent from queen snapper down to margate in this table.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, but I feel like a couple things, and so we did that at a previous meeting. We had that discussion, and that's how we got Amendment 61, and so, by trying to hone-in on the table, and I'm over here talking to staff, we're trying to figure out what needs to be in 61 or not, and so, if it's in Column 1, and it's status quo, then it's out of Amendment 61, and so that's kind of what I'm trying to do here, is figure out how to get to the discussion you're talking about, to figure out what is in or out, because, if it's out, and we're definitely going to stay with status quo, and there's some nice bullet points underneath this table from the AP about why they're recommending, you know, things in status quo, versus an ecosystem component, which we can certainly review, but we have this amendment here, and I'm trying to figure out what's in or out, and then we can progress on those species. Do you want to respond, Andy?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, but I don't look at this as anything different than any other amendment we work on, which is we're building our rationale, and we're determining whether we're going to take the no action approach or we're going to actually make a different decision, based on the internal groups that are presented before us, right? To me, right now, what is critical is what is that rationale for placing these species in one of these various bins, and are we being consistent with that, with regard to how we're approaching that decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so that's -- I'm just struggling, because I feel like we've already done that, and that's why we kicked it to the AP, is we already threw out some species that we wanted to be status quo, and then we kicked this over to the AP and asked them some of those questions, and so we can go back through it. I just felt like we had kind of already done this, but I'm going to go back to my list here and so I have Dewey, Tom, Shep, and Carolyn.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. I'm a little bit confused, but I'll work my way through it, given that this is only my second council meeting. This is what I'm in favor of. Status quo, the federal management, means you already have a permit and have to report, and is that correct? Okay, and so, with all these, something I like that probably, and probably, if I would have come on earlier, I would be asking where are these fish caught at, in which state, how much are their landings, and what months are they coming from, to give you a snapshot of looking.

It might be somewhere in a document, but, first of all, you've got to know your landscape, or I think you have to know your landscape, but I'm in favor of making sure that you have to have a snapper grouper permit, and you have to report, and I don't really care about the rest, and I think there might be some threshold that, if something starts to get over the speed bump, then you might need to look at it, but that's just what I'm for, and I don't know if that's not encompassing enough, but I'll leave it at that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was helpful. We did have a discussion before you were on the council. We had this cool little survey that we did, where we could look at the landings that existed, both rec and commercial, for each of these species over time, and that's how we got to these seventeen species for a further look in this amendment, and so we did do that, and so I'm not

saying that we can't bring that information back, because I don't know how to get to it, because it was stuck inside this survey, and so maybe it could come back. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Something else, you know, is maybe also we would have looked at the observer program, to see what comes out of that. You would have looked at maybe SADL, to see if anything comes out of that, because we do have a few sand tilefish, but, other than that, I'm for having a permit, a snapper grouper permit, and reporting. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Dewey, for your plain speech. I'm with you. I view this in a couple ways. I see all these species as needing to be caught under a snapper grouper commercial permit, to need reporting, and also to have a recreational limit of some capacity, whether it's buried within the aggregate or whatnot, and I really appreciate Charlie's comment, is that -- What did he say, that the sickness is worse than the cure, and that does -- Or the cure is worse than the sickness. It's my dyslexia. Sorry about that.

That's something that I really think underlines this. I think, if we had a better definition of what an ecosystem component species looks like, I think I would be a little bit comfortable moving it, but I'm going to go down and comment on the list, like you asked, Madam Chair, because, you know -- I do appreciate your comments, Andy.

So, when I look at this, I agree completely with what the AP put under status quo. I think that they had good rationale for all of those, particularly when it looks like the porgy, because you either have to have all of them or none of them, because you just can't -- Obviously, because you can't - - They're just hard enough to identify.

When I look at the list of the ecosystem component species, I agree 100 percent that white grunt needs to come out and go back to Number 1. When I look at sand tilefish, that has to go back to Number 1. They are a high-quality fish. They're caught in deep water. You know, we do have - - We could -- I'm going to come back to some of that rationale here in a second.

Taking Atlantic spadefish out scares the hell out of me. They're a highly-schooling fish. They're good to eat, and that's a fish that could be really heavily exploited really quickly, without any sort of management or regulations put in place, and, again, which comes -- Which I'll come back to my rationale there in a second.

I know banded rudderfish are a really important commercial fish. Tomtate, they're just such a -- They're just so common, and they're caught in such volume on the headboats and the charter boats and whatnot. The only really come back -- The only questions I have are bar jack, sailor's choice, and margate, and, again, these are fish that are caught buried within this complex. and are fairly common -- I wouldn't call them fairly common catches, but, you know, they're caught a lot.

Then I go back to Kerry's comment, which is we do have a lot of state-licensed commercial fishermen, in all four of these states, that would really like to target some of these fish, and particularly have the access to essentially an unregulated species, right? That's something that I've dealt with at the state level, and it is really, really difficult to deal with.

It also comes down to recreationally. It really scares me to have any of these fish without some sort of bag limit on it, and then I come to the next point is, if we remove most of these to status quo, and we're looking at two or three like sailor's choice and bar jack, is it really worth going forward with this amendment just to remove a couple of them, right, and that's kind of where I am here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tom. I've got Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to clarify. I know this is going to confuse things, but, as is noted in Table 5, right, there are issues with requiring the current snapper grouper commercial permit. As I mentioned, I would -- You know, notwithstanding my issues with requiring a permit period for ecosystem component species, commercial snapper grouper is limited access, right, and what is your rationale for requiring a limited access permit for a species that is not in need of conservation and management? That seems insurmountable to me. Maybe I'm wrong, but, you know, it seems like, if you're going to have a permit generally, just to require reporting and whatever for these ecosystem component species, it can't jump straight to limited access, it seems. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to go to Kerry to speak to that, but, yes, and I just feel like, if we go the way that Shep is suggesting, then we can trash this entire amendment, because, I mean -- Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: You're saying that the rationale of the fact that these species coexist in the same habitat, and therefore there will be interactions and discards, is not a good enough rationale for requiring that?

MR. GRIMES: I would say no. I mean, for one, that's not -- That is a reason for managing it. That is a reason that it might be in need of conservation and management, but, if you're going to say it's not in need of conservation management, you build that record, but -- Let's say you want to, as Jessica said, push the envelope and require an ecosystem component permit, and maybe you could do that, if you could build the rationale, but requiring the commercial permit, as it exists today, means you are placing a limited access system on the commercial harvest of a species that you do not think is in need of conservation and management. I hope you can see the incongruity in that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that opinion, and so I'm going to go back to what we said in thinking about the innovation plan, and are we going to try to push the envelope anyway and, you know, require the permit et cetera, because, if we don't want to do that, which would be against this legal advice, then I think we're trashing this whole amendment, and so that's why I'm trying to, you know, move the discussion along here. I've still got people in the queue, and I'm going to keep going. I've got Carolyn up next.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, so I'm trying to think procedurally, and I'm looking to Tom, because I remember the frustration about little tunny, right? Little tunny had been part of a plan, and it got moved out of a plan, and a request was to bring it back to the plan, and the idea was we're going to watch the trends, and determine whether or not to bring it back, and so the first question is, in this process, we're redacting those species basically from the FMP, correct, and so, these species we're suggesting, they're going to be redacted from --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Carolyn. John and I are listening.

DR. BELCHER: Okay, and so they're going to be redacted from the plan and move someplace else, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, so that's if they went into Column 2.

DR. BELCHER: Right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

DR. BELCHER: So is there a way that, because ecosystem seems to be we pull them out, and we throw them in this other bin, is there a way, within the FMP, that you can keep these species identified as an ecosystem component, but the idea being is that, currently, we recognize they're caught, and people are monitoring them, and we don't know at which time -- Back to the portfolio thing.

If things change out in a commercial fishery, and these things become higher in the queue, they should be able to stay and be elevated appropriately, and so, rather than taking them out of a document, is there a way that we can restructure the document so that you have them there? We have fishery performance reports, and is that -- Can these not be part of the fishery performance reports, rather than develop a separate document to address them? I'm just thinking about ways that we can just innovatively think within the FMP as to how these things -- They're still there, but we can -- Rather than turn them off and turn them on, like I said with the frustration that Tom had with little tunny, and how do you turn them back on again? Are you following?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I do, and so I think that we could -- We could develop something, of course, that indicates like, hey -- I'm going to make this up. At the September meeting every year, the council receives the Mid-Atlantic type commercial landings report, and looks at trends, and looks at whatever, and, if species X meets these criteria, then we'll consider it for action to pull it back as a main species in the amendment, and that's what you're saying, right?

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and, because we're already doing fishery performance reports -- That's what I'm getting at, and is this something that could be part of the fishery performance report?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, anything can be. We can provide, you know, information like that on any species, really. There's no limitation that it's only the things in the management unit, and I think, because of the way Magnuson works, where it's really easy for you guys to be conservative, and really hard for you to relax anything, that, you know, it's being really hard for us to remove anything, and it's really easy for us to add something, and you can just say, oh, let's throw this in there, and, for the most part, people will go with it.

If these were EC, and you said, oh no, bring them back into Column 1 in the future, because maybe the Science Center did something with the SADL data for something like sand tilefish, you could do that in no time, I'm pretty certain. You could bring it right in. I mean, if they did an assessment of one of these stocks, and it showed a problem with the species, you could probably do that in two meetings, and nobody would bat an eye.

I mean, people who didn't want you to interrupt maybe their state fishing, if that were happening, wouldn't complain, but, for the most part, the way Magnuson works, right, it's really easy for you to add regulations, and it's super hard for you to remove them, and so I think all of that could happen, but the question is, and it's back to Tom, you know, if you're down to three species, and why are we doing this, and he's exactly right.

Staff doesn't have time to go through all of this if we're only going to be talking about three species that are going to change, and, as Jessica said, we are trying to craft some middle ground, through this ecosystem component flexibility, that gets us something that's not full-on ACLs and everything else. That's the real problem, right, because, you know, we don't have the information to set ABCs and to know stock status and know what's overfishing.

That's where all this came from, and the idea of being able to have some type of like an aggregate on these, which I think was always in the works, comes from Dewey and the Mid-Atlantic forage fish, omnibus forage fish, where the Mid-Atlantic has regulations on landings of ecosystem component species in our dolphin wahoo fishery. You all recall that, right? They tried to put in those, and NMFS said, no, they're not in an FMP, and we added it to the dolphin wahoo, because the Mid-Atlantic requested it, because they wanted to put them in their omnibus forage and have them under an aggregate limit.

We did that. They immediately turned around and added it in there, and so there are ecosystem components with some type of regulations on them. That's where we're trying to push the envelope away and find out, well, why can't we do something similar to our ecosystem components if another council has done that? Another council has done that with our ecosystem components, but, I mean, if, for the rationale we've heard, people are really uncomfortable, you know, having these in Column 3, or only having more than -- You know, if there's not at least five species in Column 3, then I don't think the juice is worth the squeeze, in terms of staff time and all the work that we have to do.

DR. BELCHER: I guess the thing I struggle with, and it's like all the little things as we go along, and I feel like we have the tools to work with this. It's the idea of how we're breaking this, and I think people's concerns are, and I'll go to more the NGO thing, and you've identified fifty-five species, right, and an analog that the state went through was state wildlife plans.

You had certain states that put everything on it, and you had other states that were being very reserved about it, but they locked themselves out when they had a species of, you know, concern come up, and they couldn't go after, you know, competitive grants, because the species wasn't identified, and so, with too few, you lock yourself out. Too many, and it's like, well, then everything is important, and so what the heck are we doing with this, and so, knowing that we've identified fifty-five species, the NGOs are concerned, if we take those off, now we're no longer concerned about these species, and it's like it's not necessarily that the plan was drafted with concern of species.

It was we have an aggregate, and these are all of the fish that they're touching. We're trying to keep a pulse on those, and, as things have tightened up, we've painted ourselves more and more into the box, which is the trauma report of a town and -- Actually, it wasn't town and country. It

was the town, and back to John Boreman and Steve Cadrin and us trying to figure out what to do, and even Chip was on the SSC at that point, with what do we do to set these catch limits.

What we used with the third highest, we've already been told, is no longer considered best science, and so now the SSC is going to have to completely go back and try to figure out what they're going to be able to do with data that we know has issues with PSEs and everything else, because it's looked at both comprehensively for commercial and recreational.

I'm just trying to figure out a way that there's somehow -- It's still showing that we're monitoring these, but we're not metering our success at managing snapper grouper because we're ignoring two-thirds of what's in the table, if that makes sense, and now I'll get off my --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was a great description. I'll also go back to the way that John Carmichael was describing it, which is, in the Mid-Atlantic, they do have regulations on it, but, when we worked on bullet and frigate in a different FMP, we were cautioned against doing it that way, and so I think that, when we embarked on this, that we were thinking that we could put these in a different box inside the FMP, and so I see lots of hands going up. At some point, I wanted to take a break in the middle of this discussion.

I mean, yes, I need a bio break, but, also, that way, people could kind of think about this a little bit before we make final decisions, and so I'm going to go to a couple more hands, and so I have Dewey next in line, but I think, Tom, did you have your hand up? Okay, and then I saw Shep and Andy, and so let's try to get through that list, and then we'll take a break, and then we'll come back. All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: A couple things I want to comment, and I'm not sure where I want to go, but we talk a lot about this Mid-Atlantic forage fish omnibus, and we kind of act like it's not a big deal. It was a big deal. That was an incredible amendment. It took years. There was so much fighting and opposition and lobbying, and it was really groundbreaking, and I'm really happy they did it, and I was involved in that process, but it was a big, big, big, big deal.

If that's something we want to pursue, this is not what we're doing here, and, I mean, I think what they did was really great, and I would love to see more management like that, but it's not this amendment, right, and, you know, I just -- You know, because Carolyn brought little tunny up, and I got all my PTSD flashbacks from it, I'm going to mention a little bit about, you know, that discussion.

You know, personally, I disagreed when this council took that off the FMU, because I thought it was an important component of the CMP. Obviously, I was just an advisor at the time, but, you know, in taking it to this council, a fish that had more than a million pounds of landings, and is a really important recreational and commercial, we said we didn't want to do anything with it, and then, for me, you know, dealing with the ASMFC, which is not fun, and then taking it to my state, which was even less fun, that was a battle.

North Carolina has a mechanism for rule, and it is really difficult, and it takes years, and it was a very, very difficult process to get a rule in place that says maybe one day we'll have a limit on this fish, and, you know, I received -- You know, there was a lot, a lot of support for it, but we received a lot of opposition, too. It's a very, very, very, very difficult thing, and I look at all these, and I

feel, if we go that route, I'm scared to have to deal with even three or four of these, let alone all of them, and I understand all the difficulty with the SSC and, you know, and that. I'm just asking what is the best mechanism to retain management on these in some capacity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Okay. I have Shep, and then Andy, and then we're going to take a break. Okay, and so no to Shep. Andy, did you want to speak before the break?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I'm looking at the National Standards, and maybe this is a question for Shep, given his comments about the permit requirement, and so it says, with ecosystem component species, management measures can be adopted in order to collect data on the species, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality, protect the associated role of the ecosystem species, and to address other ecosystem issues, and so, in this instance, we are essentially saying that we want to continue to collect data on the species, right? A permit, I guess, could arguably be made that a permit is required to report and gather data about those species. Would that be a correct assumption, if we wanted to continue to require reporting of these species tied to the snapper group of permits?

MR. GRIMES: You could make that argument, yes, but, again, the commercial aspect is limited access, and so it's like you're not just -- You're not requiring the permit just to collect data. You're limiting access to who is allowed to harvest it, and collecting data from that limited pool.

MR. STRELCHECK: You know, we've mentioned the Mid-Atlantic. I think details are important here, and so I don't know enough about what the Mid-Atlantic has done, what they require, the reasoning for, you know, what they're requiring, and is it consistent or inconsistent with what we're talking about here, and so I don't know if John or others could speak to that specifically, but it would be good to get a little more information to understand what they've done up to this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we could also have a presentation at another meeting to look at that a little. We also have Dewey. I mean, but we -- Yes, and we got a presentation about this when we were working on bullet and frigate, but we could certainly talk about that more, and so, Shep, did you want to speak before the break?

MR. GRIMES: Yes, and sorry. Thank you, and what I was going to say before is we discussed that extensively in the context of the bullet and frigate mackerel stuff, and the discussion was that it's an incidental harvest limit in these already permitted trawl fisheries. I mean, we said they're already heavily regulated. They're managing those fisheries, and this is an incidental limit on what they're allowed to catch, rather than just, oh, here's -- You know, we're going to add, as we were discussing in the context of dolphin wahoo, we're going to add these two species to our FMP, and we're not going to do anything else with them, but we're going to require a permit, and we wanted to require limits on them, and that's why your advice was different.

You're looking at the facts of the respective fisheries, and what we were looking at doing. Here, you're also looking at something different, because you're taking things out of your fishery management unit, right? The first question is do they need conservation and management, and, if they don't, then what's left, and what's left, if we want to call them ecosystem component, what can we do with them, and, again, I'm not really driving anything either way. I'm trying to advise, and I think, if it's just for data collection, what's the point? You get that anyway.

If you require a new permit for just those ecosystem components, the only difference between that and taking them out of the FMU is you're going to make sure -- You know, you know that you're getting everybody who is harvesting them in the EEZ, whereas, if you take them out of the FMU, you could have non-federally-permitted people that would then have access to it, no federal nexus, and so you wouldn't necessarily get that piece of the data. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I understand. I think it really comes back to the permit, but John Carmichael wants to say something, and then we're going to go to break.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I think it plays to it, and the difference is, as Andy mentioned, you know, ecosystem component for bycatch, and it seems like there's been a lot of discussion, at least commercially, that a lot of these fish are now largely bycatch. If they became directed, you could move them over, and I think that's the whole -- To me, that's always been why you have the ecosystem component, and you collect data on them, so that, if you see something is moving from bycatch into people are truly directed on this thing, then it's like, okay, but, if something becomes from bycatch to truly being directed, well then you get a lot more data to go with it, and you probably have a better time doing all the things that you have to do, and so it's sort of a self-correcting system, in that sense, and so, if some of these fish are hardly ever showing up, then let's be honest. In many cases, they really are bycatch.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I appreciate this great discussion. Let's take a fifteen-minute break, and then we'll come back and try to move this along, whatever way that is.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again. All right, and so, now that we're back from break, I'm going to make a suggestion here about what to do next. Instead of continuing to have this good discussion that we've had, and so I appreciate the discussion, why don't we stop working on this decision document, and, at the next meeting, ask staff to come back with information about --

I'm assuming the next meeting, and, of course, we'll look at the workplan, and make sure that -- You know, where this falls, but, assuming that it makes it on the list for the workplan, that, at the March meeting, we would receive a presentation from staff about how the Mid-Atlantic does their ecosystem component species, what regulations they have on those, if any, and, in other words, do they have a trip limit, do they require a permit, et cetera.

Then I was talking to staff also over here, and they were suggesting that maybe some other councils, and it's not just Mid-Atlantic, but the Mid-Atlantic is just the one we're familiar with, and so Amy is saying the same thing that John Hadley said, that there are also some other plans on the west coast of the U.S. that might help us here in thinking about what are our next steps forward, and so I would be asking, and we're getting it typed up there, staff to come back with this information, so we're not just relying on poor Dewey to tell us about everything that happened, and then Tom's PTSD about what happened.

We're asking for more information, and so you can see the direction to staff there on the screen, and so see if you want to edit that, or add or anything to that, but I'm looking for some either thumbs-up or head nods or something about what you guys think about this. Okay. I see heads

nodding yes, and I'm looking around the table, and I see thumbs-up. I see one frowning face. Okay. One no, but I think maybe it's from your PTSD, but this will give us more information. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One other suggestion, and I was just talking with Rick during the break, and the Comprehensive ACL Amendment removed a number of species, but it also had some ecosystem component species that are still in the FMU, right, and so looking back at that, in terms of any sort of tie-in, especially to the permitting requirements, I think would be beneficial, just to see what we've said in the past.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Good call. I thought that, one other time since then, since I've been sitting around this table, we have removed some additional species, and maybe we can look back at that discussion and get a little bit more information. Okay, and John Hadley is nodding yes, and so, yes, we can add that as additional direction, these past South Atlantic actions regarding this. Anything else for this direction? Sonny.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, and Kim has sent out an email, a link that you can check out to see what the Mid-Atlantic is doing, and that hopefully will be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you so much, Sonny. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and one other thing. I liked Clay's comments about this idea of the more simplified approaches to some of these species, and that's also as part of our innovation plan, and it would be really helpful to know, of those species that we're currently talking about, which ones fall into that category of a simple approach using that SERFS data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, and then, also, I guess, what that approach would look like. Okay, and so specifics on that approach for these additional species. John Hadley is capturing that. Anything else here? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is just the thought, but, you know, if we're going down the path of looking at having ecosystem component species within this complex, I think we also need to discuss adding species to that list then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is it okay if we get this information, and then figure out the next steps, and then, once we start down those next steps, figure out what species go in there, because I can't figure out how to capture the direction to staff to bring us something back on that.

MR. ROLLER: I don't think that we're looking for a list. I think I just want that idea there that, if we're going to be considering that, that is something we'll look at in the future. That's all I'm saying.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Anything else? All right. I appreciate all of the discussion. It seems like we have a path here. We're going to get more information, and so I appreciate this discussion, and so, next up, we are going to dive into yellowtail and mutton, and Allie is going to come over here on that, and so give us a couple of moments to switch out here. All right. Allie is going to dive into Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, looking at mutton and yellowtail.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I'll start just briefly rehashing this amendment, and so, for both yellowtail and mutton, the stocks are considered a single stock between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and they're going to be managed jointly between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and, as a reminder, for this particular amendment, the Gulf is the administrative lead.

This amendment is responding to the most recent assessments for both of those species, and SEDAR 79 for mutton and SEDAR 96 for yellowtail, and this amendment is going to modify the stock OFL and ABC, the jurisdictional apportionment between the two councils, the regional ACLs, and then South Atlantic sector allocations.

A quick recap of what the council did in September, and so you guys -- Following some discussion that happened at the Gulf prior to you guys seeing this, you removed alternatives that considered a jurisdictional apportionment based off of the distribution of landings versus the current formula, which we've been calling the bowtie formula, that was used to calculate that apportionment.

You also directed staff to split action one, so, if you remember, there was kind of one action to rule them all in this amendment that included both species for yellowtail and mutton, and so you directed staff to split that out into separate actions for species, and then so that got you to Action 1 and Action 2, and so the apportionment and some other things for yellowtail and mutton.

Then we talked a little bit about the ACL for these species, and so that is going to be wrapped into that jurisdictional apportionment action. You guys discussed not wanting to put in a management buffer in between the South Atlantic ABC and the South Atlantic ACL, and so that can be then done in those two actions for each species, respectively. Then, finally, you directed staff to include two additional alternatives that would modify the South Atlantic sector allocations, and, again, this is a joint amendment, and so I anticipate that the Gulf will just kind of give the remote thumbs-up for those two actions.

Today, what we'll be doing is just reviewing those changes to the action and alternative structure. We'll be reviewing your Snapper Grouper AP feedback and the November Gulf discussion, and then one of the other things that we talked about in September is to develop actions for modifying those South Atlantic sector allocations, to develop alternatives for those actions that you guys would use the allocation decision tool, and so staff has worked really hard to put this tool together for you, and so I'll be handing it over to them to walk through that tool for each species when we get there.

All right, and so I wanted to stop on timing really quick, and so the government shutdown affected us a little bit with the process of this one, and so, because the Gulf is the admin lead, we had anticipated that it would be going to the Gulf Council, so they would be seeing it ahead of you guys as we progressed on in this process. I'll talk a little bit about some of the data considerations that the plan team has been discussing, but, because we've had a little bit of a delay in that, this amendment has been taken off of the January Gulf Council meeting agenda as of this point.

So far, in talking to our friends in the Gulf, they're fine with that with us being a meeting ahead, and so that means that you guys would be potentially selecting the preferred alternatives before the Gulf. Again, your preferences need to match, and there's going to be discussion, and so we're going to be reviewing that as we go, and so the plan team doesn't anticipate this being a problem.

This is going to be adjusted just a little bit, and so they're not going to see it in January, and you guys will see it in March, be able to select preferreds and approve for public hearings, and then they will subsequently do that in April, and so I just wanted to mention that on the timing. Any questions before I move on?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No question, but, speaking of PTSD, I have PTSD from the last joint amendments that we've done with the Gulf. Just saying, because like Allie said, if you've never done one of these, you've got to get both councils to agree to every preferred, and you have a Gulf preferred and a South Atlantic preferred, and so it's going to be fun times.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I am not going to spend too much time on the ABC section, and so this is just pulled from, you know, the highlights from those assessments. You have your stock determination criteria tables for each species, and so I'm going to just move through to recent landings and closures.

Again, this is information that you've seen, recent landings for each region, total landings. No recent ACL closures for mutton from 2012 to 2024. Then, looking at yellowtail, the same figure, regional landings, total landings, and then there have been some recent closures for yellowtail, and they're listed there.

All right, and that brings us to the purpose and need statement, and so the purpose of these fishery management plans is to revise the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper stock overfishing limit, stock acceptable biological catch, based on the results of SEDAR 79 and SEDAR 96 stock assessments, respectively, and the amendments would also revise the jurisdictional apportionment between the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils, the regional annual catch limits, and the South Atlantic sector allocations.

Then the need for these fishery management plan amendments is to update existing catch limits, jurisdictional apportionments of the ABCs, and the South Atlantic sector allocations for the southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper, to be consistent with best scientific information available and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects, and so I have a draft motion here for the committee to approve the purpose and need.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Allie. It's on the screen there, if you get a chance to read it. Any concerns, or comments? Otherwise, I'm ready for a motion. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I make the motion to approve the purpose and need statement for the Snapper Grouper Amendment 44.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Carolyn. Any additional discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. That brings us to some of the kind of data specifics that I wanted to talk through with the committee in how the data, and how we analyze the data, has changed since the last time that you guys looked at yellowtail, and now looking at mutton.

I am going to scroll so that this figure is kind of front and center, but everything that I'm going over is included in those bullets that are above this figure, and so, the last time you looked at these species, the recreational estimates came from the MRIP-FES. Now both of these assessments are inclusive of both MRIP-FES and the Reef Fish Survey.

Under MRIP, this area is -- So Area D was combined with Area E, and those landings had historically been attributed to the South Atlantic. Under the Reef Fish Survey, Areas D and E are split to provide additional geographic resolution, and landings in Area D are attributed to the Gulf, and, really quickly, I had included an error in there, and that should be "are attributed to the Gulf", and this has been since reposted, so that that is clear. My apologies on that. For the State Reef Fish Survey, the landings in Area D are attributed to the Gulf.

Reef Fish Survey had boat landings in Area D have historically been attributed to the Gulf, and then charter-for-hire landings in Area D are typically combined with Area E and attributed to the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction, and so, when the IPT talked about this, our date range was from 1986 to the most recent year data that is available to us, and then, when thinking about the geographic coverage for Area D, the IPT recommends that shore mode, which is coming from the MRIP-FES, be attributed to the South Atlantic.

Offshore private, which has more resolution under the Reef Fish Survey, be attributed to the Gulf. Charter-for-hire, which is coming from the MRIP-FES, is attributed to the South Atlantic, and then headboat, which is gathered under SERFS, is attributed to the Gulf, and so, essentially, what we're thinking of is, when we had the resolution under SERFS, we attributed those landings accordingly, but, where we didn't have the resolution, we attributed them the way that MRIP has done in the past, and so I'm going to pause here to see if there's any questions on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This has been one of my things. Can you go back up to above the -- Right there, where it says what the IPT thought was appropriate for this amendment, and so I was studying this, and trying to go back to my notes from last time, and trying to figure out how State Reef Fish Survey was used in the assessment.

Just to be honest, I feel like I need some more time to look at this, and so I'll work with FWC folks on this a little bit more, and I'll be ready at the March council meeting, and so sorry that I don't have more input on this decision right now, but I appreciate you guys laying this out in the document, and having the map there. It was super helpful. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, just because you said March council meeting, I'm going to think, if you can get with the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and give us some recommendations sooner than that, that'll help, obviously, inform any changes that we need by the amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Will do.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and that's kind of what I was going to mention, and so the catch levels that we have in this document are what was presented in September, and we need to make sure that these landings are attributed to the region correctly before we can calculate the catch levels, with all of this attributed the way that it should be, you know, according to how it was done in the assessment, and so, yes, that would be my recommendation as well, but --

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and just one other thing, and so the Gulf Council, because of the shutdown, is not going to discuss this in January, but, to the extent we could at least have some guidance under Other Business, maybe at the January council meeting, that would help them inform, you know, further discussions going forward between the two councils.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me just make sure I understand, and so you're saying, at the January Gulf meeting, under Other Business in Reef Fish, to have some guidance? All right. We will be ready to go on that as well. Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: Next, I will go over your AP's feedback, and then the November Gulf Council feedback, and so the Snapper Grouper AP reviewed this. We kind of stuck to like a higher level, since you guys -- We were still rearranging these actions, and we're kind of early on in this process, but we gave them kind of the rundown of what will be changed through this amendment.

The main consensus that we heard from the AP was kind of, if it's not broken, don't fix it, and the AP noted that they just want to ensure that there's not a closure for either species for the South Atlantic, and then the Gulf did review the draft amendment at their November meeting, and that committee report is linked there.

They didn't have any edits to the document, and one committee member noted that fishermen in the Gulf have been seeing a northward, and so up the Gulf Coast of Florida, expansion of both species, and the committee stressed that they wanted to avoid quota closures of the stocks, because they are healthy, and so similar advice to our advisory panel, and if I'm good to keep -- Okay. Cool.

All right, and so that will bring us into your actions and alternatives, and so, with each of these, they're split by species, and we're going to start with mutton first for each different action, and so Action 1 will modify the stock OFL and stock ABC, the jurisdictional apportionment, and regional ACL, and so it's going to do all of that in one action.

Alternative 1 is your true no action, and so you would have the 18 percent Gulf apportionment and 82 percent South Atlantic apportionment. However, because this is a true no action, you would be retaining the ABCs that is inclusive of MRFSS recreational estimates. Alternative 2 would take those existing percentages and apply them to your stock, your updated stock, ABC from SEDAR 79, and then both the South Atlantic and Gulf ACLs would be set equal to that region's ABC.

Alternative 3 would update that bowtie formula, or the formula that's currently in place to divvy up that stock ABC, but you have two sub-alternatives, and they differ by how many years you're wanting to plug into that formula, and so 3a uses a timeframe from 2004 to 2023 and 2021 to 2023, and then 3b gives you a shorter timeframe of 2014 to 2023 and 2021 to 2023.

Again, I mentioned these catch levels. These are what you saw in September. When we go to allocate that Area D, these numbers will change slightly, just from allocating those landings correctly. Any questions or suggestions for Action 1?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands. Wait. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and I just didn't want to interrupt you when you were talking about the feedback from the Gulf. I just wanted to note I was the liaison to that meeting, and there was some interest from the council just to see if there had been any -- To see what the landings were from like the east coast moving northward, just to see if that northern movement was also seen on the South Atlantic, and I couldn't answer that question, but I just wanted to say it, and I know it's not part of this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Tom, for mentioning that, because, yes, we did discuss that. The other thing I'll emphasize, and I don't remember whether it's yellowtail or mutton or both, and you heard the comments about avoiding closures from both the AP and the Gulf Council. Because of the jurisdictional apportionment, I recall, at least one of the species, you get a lot closer to potentially hitting the ACL, based on recent landings, than for one council versus another, and so I think that's just something we're going to want to carefully look at as we decide on jurisdictional apportionments. It's the same stock, but just two different regions, and do we want to try to figure out a way to portion this so that we minimize the potential for shutting down one portion of the stock relative to another?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and that brings us to Action 2, which is going to be an identical action to Action 1. However, this will apply to yellowtail snapper. This is a little bit different, in that the Gulf Council currently has a buffer between the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL, but we'll start with Alternative 1. Again, the same situation as Action 1. This is your true no action, retaining those ABCs with the MRFSS recreational estimates.

Alternative 2 would retain the current percentages, but apply them to the updated stock ABC, and then the South Atlantic ACL would be set equal to the South Atlantic ABC. Because the Gulf has a buffer currently in place, and they've indicated that they do not want to include a management buffer, they have subalternatives here, 2a and 2b, that would either retain that 11 percent buffer they currently have or remove it and set the Gulf ACL equal to ABC.

I have here Gulf only, because I don't know that this council has a strong feeling on their management buffer, but it is part of the action, and then, similarly, with Alternative three, you have those two bowtie formulas, both with the longer time range, and these are the same dates as for mutton, and then the shorter time range, and, again, we have to have those subalternatives, where the Gulf would either retain or remove their buffer between the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL. Again, there's a column here with that Gulf ACL, either with the buffer or without. Again, this is -- I highlighted it, and so it's not something that you're having to root through. Then these bullets here kind of just describe what we just talked about, and so any questions on Action 2?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm good. It looks like no questions.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and that brings us to Action 3, and this is going to be the modification of mutton snapper allocations in the South Atlantic, and so I kind of have more of a strawman here of alternative lineups, and so your Alternative 1 would be the true no action. You have your sector allocation percentages there, but those, obviously, would be applied to your current catch levels.

Then I have Alternative 2 in here right now as applying those current sector allocations to the updated South Atlantic ACL, and so, after you've removed your South Atlantic portion of the pie, then you would apply these percentages for the sector, and the Table 7 is taking that 2026 South Atlantic ACL and then just running those percentages. Again, these numbers will change as we allocate regionally.

Then, if you guys are good, then I think now would be the time to hand it over to the allocation decision tool folks, and, again, a reminder that running through the tool to help you guys develop any additional alternatives that might fit for appropriately allocating between these two sectors, and so, with that, I'm going to turn -- Unless. Okay. I'll turn it over to the allocation decision tool folks, and so we'll give them a minute to come up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, getting into the allocation decision tool, it has been a little bit of time since you all have used this, and so just a brief overview, or a reminder, of what this is intended to do. This allocation decision tool has a bit of emphasis on "decision". This is a tool that will give information, and it will give a process for considering that information, and it will give advice, but you will need to make decisions in order to move through the tool. You will need to make some decisions as we go through.

It's formatted in kind of a yes or no answer, or a discrete number of answers for you to click through to develop the advice that you have related to this fishery. One thing to not expect out of this is to get allocation percentages. That is something that you all will need to make decisions on, once again, and decide what those percentages will be, but this will kind of help you organize your thoughts and be able to help begin to build your rationale for the decisions that you will make in the amendment.

I will talk us through the landings and discards and stock status portions of the tool. Then Hadley will take over for the economic side, and Christina will finish up with the social side, to get through all of the different aspects, and then, once you get through to the end, then there will be -- We'll show you the summary here, and that has a compilation of all the advice that you would be getting out of this tool.

First of all, looking at landings and discards, and the first question is really quite conceptual. It's not really, I guess, a data-driven answer. It's do you think that future allocations should be based on harvests that are impacted by previous or current quotas?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess my question is why wouldn't you partly base it on that, and so, even if it's partly based on that, wouldn't the answer be yes?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure. It can be yes, and some of the justification that you all have had for allocation decisions in the past have been you don't want to use more recent harvests, because they were affected by the annual catch limits, but, as we get further and further into the Sustainable Fisheries Act era of Magnuson, you're going to have more years of your harvest having been constrained by annual catch limits, and so this is kind of a lead-up, and the current allocations are from an era before that, correct, and so would you like to use more recent landings in this decision?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think just the one thing you have to be cognizant of is if it's ACL plus overage, right, because one sector has a hard limit, and is constrained one way, and the other sector is constrained in a different way, that could allow for overages, and I don't know enough about mutton, and I don't think that's the case here, but just, when you were asking like why, that's one of the reasons. That's an argument that could be made, is all I'm saying.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. That was helpful, but I guess my big-picture question is, if we choose yes, are we not running through this tool? Like does this affect us using the tool for the whole rest of the questions?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and not all the other questions are dependent on this. This is intended to have several lines of thinking, and so, when we went through the whole allocation strategy process that you all went through a few years ago, one of the things that the council decided is you all want more than just past landings to be part of the decision-making process, and so, if you don't want recent landings to be the basis for future allocations, and you think that future allocations are better informed by something like economic trends, or social trends, or some combination of all of those, then that's what this tool is designed to do. It's what pieces of information do you want to use in your allocation decisions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, if we want it to be a combination of all of those, which box do we check, yes or no? I mean, I feel like that's a fair question.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There could be yeses, and there could be noes. You would make decisions going through it.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think what she's trying to say is, because it's a tree, does the tree look different if you choose yes than if you choose no? Do the branches look different?

MS. MCCAWLEY: If we want this to partly be based on landings, and consider all these other factors, do we choose yes or no?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If you want it to be based on landings, then you would choose yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Landings only or landings in combination?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If you want landings to be part of the equation -- If you are looking at other factors, you would make the decision for other factors when we get to other steps.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I think the answer here is yes, but I'm looking around the table to make sure. Okay. Everybody is nodding yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Now, kind of getting at what Kerry seemed to have some concern about with overages, have both only one or neither sector met or exceeded the ACLs or experienced closures due to the ACLs being projected to be met or exceeded in any of the past five fishing years?

Here, we see the recreational and commercial landings relative to their ACLs, and we only really have one year where the recreational landings got kind of close to the recreational ACL, but no overages, and so, in this case, this is kind of a data-driven answer, and that would be a neither, and so the associated landings-related advice would be that current fisheries have not been limited by the ACLs, and you'll see the rest of that. I don't need to read through all of that, but you'll see it within the advice summary.

So, going to the next portion, which considers discard mortality, and how that can play a part, has discard mortality accounted for a substantial portion of removals for either sector in three of the past five fishing years? "Substantial" is a subjective term, but you can see that there is a pretty stark difference between the discard contribution to removals for the recreational sector versus the commercial sector, and so removals by the commercial sector is roughly 5 percent, somewhere between 5 and 6 percent over the last -- Over these five years of data have been due to commercial debt discards, whereas, the recreational sector, it's more along the lines of between 50 and 70 percent in a given year. That being the case, unless anybody raises their hand to disagree, I would say, yes, that there is a substantial portion of discard removals.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Wait. Can we pause, please? There's hands going up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that the word "substantial" is what's throwing me off, and like so is 50 percent substantial? I don't know, and so I have Dewey, then Kerry.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: My question is, I mean, is this from -- Where is this data from for the discards on the recreational side? Where is that from?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The recreational is a combination of the Florida State Reef Fish Survey, and that would have been covering the private component, and the headboat survey would have covered the headboat component, and MRIP-FES would have covered the charter and shore components.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: (Mr. Hemilright's comment is not audible on the recording.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that is -- I believe that is consistent with the method that was used for the stock assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm just going to remind you that we had -- We asked FWC to go back and rerun the stock assessment to bring in State Reef Fish Survey data, et cetera. Kerry, you had your hand up? All right.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: (Mr. Hemilright's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can't remember, but it -- Not only did it bring in the State Reef Fish Survey, but it added more years to the data stream, but I would have to go back and look. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I understand they're all mixed together, but do we know the breakout? Is one headboat lower than something else? I'm just curious, because it may matter.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I have it, but just not in front of me right now, but I could get that information to you, and so I guess the question being the higher of the two would be the recreational, and do you all consider 50 to 70 percent of the removals being discards as a substantial portion of those removals?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I heard some people say yes, and, also, it says three of the past five fishing years, but it's 2018 to 2022, and so that's not exactly the past five, because we're in -- We're about to be in 2026, and so --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Those are the five most recent from the stock assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Which is now becoming outdated once again. All right, and so it sounds -- I heard people say yes here. Okay. People are nodding yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so the priority kind of coming out of that would be that you wouldn't necessarily be increasing the allocation for a sector with a substantial discard mortality. Next, looking at stock status, stock status has been determined. It's not overfished, and not overfishing, and so this would kind of be a non-contributory factor to the decision-making there, and you would base it off of other factors. Now I'm going to move over to economic.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so we're going to work through a series. There are three different main topics on the economic side. One looks at trends in economic importance, one looks at potential trends in demand, and the other looks as a sort of forward-projecting potential ACL utilization under the new potential sector ACLs, looking at what is status quo right now.

You know, the idea here, again, is it's not spitting out a percentage of, you know, the rec allocation should be this, and the commercial allocation should be this, but it does give you an idea of maybe directionality, and so, you know, do you want to go one way or the other when you're structuring your different alternatives, or is the current allocation looking pretty good.

With that, I'll start with Question 1.1, and so do the sectors have similar or divergent trends in relative economic importance of the species, and so there's two graphs there. The one on the left, that covers the commercial sector, and that looks at the contribution of the species to total revenue, and so that's all species in the South Atlantic that landed mutton snapper, the revenue from mutton snapper compared to total revenue for those species, and that's based on logbook data. As you can see, mutton snapper makes up a relatively low portion of total revenue for those vessels, and, if you insert -- At least over the past five years, if you insert a trend line through there, there's a decreasing trend.

The graph on the right looks at directed effort, and so, what this is, this is a comparison of directed trips for mutton snapper compared to directed trips for South-Atlantic-Council-managed species in the region, and so, you know, you can think of the numerator is directed trips for mutton, and the denominator is total effort, and so there has been an increasing trend seen on the recreational

side, where there's been an increasing trend in directed effort towards mutton snapper in comparison to total recreational effort in the region.

In that case, based on those graphs, there are divergent trends here, and so the advice there, and, again, this will be captured -- As Mike mentioned, it will be captured in the summary, but the idea would be based on that prioritized reallocation towards the sector with the increasing economic importance. In that case, it would be the recreational sector.

Moving on, looking at potential trends in demand for the species, there are four graphs here. The top two look at the commercial sector, and this is looking at trends in price per pound on the left, and then trends in landings on the right, and so there's been a slight increase, kind of a relatively flat trend in price for mutton snapper.

However, landings have gone down, and so this is -- What you really want to see here, to at least give an indication, and it's not a definitive statement, but an indication in that change in demand, and you would want to see those in the same direction, and so, if price is going up, and supply, or the landings are going up, then you could infer that perhaps there's additional demand for that species. In this case, it's really kind of inconclusive, because price is going one way, and supply is going the other, and so the inference on demand is, I would say, inconclusive or unknown.

Moving down, this covers the recreational sector, and so this looks at directed recreational trips, and, again, this is directed recreational trips for mutton snapper in comparison to recreational landings. And so, you have an increase in directed trips, and so these are trips where mutton snapper were targeted or landed, and also an increasing trend in recreational landings, and so, since you have the same trend there, you would say there's sort of an increasing trend, or infer there's an increasing trend, in demand from the recreational sector for mutton snapper. In that case, it would likely be a divergent trend, since you have a different trend between the commercial and recreational sectors.

The last one looks -- Keep in mind this is sort of a hypothetical, and so this is looking -- Sort of a forward projected looking utilization of your potential new sector annual catch limit, and so this is applying status quo to all of the various regional and sector allocation decisions in this amendment.

If you kept the current percentage on the regional level between the Gulf and South Atlantic, and then also maintained current sector allocations on a percentage level, and applied them to the new ACL, this is what they would likely look like, if they were in theory applied in recent years, and so, again, this is a potential hypothetical situation, but it gives you an idea of what the sectors may need, what are their needs, when you implement this new annual catch limit, and so the first two graphs are focusing on the commercial sector, and you can see, looking at the left graph, the dotted line on the top, and that's your potential new sector ACL, and so a little over probably 300,000 pounds.

You can look at -- Then the solid line here towards the bottom are commercial landings over the past five years, and so you can see commercial landings are well below what would be the new sector ACL, and so you're looking at a sector -- Again, hypothetically, there would have been a sector ACL utilization of about 15 to 20 percent, and so it would be a pretty good buffer there between landings and the commercial sector ACL for mutton snapper.

For the recreational sector, the bottom two graphs, you see a similar situation, where, again, the dotted line at the top would be your potential new recreational sector ACL under the new -- Once this amendment has -- Or if this amendment is adopted, and so how that would play out is that, if that were in place, and landings were being accounted for in the new units, if you will, under the new ACL, the recreational sector would also be considerably underharvesting its ACL, and so you're looking at an ACL utilization from about 40 to 60 percent, and so good news there. A pretty good buffer for both sectors.

The question here is has a sector fully utilized its ACL on a consistent basis? In this case, yes, both sectors, and so that would indicate, or lean towards, maintaining current sector allocations or potentially looking towards other potential topics that you reviewed in this tool.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, by yes, we're saying that, in the old numbers, we were fully utilizing it, but it looks like -- We're seeing the new numbers, and it's looking like we're under on both commercial and rec, and it's just -- These questions are hard. Words matter. Jimmy, did you want to ask a question, because I was a little hung up, too.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I think I've got it now, and this is with the new ACL, and that question is with the old ACL, and is that --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's why it's confusing to me. John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: So, yes, and it's tough to -- Especially with the changing units, it's tough to kind of wrap your head around, but the way I think about it -- You know, when Mike was asking about ACL utilization, he was -- It's sort of backward looking, to say, you know, how have sectors used their annual catch limits, and this is more of a forward. This is, you know, flipping the -- This is not looking backwards, and it's looking forward now to what the sectors may need under your new annual catch limit.

MR. HULL: If I could just add one -- So, looking at these graphs before us, it looks like there's plenty of fish, and there's plenty of opportunities there for both sectors.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and that's -- You know, assuming status quo across the board, and so the same trip limit, the same, you know, seasons and all that, yes, and that's what it's indicating, that there's a, you know, increasing -- An opportunity to increase landings, or the sectors will not be meeting their ACL under status quo.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, just to keep down that -- So then you answer the question -- Based on everything you just said, then you click no on this box, because they're not meeting it, and won't likely meet it on a consistent basis, and so is the answer then no?

MR. HADLEY: That's correct, and I made a mistake. I meant to say no. Mike pointed it out, but, yes, it would be a no, but the recommendation remains the same, where it's saying, you know, consider your current -- Maintaining your current allocations, or, if you do want to change allocations, you know, use a different -- Consider a different topic to base that decision on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and so, moving on to the social questions, these will be, I guess, easier, in a sense that the data is a little bit cleaner to explain, but that's also because we don't have as much of it, and so there are going to be a number of decisions that need to be made based on informed judgment from the council, as well as sort of all the qualitative information you have for this. We've relied pretty heavily on fishery performance reports that have been completed by the advisory panels.

The first set of questions has to do with community dependence, and this analysis was run at the county level. While it's ideal to do this at the community level, that's challenging to do with recreational data, and keep it still reliable, and so sort of trying to balance the need for commercial data to be at the community level, because it can be, but recreational data not being able to be, and, wanting them to be comparable, we stuck with the county level as a compromise, and so the counties listed there are the counties that had the highest amount of mutton snapper landings between 2020 and 2024.

Then what you're seeing, in the next two columns, are engagement indices, and these are how much a given county is engaged in commercial activity and recreational activity, and so identification of the counties is based on mutton snapper, and then engagement is just general engagement in commercial and recreational fishing, and that's based on things like number of permits, number of fish dealers, landings commercially in that county.

Your first question here is, among the top ten counties with the highest total landings, are most of them engaged in commercial fishing, recreational fishing, or both, and, again, I would encourage you, in addition to this sort of quantitative data that we're showing here, to also use your informed judgment and qualitative data to sort of groundtruth some of this.

No one -- None of these counties were engaged highly in either, but, sort of looking at this, and you can see it's color-coded, to me, it looks like mutton engagement -- Counties that are highly -- That have high landings of mutton snapper tend to lean to be a bit more engaged in recreational fishing than commercial fishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can we ask questions?

MS. WIEGAND: Absolutely.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I have so many questions. Okay, and so, just to make sure I understand, the recreational column isn't specific to mutton, and it's more on just -- Okay, and that's correct. It's just recreational fishing in general, and so that helps me understand the low, medium, high, and that makes a little bit more sense there, but, on the commercial side, it's actually looking at the commercial landings for mutton in those counties, and is that -- No, it's not. Okay. All right.

MS. WIEGAND: It's the identification of these, the county, and so Broward, Duval, Indian River, and those are the counties in the South Atlantic that have the highest landings of mutton snapper, and so it's that first column county that is specific to mutton snapper. Then, commercial and recreational, that is just commercial engagement generally, recreational engagement generally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then I struggle with how to answer this question, because I think about the range of mutton, and what I know about the communities that fish for mutton, and where that is, and so can you ask the question again, maybe in another way, so that that can help me understand, at least in this first one, kind of how to answer?

MS. WIEGAND: So I think of it as, okay, I want to know which -- Preferably communities, but in this place counties, in the South Atlantic are having really high landings of mutton snapper, and so let's say, you know, Broward County, Florida has really high landings of mutton snapper, and so, when thinking about allocations, is it -- Is that community of Broward, Florida, really engaged in commercial fishing, or are they really engaged in recreational fishing, or are they really engaged in both?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess my question is -- I'm sorry to ask dumb questions, but why does that matter? Like so, since mutton is so regional, and yellowtail is going to be the same way, then I guess, to try to take what you're saying a step further, to me, mutton is really heavy in Monroe County, as is commercial fishing is very important in Monroe County, and so the fact that mutton is yellow, is important, and it's yellow here, medium, in Monroe, and commercial fishing is important in Monroe, what does that tell us? Like so, in other words, we're saying this is important in thinking about allocation, because mutton does or doesn't make up a significant portion in some of these counties, and so -- I mean like let me find one that's low.

Volusia, and I don't think that mutton is particularly important commercially in Volusia County, and so then, because there's not a ton of commercial fishing there, and then not a lot of mutton-specific fishing, then how does that affect how you think about allocation?

MS. WIEGAND: So that sort of moves you to the second question, and so, sort of looking at this, when I glance at this, it looks to me like -- The counties that are landing a lot of mutton snapper, it looks like they are a little bit more engaged in recreational fishing than they are in commercial fishing, and so then you move to the next question, and so are recreational fishermen in those counties dependent on the resource, and this is where some of your informed judgment comes in, because we can't really break down to the community level with recreational data.

Here, think about, in say Volusia, where they're medium engaged in recreational fishing, how important is mutton to them? On a given trip, is mutton more or less important than other species, and that's where your yes or no comes in here for recreational fishermen. Commercial fishermen would take you down the same line.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The reason why I'm struggling is just because of the regionality of mutton, and we're trying to answer these questions about South Atlantic only, but I mean, I know mutton is -- I know that mutton is super, super important in Monroe, but I do think, recreationally, what we're hearing is it is important in some of these other areas, and so I think I might say yes, but I would also say I struggle with how to answer the commercial too, because I know that it's super important in Monroe.

Then, because it's super important in one of these top-ten areas, does it get it -- Does commercial get a yes too, and do you see what I'm saying? Like I'm trying to apply the informed judgment here, and then, after you answer, Jimmy has got questions, but could you help me apply what we know about mutton, and kind of its center of abundance there, to answer the questions?

MS. WIEGAND: I mean, I will acknowledge that it is a challenge, because sector allocations are not done by community or region, and they're done for the whole South Atlantic, and so there, you know, could be a conflict between, you know, mutton snapper may be very important commercially in Monroe, but not very important in Dare County, North Carolina, for example, and so that can be challenging.

What we were trying to do here is really distill the area that it's important, which is why you see all of these counties are Florida counties, and so it's going to be hard when like Monroe County, Florida is a little bit different from Volusia County, and, if the council wanted to direct us to not include as many counties, we could do that.

You'll notice, when we get to yellowtail, there are fewer included, just because that's where the landings were, but this was our attempt to sort of distill it down into the area it matters to, where mutton snapper really matters, and so, for example, you're not considering the importance of Dare County when you're talking about mutton snapper landings commercially.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think I get it, and so I think it's yes to both commercial and rec, but there are lots of hands going up, and so I'm going to let other people ask questions here. I have Jimmy, Trish, and Amy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and just a comment. The stock is expanding north, and I am from Volusia County, and so we are interacting with muttons more so, both commercially and recreationally, but, on the commercial side, you know, when I say interacting, maybe you'll catch a few fish, a handful, and so it's really not that important. It's good, and it adds to the catch, but, on the recreational side, if you catch one or two, it's really a big deal, you know, for a recreational trip, but it's growing in importance to both sectors as it expands, and it is expanding north.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's great information. I just don't know how to translate it into answering yes or no to the question, and so, for all of these, it's like I have an answer, but I don't know how to translate it into answering the question in the tool. I have Trish, Amy, and then Dewey.

MS. MURPHEY: So you selected these ten counties based off landings of mutton. Is that commercial and rec landings? Okay, and so, basically, since you based -- I'm just making sure, and I think I'm following you, maybe, and so you teased those counties out based off mutton, and so it's kind of inferred, and it seems like, what Jimmy described for his county, it's sort of inferred that there are commercial landings, but they're low, because he said he gets a few, whereas is it also -- It's inferred that recreational is a medium engagement, but they probably interact with mutton more.

I mean, I see -- I'm kind of reading that these commercial and rec are kind of inferring the amount of those mutton, and so Jessica was saying she knows, what was it, Monroe is very important commercially and very important recreationally, and, you know, that reflects there, too. It's medium, and so, to me, those species -- The mutton is probably more important in Monroe than in St. Lucie, and that's how I'm reading it.

MS. WIEGAND: Let me try to sort of break this down stepwise into a thought process. The first thing we wanted to identify is the area, and what communities in the South Atlantic is mutton

really important for, and we did that based on landings, which counties have the highest landings of mutton. That gives you your first column right here.

Once we know those counties, we want to know are they primarily engaged in commercial fishing or recreational fishing, and just in general, and so, these like medium, high, low, those aren't landings. Those are engagement indices, and so then, once you look at this, you're like, okay, well, it looks like, again, to sort of me, it seems like most of these counties that have high landings of mutton snapper are primarily engaged in recreational fishing, or more engaged in recreational fishing, than they are in commercial fishing, and so, again, to me, and this is certainly something the council can discuss, I would say, okay, they're more highly engaged in recreational fishing, generally.

Once you hit recreational, that bumps you down to the second part of this question, which is, okay, how important is mutton recreationally though, and this is where your informed judgment comes in, and so, in this area of these ten counties, and I understand that there will be variation between counties, how important is mutton specifically to recreational fishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would say that's -- I mean, every time you talk about it, it helps a little bit, and so I think my answer is yes, because I agree with what Jimmy is saying, because it is becoming more and more important. It's moving north, and we're seeing more mutton harvested say outside of Monroe County, but we've got more hands up, and so I'm going to let others ask questions here. Amy, and then Dewey.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, yes, I feel for you Florida folks with this one, but can you scroll back up, just a hot second, so I can read the text above the -- Thank you. For me, it's just -- It's a little weird not understanding the magnitude of the fishing communities in each of those counties, and how that may apply to the overall fishing effort of commercial versus recreational, especially if you're looking at all kind of landings, versus specific to mutton landings.

I think it would just be a thought process to more -- So maybe, Jimmy, from a commercial world, knowing all of your brothers and sisters up and down the coast, do you feel like some of those lows, or those mediums, are sort of representative of where your fishing community lives, because this is going to be based on landings and not necessarily where that individual is fishing, and does it matter, the magnitude of the fishermen in each of these counties? Like how many recreational fishermen or commercial fishermen are in these areas? Does that have anything to do with this, or does it --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me -- I guess so then it's the second-level decision. Let me try to restate what I think you're asking, but I'm not sure, but so I think you're saying why is it important, or why are we diving into this just based on engagement in general in these counties that have the highest landings of mutton, and is that what you're asking? Like, in other words, to set up this question in the first place, why are you first going to mutton, and then you're backing up, and you're going bigger picture, to just engagement in general of commercial and recreational fish? Okay, and that's our question. Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: So that's because we can't do engagement and reliance indices by species, and so, again, that's where some of the council's informed judgment comes in, because, in working with the individuals at the Regional Office that run this analysis, it's not really feasible, from a data

availability standpoint, to break engagement and reliance, which is a complimentary index to engagement, down at the species level.

There is some work being done to try, or at least there was perhaps before other priorities took over, work to try to work something at a species level out, but, as of right now, it can't be done at a species level, and so that's why we sort of start by narrowing it to mutton, go wider, and then try to dig back in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's weird. Thank you, and that makes me -- Thank you for validating how I feel about this. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: If you go down to the bottom, what's the outcome of this exercise right here? I mean, I understand it's one state. There's plenty of fish for both, and what the hell, I mean heck, are we -- I mean, everybody, it's like you all need to have a side session, or a different -- Like a workshop on how to figure this out, but, I mean, what's the outcome here? Both people get fish, and does this have anything to do with giving fish to the Gulf?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, this is just -- So, I mean, let me try to explain, and then, staff, please help.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Give the simple form of explaining this to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So the Gulf -- There was like a government accountability report, a few years ago, that said that the Gulf and South Atlantic needed to make sure they were looking at allocation.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But, when we're talking about allocation, and using the tool here, this is just within the South Atlantic, because the jurisdiction of this stock between Gulf and South Atlantic, there's not a tool for that. That's in another part of this document, and so, a while ago, following that GAO report, the South Atlantic developed this tool.

We've never actually used it before. We actually, spoiler, thought that it would be easier to use it on mutton and yellowtail, and try to use it on a species like that first than instead -- Because we debated using this on like amberjack, and so this is the first time that we're going through it, and we're -- You see that there are challenges for all of us, and it's not just you. We've never used it before, but this is our commitment, to try to look at things other than just landings, and, like you heard staff say, there's still all this informed judgment.

It's not like it's going to spit out percentages that then we're going to place in this document as alternatives. You're still -- You're going to get some answers here, and then you're going to have to use informed judgment to come up with the percentage split between commercial and rec in the South Atlantic yourself, and so this is supposed to make it easier.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So why don't you just go ahead and fill in yes or no, yes or no, and you get to the end and use your common sense and informed judgment. You went through this process, and I'm just saying that I don't know if we're going to get through this to get to lunch, but it's --

You know, I know you've got to use it, and some things are probably going to work better, but it just seems like you're just not getting the where of it. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I understand, Dewey, and I understand like the concept of yes, no, yes, no. That is what this is intended to do, but staff is not supposed to be making those decisions. The council is supposed to be making the decisions, and that is why we're here, for you all to say yes, no, commercial, recreational, equally, and both, whatever the answer may be, but that is why we're going through this so that you all can make the decision, and staff is not in the place of filling everything pre-filled for you in order to do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just one more comment on this bar graph in front of us, and so, on the commercial side, you see mostly lows, and, on the recreational side, you see increasing, and so, I mean, that's common sense. The recreational sector is expanding, exploding, flourishing. The commercial sector has one foot in the grave and one on a banana peel, and so does that mean that having -- Trying to stay out of the grave, maybe this animal is important to them, and, yes, I would say that it's equally important to both, for different reasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with you. That's what I was trying to say earlier. You just said it better, but, yes, and I'm going to go to staff.

MS. WIEGAND: So I would say that's where the informed judgment comes in, and you'll notice -- Again, we haven't gotten to yellowtail, but, in yellowtail, I was going to bring up some of what was discussed in the fishery performance report, which talks about how important it is to the commercial sector, which I would say could change some of this, and so, I mean, quantitative analysis like this for social data is challenging.

It's challenging when we're bringing it up to the county level, and it's certainly possible, for example, identifying the top ten areas based on landings, that there are small areas, that have proportionally low landings, but are nonetheless reliant on a given species, and so, especially with the social data, informed judgment, and, again, this is why we do the fishery performance reports with your advisory panels, and ask them specifically about community dependence, is you have that information, and it's down here in this document, to sort of groundtruth what the quantitative information is saying.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, how do you bring in what Jimmy is just saying, like the commercial industry in general is smaller, but mutton, in certain counties, are important to them, and because this is, you know, such a narrow area, I guess I come back to we don't understand how to take our knowledge and answer the questions, because I agree with Jimmy that, yes, recreational fishing is important, but you're going to be saying that for every single one of these species. Just because commercial is lower, it doesn't mean that this particular species isn't important to commercial fishermen, and so we don't know how to answer the question.

MS. WIEGAND: I think you, in fact, are answering the question, using your informed judgment. This is you guys telling staff that we see this, and we believe that it should be equally in both,

because of this rationale, and then we can select equally in both on here. It's just, like Mike said, staff doesn't want to make that decision, but, if you guys would like to make that decision and provide rationale for that decision --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it's kind of like you need to interpret our verbal informed judgment, and then click the boxes that go with that, because we're having trouble translating our informed judgment into what box to click in the tool. Okay, but Charlie put his hand up.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't want to add any confusion to this, but -- It's confused enough. You know, commercial guys portfolio fish. When my guys unload, I've got a long list of stuff to pack, generally ten to fifteen different species. I think we -- I don't know what the recreational cooler is going to look like, but I don't think they have nearly the variety that we do commercially, and so our landings, on any given species, are going to be low compared to possibly a recreational, quote, unquote, directed permit that, historically, is going to have less species in the box. Does that kind of make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, but I still think we're at equally to both.

MR. PHILLIPS: I agree.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. I just wanted to make sure. All right. So then, Christina, I'm going to pass it back to you, since we now selected equally in both, and can you run us through the other questions?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so equally in both would then -- The results from that would be to consider removing sector allocations or allocating equally between the sectors. This next set of questions is about cultural importance of a given species, and so for, in this case mutton snapper, and this is based entirely on informed judgment, and so you guys can discuss, and say yes or no, and so, for mutton snapper, do fishing activities play an important role in the history of fishing communities?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would say yes for Monroe County, because I think about Western Dry Rocks, and I think about -- Because there's some spawning aggregations there, and I just -- I think about, when we go out to workshops, and what people said about mutton the last time we went out to workshops on this, and so, in certain ones of the areas, I would say yes, and I'm looking around the room. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and, in Volusia County, we've always caught muttons, but we are catching more.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so this says there has historically been an important fishery in these fishing communities. The next question then is does it play an important role in community cultural tradition, and I'll explain what we're getting at here. This is things -- Like think of iconic species. These are species you see constantly marketed for recreational trips. These are species that you would see mounted up in restaurants, advertised in tourism boards, advertised at restaurants as an incredibly culturally-important species.

One of the ones that we always sort of use an example for that is dolphin. Dolphin is almost always thought of as a culturally-important species, because it's used in marketing for commercial fisheries, recreational fisheries, tourism, things like that, and so is mutton a species like that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think -- Well, I'm thinking about Monroe County. I'm thinking about Western Dry Rocks, and I'm thinking about all of that. I think the answer is yes. Okay, and so Jimmy is nodding yes. So yes in this one specific community for sure, and then, some others, it's a maybe, and so I think the answer is yes.

MS. WIEGAND: Okay, and so the last question, tiering off of that one, is it changes in the regulatory -- Are changes in the regulatory environment affecting the role that the species has played, either historically or culturally? Are you seeing changes because of regulations and how important that species is?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think -- I'm trying to think, once again, about Western Dry Rocks, and how this has affected things, and I think that the answer is yes.

MS. WIEGAND: In that case, the advice is to sort of look backwards and try to mirror the historical real -- In this case real, but, also, in some fisheries, de facto allocations, to try to mirror that historical fishery that was culturally important, or, in the case like Jimmy is talking about, where you're seeing it move up the coast, current values in the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I'm still thinking about all that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Well, I was just thinking of -- I'm trying to remember, you know, when there wasn't a size limit on mutton snapper, and, of course, in today's world there is, and so, to answer the question of have changes in the regulatory environment affected the role of this, you would have to say yes, because of size limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we're good with these questions. Phew. Thanks for sticking with us, Christina. All right, and someone is going to tell us about our summary of all those questions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so, the summary advice, obviously, it's a compilation of where you got to with each of those different trees, and what we can do is we can have this kind of printed off and available within your decision documents, so that you can use it when you go through your allocation decisions, as far as setting up percentages, and if you want to have any prioritization in one direction or another. I wasn't sure, and, Allie, I guess checking in with you, was the plan to have the IPT develop alternatives based on this type of advice, or are you trying to have any discussion today?

MS. IBERLE: I think that's up to the committee, but I think, if you wanted to, we can take any further discussion on this, and this summary report, and bring maybe back like a short list at Full Council for you, and would that be amenable?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. Sure. I think that's fine. I don't think that we have percentages off the top of our head here, and so, sure, if you want to bring back some options, and it sounds great to

me. Now we're going to talk about yellowtail, and then we're going to do that same thing with yellowtail before lunch.

Okay. A couple things, and so we're not not appreciative of this allocation decision tool, and I just want to start with that. We are appreciative of this tool, and thank you. You guys did exactly what we asked for, and looked at all these other factors, and asked questions, and we looked at the trees in the past, the decision trees, to try to figure out how to set that thing up, but I don't know that what we got for mutton was super useful.

I don't know that the decisions in the tool would actually be any different for yellowtail, because it's kind of the same story, in that it's very important in Monroe County, just like Jimmy is saying, and it's moving up the coast, and so Jimmy and I can sit here and answer the questions the same way for yellowtail, but what Myra was suggesting is this is a tool for us, and, if we don't think that we're getting a lot of utility, and maybe it's just because it's these two species, but, if we're not getting a lot of utility out of it, we don't have to sit here and go through it.

It was actually supposed to be used to try to develop the range of alternatives, and I don't really think it helped us develop a range of alternatives for mutton, and so, if that's the case, then we can technically just go to lunch. I mean, I know it sounds hilarious, but I'm serious, because it didn't really get us what we needed, I guess. We tried it, but I see various staff with their hands raised, and so I'm going to go to Allie first, and then somebody else, and I think Andy had his hand up, and so Allie first.

MS. IBERLE: Just really quickly, if you're not wanting to -- If you're okay leaving this meeting without a fleshed-out set, we can take this back to the IPT, and the IPT can develop some more alternatives between now and March, you know, accounting for some of the stuff you have used the tool for, and then some other reasonable alternatives, and bring them back to you in March, so that's another option, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm okay with that as long as it doesn't slow anything down, because, you know, we're getting further and further away from the final year of data used in the assessment, and I don't want to end up in the same place again, where we're asking FWRI to rerun the assessment to bring in additional years, and so that's my only concern. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I just wanted to second that I think we're going to reach very similar, if not the same, outcome, and so I don't see the utility going through it. In terms of staff bringing back alternatives, is there any specific direction you would like from us at this point, in terms of those alternatives?

MS. IBERLE: I will just note, when you're looking at the current percentages, yellowtail is much closer to a 50-50 split, and you're at fifty-two-and-change, and forty-seven-and-change, whereas, when you're looking at the current breakdown for mutton, it's a little bit heavier on the rec. The allocation is higher on the recreational side, and so just keep that in mind.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I guess that -- Sure, and, if you think you can bring something back to Full Council, then we could react to it, and then the IPT could maybe work on it some more, but I think, based on everything we heard from the AP, based on our previous discussions, everything we've seen with not hitting the ACL for either sector with the new numbers, et cetera, I don't know

that we need significant changes in the alternatives for that allocation percentage, but go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: The other option too that you can use, and this is just me spit-balling, is taking those same date ranges that we used to look at the jurisdictional apportionment and plug those into the allocation formula that you use for both of these species now. That's, I think, a reasonable alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. I do, too, and let's do that.

MS. IBERLE: I mean, and you can always share the pain and share the gain.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let's do both. Let's do -- Those sound like some great alternatives, and, if you have those ready for Full Council, I think that that would be great, so that we can keep moving, and so the IPT can discuss it, but we have some hands up. Andy, and then Jimmy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I made the comment earlier, and so, you know, we don't necessarily have the catch limits being met, even under kind of current landings, but, if staff could look, kind of carefully, at are we hitting 95 percent of the catch limit in the Gulf, but only 50 percent in the South Atlantic, and would that influence any sort of jurisdictional allocations and decisions that we would want to make in the amendments?

MS. MCCAWLEY: You know that this discussion is just about South Atlantic rec versus commercial. We left the jurisdictional things behind, and the councils already talked about -- Both councils have already talked about it a couple times. I didn't get the impression that either council wanted to make significant changes, including the Gulf removed a bunch of the options that they didn't want to consider anymore. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Understood, but the jurisdictional apportionment then influences the allocation for the South Atlantic, and ultimately the split commercial and recreational from that, right, and so I think we just need to make sure we're looking at this holistically, and, if we shift the jurisdictional allocation, that could lower the commercial and recreational ACLs in the South Atlantic, which then affects their potential to actually be met.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see, and then, also, I just want to point out yellowtail, in the past, especially on commercial, had hit it in the South Atlantic, and there were early closures, I think, in three of the last few years, and so I just want to bring that up as well in thinking about what the sector allocation should be in thinking about alternatives, but I like the idea of putting in a new date range for the formula and things like that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just to comment on maybe a reason to go through these exercises is because it develops a record, and a rationale, for the decisions that we ultimately make on allocation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate that. Thank you, and we can certainly go through, have staff maybe go through the tool, and use the same answers we put in for mutton, and then we could just check that, and that might save some time, and so just a thought. With that, I think we're good to break for lunch, but I'll look over to our chair to make that decision and tell us when we're coming back.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and does everybody -- Do you want to just go ahead and break for lunch now and come back at 1:00, instead of 1:30?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

MS. MURPHEY: Would that be okay with everybody? Let's go ahead and break, and we'll come back at 1:00.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going. Next up is the Management Strategy Evaluations, and Chip is going to talk to us about that. All right. We're going to go ahead and bring Marcel up here to give us the SSC report on this topic.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I start my report, I would remiss not to mention how incredibly saddened the SSC was hearing about the news of Kyle Shertzer's passing. Many SSC members have worked with Kyle for years on stock assessments and research projects. Kyle was a wonderful colleague, and a great scientist. The SSC will remember that he was always thoughtful, and to-the-point answers and comments to our questions and our stock assessments, when we review them. He will be greatly missed, and the SSC's thoughts are being with his family and friends.

Of course, from here, it's kind of a hard transition to my report, but the SSC met October 21st through the 23rd. That was during the federal shutdown, and so we had to make some changes to our agenda, and I need to thank the staff, in particular Chip and Judd, who helped us getting through all but one agenda item.

Also, we had two-and-a-half days to complete a meeting, and, especially as chair, I really appreciated that. I think it worked very well. We were able to go through the agenda, and we also had time to discuss our report. We left the meeting with a really good draft of that report, and that really helped me and others to get the report to you all in a timely manner.

With that, the first part of my report is a summary of the snapper grouper and wreckfish management strategy evaluation, especially the discussions and the recommendations from the SSC. Chip provided an overview of the snapper grouper MSE, and the SSC was asked to consider several questions to assist with moving forward.

We discussed if there were any concerns using the outputs from past SEDAR assessments, and, if there's not a SEDAR assessment, to use the rapid conditioning model to parameterize the MSE, and also to see if there were any diagnostics or validation steps that the SSC would like to see.

We concluded that, for those species with stock assessments, the most recent SEDAR assessment outputs are most appropriate to use in the MSE. Given, or despite, the uncertainties that were identified by either CIE or SSC reviews of those assessments, the assessments likely represent the best input data available. For stocks without accepted stock assessments, the use of the rapid conditioning models is likely a good approach, and the SSC discussed that, perhaps for a few

species that have SEDAR assessments, to use that to compare MSE operation models based on those assessments, and compare that with those based on rapid conditioning models.

This comparison could help validate the MSE operation model, and could also provide some insight into the impacts of relying on these rapid conditioning models for those species without a SEDAR assessment. For instance, how does it affect uncertainty, and is there a directional bias in the outputs of the rapid assessment model.

The assessment team mentioned that, for five or six species without a SEDAR assessment, a quote, unquote, data workshop will be held to obtain data inputs to configure the rapid conditioning models. The SSC noted that there may be some concerns about the data used for these unassessed species, but, unfortunately, at the moment, that's kind of the best option we have.

The SSC was also asked about the aggregate bag limit. One of the suggestions we had is to explore a so-called envelope approach, meaning that you would look at two scenarios on either end of the possible spectrum, and, in other words, exploring a best or a worst-case scenario, and these scenarios could provide kind of the bounds, or the bookends, of what would occur in the fishery, recognizing that what would actually occur is probably somewhere in between, and our report provides a little more detail on possible scenarios for that.

The SSC also recommended investigating a bag limit compliance rate of zero, and, in addition, we suggest looking at the angler response and behavior information from the Florida exempted fishing permit study, and Jessica provided an overview of that earlier this week. This could potentially be used to compare quantitative modeling runs and modeling outputs, and, before I switch to wreckfish, let me pause here and see if there's any questions relative to the snapper grouper MSE discussions, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thanks, Marcel. Just one question for me. Can you give me an explanation of a rapid conditioning model?

DR. REICHERT: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So this is an approach that they use at Blue Matter Science in order to do stock assessments inside these management strategy evaluations. Some stock assessments can take a long time to run, and so that what they have is optimized procedures, in order to get outputs fairly quickly. That can be developed in the management strategy evaluation, and so it's designed to run in a variety of stock assessment platforms. It's just the algorithm that they use in order to get all the outputs quickly is slightly different than what's used in typical stock assessments.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Chip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: When you say a variety of stock assessment platforms, for those of us that are not in the stock assessment space, can you describe various platforms, please?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so biomass production models is one. BAM is one platform. SS is another.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks for that, Chip, and I guess continuation of that. Are they simple, or are they pretty darn complex approaches? Not the ones you described, but the Blue Matter one.

DR. COLLIER: So it can take the information that you provide to it and perform those different actions, essentially, different platforms, and so, when we look at how well it does -- If you looked at the previous presentations that Adrian has done, he has basically used that rapid conditioning model for red snapper and black sea bass, and it matched pretty much identically.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and that's what we propose to do, so you can actually do the comparison. Thank you. Any other questions? No? Thank you. Relative to the wreckfish MSE, the SSC received a presentation from a wreckfish MSE from Dr. Collie and Dr. Nowlis from Lynker, and we had really good discussion about that. I'm highlighting some of that discussion in the next two slides.

The presenters mentioned the narrow range of fish lengths in the catches, and the SSC noted that, based on the life history of wreckfish, recruitment is likely coming from outside the fish area, which may explain why smaller fish are rare, or absent, from the catches, and it also explains the relatively narrow size range. The presenters also mentioned that there's limited availability of age and length composition data, and the SSC noted that we don't necessarily need that composition for every year, as long as, for the years that we do have data, it represents the population, or the fishery, depending on what you're looking at.

The SSC also recommended looking at other assessment methods, such as the Depletion-Based Stock Reduction Analysis, or DBSRA. That was one of the examples, and, as a reminder to the committee, this is a method designed for determining catch limits and management reference points for data-limited species, but where the catches are known from the beginning of exploitation, relative to the DBSRA.

As you know, the previous wreckfish assessment was done a while back, and the SSC mentioned that there were some differing patterns in CPUE between the previous and the current assessment, and we recommended that it would be good to contact, or reach out, to the previous assessment analyst for some additional information about, in particular, data inputs and model assumptions.

Speaking of CPUE, the SSC also discussed several CPUE matters. Since there's no fishery-independent data, the fishery-dependent index is critical, and the MSE will likely be highly reliant on that, and it's important to look at how management actions are accounted for in the index development. The SSC also proposed exploring variation and trends in the data, such as number of hooks per line, number of lines, number of hours fished, and we thought there may be other, such as days fished, that could be useful as effort metrics.

Also, the changes in technology, which is not unique to wreckfish, but is happening, or has happened, in a lot of fisheries. Changes in technology may have affected the catchability and

selectivity. Things like GPS and other technologies may have affected many fisheries, and catchability may have to be looked at as variable, or changing.

The MSE team mentioned that there is a stakeholder engagement phase planned, and the SSC recommended discussing if information from, for instance, stakeholder logbooks can help answer some of the questions we had, and, Madam Chair, that completes this part of my report, and I'll be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Marcel. Any additional questions here? I don't see -- Wait. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given my understanding that wreckfish is only caught with a hook, and I know, from my experience here with black sea bass in the Mid-Atlantic, and catching blueline tilefish with the hook, that we would never catch the small ones, but, now that I use a black sea bass pot, and I'm wondering -- You know, I'm seeing fish there that we don't never see, with a 12/0 hook, doing the SADL survey, or just anywhere fishing.

I know the wreckfish is a lot deeper, but, just assuming that they're coming from somewhere else, your gear might not be catchability to what's actually there in a smaller size. Had it not been for black sea bass, I would be thinking the same thing, but it's not -- It's simply not the case, now that I've been able to see the difference, and you're seeing the, you know, smaller fish, and stuff like that, because they can only fit in such a size hole as the opening to that, and so I would just be cautious, but I know it's hard to sample that deep with other things besides guys fishing with the hook.

DR. REICHERT: You may be right, but on the other -- The flip side is that, what we know of the life history of wreckfish, the SSC felt it was likely that recruitment is coming from outside the U.S. fished area, and so that's all I can say relative to that topic. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, just to build on that a little bit more, sometimes they will catch wreckfish with hooks that are not used in the U.S. That's what makes them think that they're coming from outside, and so --

DR. REICHERT: Actually, the others from -- The hooks that are more commonly used in the other side of the Atlantic, the Azores and those areas.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other comments or questions? All right. I don't see any. Thank you, Marcel.

DR. REICHERT: You're welcome. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Now I'm going to turn it back to Chip, who is going to, I think, first, give us an update on the snapper grouper MSE.

DR. COLLIER: That's correct, and so, the snapper grouper MSE, we're working with Blue Matter Science, and that's Adrian Hordyk who is the lead working on that. He's continuing to update the models, and we're trying -- He's waiting on me to really narrow down the list of species.

I've worked with Jessica on the south Florida stuff, but I do need to work with the other state partners to get the north of Florida species to include in the stock assessment model, and so we're going to -- Or that management strategy evaluation, but he has said that he has all the species that have Beaufort assessments. He has those included into the MSE, and he's ready to operate on whichever species are going to be most appropriate. We had talked about, last time, five or six different species to include in that, and we just need to supply him with the list of species.

Additionally, I'm working with him in order to be able to include an analysis for the bag limit for the recreational fishery. We're working on that, trying to change it from a SAS analysis over to an R analysis, and so that's just taking a little bit of time. With that, that's all the updates I have on the management strategy evaluation.

The reason that this is here is just in case there were questions that came up as we were developing the model. We wanted to have some time already designated on this agenda, in case there were questions, but, right now, there's no questions that he has for the council, and so we're going to continue moving forward with the model, but please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any feedback here? I guess one thing I was going to ask is so the Snapper Grouper AP talked about some species as well, and I was a little concerned, because, in the northeast Florida list, they had Goliath grouper, and I really didn't think that that one should be analyzed in that list, and so I just want to throw that out there.

DR. COLLIER: That's correct. Goliath grouper was in there. We don't really have a stock assessment for that, and we don't really have landings. I don't know how we would incorporate that into the management strategy evaluation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any other questions, or comments? Okay. I don't see any additional hands. Back to you for wreckfish.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so, for wreckfish, the team from Lynker has still been working on this since our last meeting, as well as the stakeholder engagement meetings. I felt like they had those October, or November, and I'm drawing a blank on the time period, but it was in November, but I felt like they went really well, although there weren't a ton of people in attendance.

I thought the discussions that went on at the table were very informative. They talked quite a bit about the information that was included in the logbooks, like Marcel had mentioned. The modelers have taken a lot of information from the SSC, directly asked the stakeholders what they did to try to inform their models. They're revising the index of abundance based on some of the comments, and so I think everything's moving forward very well with the wreckfish MSE, and they seem to be on track to have a final model presented to the SSC in April.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions or comments on that? I don't see any. All right. We're going to leave the MSEs. Thank you for the update on that, and then we will dive into golden tilefish.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so I'll be giving a brief overview, or doing the presentation for golden tilefish. The Science Center, partially due to the government shutdown, had asked council

staff, or I had offered to give the presentation for them, as opposed to them having to develop a presentation, and also give it in a fairly short timeframe.

The original SEDAR 89 was presented to the SSC in October 2024, and, as we were developing some of the tools that you all use for making management decisions, or consider management decisions, we noticed a discrepancy in the landings that were included in the stock assessment, and then in the landings that were being used to monitor the fishery, and so the discrepancy -- We reached out to ACCSP, and they revised the previous estimates for landings of golden tilefish, and then the assessment was re-run, and so you can find the -- The assessment is -- I think it's included in this report, or as a background document for this.

The big changes that the models included were a change in the initial F value. It was changed from a very low value of 0.01 to a fixed value of one, and what this does in the model is it's basically giving it a starting point. This does not mean that the model is going to use that as the final estimate it comes up with. It's just a starting point to initialize the parameters in the stock assessment. Then the second big change that occurred was the landings were revised based on corrected landings, those corrected data, that were provided by ACCSP.

So how did the model change? Diving into the landings first, over to the left, you can see the landings by the different categories and components. There's the -- In blue, you'll see the longline landings, and that's clearly the dominant fishery for golden tilefish, but we also have some landings in the handline commercial fishery, as well as some sporadic landings in the recreational fishery that are in red in that graph.

If you look to the right, that's where you'll see the differences between the original stock assessment and the revised stock assessment. The revised stock assessment are the green values, and they end up being very close, in most years, to the ACL-based monitoring for -- Or to the ACL in most years. If you look at the blue value, basically since 2018, that's where you see that deviation between the two different datasets, and so that's what was corrected there.

The results of this, we can get into here. These are the findings of the stock assessment. You'll see that the spawning stock biomass -- It is right around the spawning stock biomass at maximum sustainable yield, which is a good thing. That means the stock is not overfished, and then, if you look on the right plot, you can see how the model changed with these two model corrections that were applied into it.

On the left side, you're seeing the difference between that very low initial F and then the F that was placed at one, and you can see that the spawning stock biomass in this corrected version is a little bit higher from 1970 to 1980. After 1980, all the way up to around 2010, these values are identical, and then, after 2010, you're seeing some slight deviations, and those were due to the differences in landings.

One of the things that was probably of concern in the last assessment, or probably most noteworthy in the last assessment, was that the estimate of F was getting very close to an overfishing status. However, if you look at the plot on the left, which has the fishing mortality rate from 1970 all the way up to 2022, what you'll see is the F rate has gone down as those landings in those more recent time periods were dropped, and so the F rate is no longer approaching an overfishing condition.

There's also a selectivity block that was applied. This was in the original stock assessment and this current stock assessment, just highlighting how the changes in F are occurring in the most recent time block.

The part that really drew my eye, and I don't know if it draws your eye as well, but basically that purple drop, and that's a change in how the stock assessment selectivity was applied. Basically, for the oldest fish, they're not really selected as highly as they were in the previous time blocks. That's what that big change is there. It's not necessarily a change in abundance.

Going on to the assessment results, and how confident we are in the outcome of the results, if you're looking at this plot, what I was trying to do is look at the overfished condition and overfishing condition, and what I did was I took the two values for the not overfished, and so it's in those two blocks on the upper side.

You add those together, and you determine how many runs indicated that the stock was not overfished, and it's 78 percent of those runs indicate the stock is not overfished. If you look at the two bottom ones, or the two on the left side, if you're below one on the left side, that's indicating that overfishing is not occurring, and so, for this, overfishing is not occurring in 80.8 percent of the runs, and so it's pretty confident that, for golden tilefish, the stock is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring.

Here are the assessment results, basically in a more tabular form, and I have a block down at the bottom indicating what I highlight as some of the important parts for you all to look at when you're looking at a stock assessment. Where we're looking at the geometric mean from 2020 to 2022 over the fishing mortality at FMSY, it's 0.72. Once again, that stock is not overfishing, and then you go down to the values for MSST. If you're below one for the MSST, that means you're overfished. This one is 1.31, and so it's not overfished, and, in fact, it's right at SSB MSY, which means the stock is right at maximum sustainable yield.

Going into projections for this stock, and I have a bar that I placed into the projections that were supplied by the analyst, and so you can see the 2023 through 2024 values, or 2025 values, and those indicate what's currently going on in the fishery, or were projected to occur in the fishery. If you look below that, that is what's going to be potential new ABC and OFL recommendations if you all approve this amendment or a future amendment to include this, and so you're seeing an increase in the land pounds, from 389,000 pounds up to 546,000 in 2026, and then 540,000 pounds in 2027.

Taking account to the scientific uncertainty and the recommendation from the SSC using a P* of 30 percent, you can see that it changed from that 546,000, or 540,000, down to 459,000 and 465,000, still well above the 389,000 that is currently being harvested, and so that is all I had for the revised assessment for golden tilefish, and we can bring Marcel up, if you want to talk about the SSC's recommendations, or you can ask me questions, if you would like.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Questions about this, folks? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, and so I looked on SERO quota monitoring, and, for this year, you have an ACL for the pelagic longline -- I mean, not pelagic longline, but the bottom longline, of

332,165, and you have, for the hook-and-line, 110,722, and that comes up at 443,000, and you're saying, on your piece of paper like 389,000, or it's under 400,000, and so what am I missing?

DR. COLLIER: So those are the projected values to be caught. It's not necessarily the values -- It's not the ACL value.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right, and so what I'm looking at for quota monitoring is what you're allowed to catch, and so what I'm looking at here, when you say the 389,000, and what's the difference there, or that's what they anticipate?

MS. MARHEFKA: They don't think we're going to catch it all.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: Because that value is also inclusive of the recreational fishery as well.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right, and so my next question would be, and help me out here, in 2026, what are we allowed to catch in the golden tilefish? Maybe we haven't got that far yet, but I'm just -- I'm a simple thinker.

DR. COLLIER: Right. Correct. You haven't got that far yet, and I will say, the 459,000 in 2026 is the ABC value. This is inclusive of dead discards, and so we'll have to reduce from this estimate for dead discards, in order to develop an ACL. I can't give you a value of what you'll be able to catch, because that will have to be developed through the amendment on what the ACL is.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Are we anticipating this amendment -- I'll stop there. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other questions? All right. I'm going to turn it back to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Marcel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and we're turning it over to Marcel.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. This was one of the agenda items that was affected by the federal shutdown. The analyst was not available to present results of the updated assessment, and the SSC was grateful to Chip that he was willing to provide the overview, similar to what you all have heard just now.

However, the SSC felt that the updated assessment report, and the presentation slides, were sufficient to base an adjusted fishing level recommendation on, but, of course realized that we had no opportunity to ask the analyst any questions during this review. The SSC appreciated the efforts to investigate and correct the landings, and also to investigate the initial F, the initial fishing mortality, in the model. We concentrated our discussions on the impacts of the corrections, and we tried to avoid to do a complete re-review of the entire assessment, and so we focused on the initial F and the corrections of the landings.

The SSC supports the change that was made to the initial F, and we discussed that it minimally affected the output in earlier years, and with less impact in the more recent years. The bottom line

is that the SSC considers the revised assessment consistent with BSIA, best scientific information available, principles and practices. The assessment provides a reliable, quantitative estimate of current stock status, but, of course, with the uncertainties that were discussed in our initial review and our October meeting.

We did reiterate some of those uncertainties and recommendations that we discussed during our initial review, including the choice of the direct estimate of FMSY in the stock-recruit relationship relative to the poor fit of the Beverton-Holt spawner recruit curve, the limited data at low spawning stock size, and the significant uncertainty in the steepness profiling.

We also mentioned the dome-shaped selectivity and the selectivity block change in 2020 that Chip, I think, also mentioned, and we recommended that it would be good to explore if the data from the commercial longline, using years since major change in the fishery, can be used to develop a fishery-dependent index, and, as a health check to the next assessment, the SSC again reiterated that the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey data are likely going to be very important to monitor the stock, as well as for the next stock assessments, but also look at landings versus projected landings from the assessment and if and when the ACL is reached.

In terms of the projections, the SSC felt that the provided projections are likely reliable, of course, again, assuming that the uncertainties and assumptions that were used in the projections, and also mentioned in our review, are appropriate. With increasing uncertainty in the projections over time, as was reiterated in the report, and also in the stock assessment report, there was some concern within the SSC that the terminal year of 2022 is now three years ago.

Related to that, the SSC understands the next assessment isn't scheduled, I think, until 2029, and we felt that it may be too long of a gap between assessments, given the uncertainties in the assessment and the projections. However, of course, the SSC also realized the difficulties in the assessment scheduling.

In terms of updated fishing level recommendations, the changes in the assessment were minor, as Chip mentioned, and did not change the P* value of 30 percent, and that resulted in the ABC recommendations in this table. As a reminder, given the increasing uncertainty in the projections, the SSC typically doesn't provide projections, ABC recommendations, beyond five years, and with the post-terminal year of the assessment, in this case through 2027, and, as Chip already mentioned, 2023 through 2025 are projected based on landings.

As an aside, we discussed the change in the general setup of our fishing level recommendation table. It's a little different than you usually see from us, and that was to clarify the difference between our true ABC recommendations, in this case for the years 2026 and 2027, and the values of the intermediate years, in this case 2023 to 2025, that are based on observed or projected landings, and this is my last slide of this part of my report, Madam Chair, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Marcel. Questions about this? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I probably should know this, but I don't. Why is the OFL, recommended, and the projected ABC like 90,000 pounds -- Like 90,000 pounds difference?

DR. REICHERT: That's the buffer based on the P*. That's the buffer as a result of the scientific uncertainty in the assessment.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Basically, the scientific uncertainty is saying close to 20 percent of the pounds, 90,000 pounds, uncertainty in the assessment, and, I mean, that's what -- Based on the methodology, or based on the P* approach, right?

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and that's the percentage of the OFL that results in the ABC. That's the result of the scientific uncertainty in the assessment.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, that's a lot of pounds of uncertainty.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, based on Dewey's questions earlier about the current catch limits, and I realize we're not at the point where we know what the catch limits would be, but let's say they're in line or close to this ABC. Are we looking at slight reductions in the catch limits relative to where we're at currently?

DR. COLLIER: I think it was going to be an increase.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I see heads nodding yes. Are there other questions here? All right. Thank you, Marcel. I think, Chip, we're going to turn it back to you, and you're going to talk about the abbreviated framework, and kind of dive into that. All right, and maybe that's Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so, in follow-up to this assessment, if you would like to -- You all would probably be cleanest if we get a motion to do this, but, if you all would like to reinstate Abbreviated Framework 4, and that was going to put in the tilefish ABC and ACL changes, then you all can do that, and we can get back to work on that, but that's something that, if you all need more discussion before you make that decision, then you're able to go ahead and do that now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't remember this amendment abbreviated framework from before. We had already started it before, and then we stopped work on it to wait for the assessment, or why did we stop work on it?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: To wait for the assessment. There was a discrepancy in the commercial numbers, and that was identified kind of after it had begun, but before it finished.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good, and so we would need a motion to pick that amendment back up, and so resume work on Abbreviated Framework 4, and I guess I would also -- So let's talk about a motion on that, and then let's talk about what's in that document, but it looks like -- I see confused faces, and so do we have questions? All right. Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: If you guys said this while I was getting my snack, I apologize, but we have -- Because we have a new ABC, don't we have to somehow change the ABC through some vehicle? Like we have to do something, because the ABC is new, or no? Am I lost?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If I remember correctly, the new ABC is higher than your current ABC, and so you are not required to change it, because your current ABC is within the bounds of your SSC advice.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm using my handy dandy little book, Allie, and I am looking at the current golden tilefish ABC is 458,000 pounds. This is 459,000 pounds. Am I understanding that this is a thousand-pound increase in ABC?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and, if you look at the assessment -- I mean this is -- Golden tilefish, and we kind of pointed it out when the first round came around, and this one -- The change is rather small, and so it's still kind of the same effect.

You all are fishing right at the FMSY value, which in one sense is you don't want to go over, because you're not -- You don't want to, you know, overfish the stock, but, in the other sense, that's where you're getting your maximum sustainable yield, and so you all are right at that line of FMSY, and that seems to have held fairly consistent from the last assessment to this one, and so this is kind of a theoretical situation, where you all are harvesting what the stock is able to produce, or what the fishery rather is harvesting what the stock is able to produce, and so, yes, there's going to be a consistency in what that ABC and OFL is going to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: More questions? Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I didn't want to take the time if someone over there was going to ask, and so let me make sure I understand, and you're bringing this -- It's a thousand pounds, but, in theory, we could say, oh, we're hovering at that line, and maybe we're nervous that we're hovering at that line, and so we would lower it, but, if we're not feeling that way, then we don't -- We really probably shouldn't do anything for a thousand pounds, right? Is that why we're -- Are we having the discussion over this small amount on the off chance that we might be thinking of going lower, because we're not going to do this whole thing to go higher for a thousand pounds, right? Am I saying this right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, that's up to you all if you want to, and I'm not suggesting one way or the other. I'm simply pointing out that the goal, the entire goal, of the way Magnuson is set up is to fish at FMSY. That's what's going to maximize your yield from the fishery, and this -- In this fishery, that's what's happening. The F that is being produced is right at FMSY.

MS. MARHEFKA: That's the most lawyer answer. I don't know when you went to law school, but congrats.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I've got hands up. Amy, and then, Charlie, I think you had your hand up. Let's go to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: If you remember back in the corrections for the stock assessment, the landings reduced, and, with that reduction in landings, the F rate reduced, and, therefore, you were -- Based on the previous projections, you were going to have to do management measures to cut back harvest, and, in this case, you don't have to necessarily do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But we would have to bring in the new ACL and all that other stuff, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: You don't have to make any changes, because the ACL and the ABC right now is within the SSC's advice that they've brought, and so you don't have to change anything.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we can just like automatically adopt this, or we don't adopt it? Okay. Thank you. Proceed. Okay. All right. I've got more hands here. Amy, and then Charlie, and then Andy.

MS. DUKES: I guess I'm trying to think ahead, about how this works into perhaps the innovation plan, and, if we don't have to spend time and energy on this, maybe it's something we should say, thank you very much, since we're fishing at it, and see what happens, but then, if we do that, we don't have another assessment for, what, three years?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought it was -- That was part of the issue that the SSC brought up, that Marcel talked about, and so wouldn't that need to go back to the SEDAR Steering Committee to try to move it up in the process? I think that that would be how you would handle that, to move it up, if you wanted to. Okay. I'm going to go to other hands, while you all are having a conversation over there. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, to Dewey's point, we're sitting there with 100,000 pounds of scientific uncertainty that's set aside, and, basically, whether we're using the old assessment numbers, or the old ABC numbers, or the new ABC numbers, we're still going to catch the same amount of fish, within a hundred pounds or so, and so, as soon as we kind of make sure we have covered all of our bases, I think we should just move on into something that helps. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, we can look at this as we've done our job successfully. We're essentially managing it right to maximum sustainable yield, and, given the small change, the fact that the ABC is slightly higher, we wouldn't have to make any course corrections at this point, and so this is kind of like a health check for us, the way I would view it.

We're not coming close right now to harvesting the current catch limit, and so that's, I guess, my other argument for do we need to spend a lot of time energy to increase by 1,000 pounds.

In terms of Amy's comment about SEDAR, you know, Dewey has been participating this, and been involved in it, and we're going to soon have the SADL survey, with five years plus of data, and I think this is going to be an assessment that's ripe for an interim analysis, and so I think we could, obviously, come back and ask the center to do an interim analysis in the near-term, and give us an update on where this population is at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Apparently folks over here need to amend what was said, and so Chip and Mike have got some more information.

DR. COLLIER: No matter what, it's small changes to this, but, unfortunately, we were backwards in the way we had said this. If you look at the ABC recommendation, or the SSC's recommendation, in 2026, the recommendation is not 466,000, and then, if you look at this recommendation for 2026, it's 549,000, and then, the following year it's -- Sorry. It's 459,000, and then, the following year, it's 465,000, and so there would be a slight reduction.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: On the right, I have what is currently in the management plan from Amendment 52. That was the last time that you all changed the ABC, and so your ABC in 2026 and beyond is 466,000. What came out of the stock assessment, the ABC for 2026 is 459,000, and so that is what the change would need to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Based on what I just saw, I would say I wouldn't do an abbreviated framework to decrease by 1,000 pounds, but I'll look around the table, and so, Charlie, you have your hand up.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, considering all these numbers are so close percentage-wise, and, again, we've got 100,000 pounds set aside for scientific uncertainty, I would think that we should be able to just move on and get an interim assessment in a couple of years, or something like that, if the SSC thought that was a good path forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To add to Charlie's rationale, I mean, we haven't even taken the ACL that we have. We're not going to take the ACL, and so I know it doesn't legally work this way, but, you know, we know that some fish has been banked, in theory, because I do believe we're not taking it, more due to lack of effort than the fish not being out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Just to be clear, we do not need a motion to not re-initiate. They will just capture this decision, assuming that this is our decision, in the committee report, but I see that Shep has his hand up.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'm not clear, since it's a reduction. Do you currently have an ACL on the books that exceeds the new ABC recommendation associated with this?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the question to the council is then what are the options, in terms of vehicles that you would like to change the ABC? It doesn't seem like there's a lot of support for using the vehicle of an abbreviated framework, and so do you want to put the ABC change in some other amendment, rather than developing an entirely new amendment for this specific change?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I saw hands over here. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So we have to reduce, in 2026, 1,000 pounds? All right, and so what happens -- Well, never mind.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy, you had your hand up.

MS. DUKES: Because I do not know the procedures, I'm going to ask this question out loud, and so, understanding that this body is management, and understanding the SSC is the science-based management, is it plausible to go back to the SSC and have them reevaluate that value that they presented to us, understanding that it is 1,000 pounds difference, and ask if the level of uncertainty that's already been applied to the P* of 30, if we can come back and match those numbers, so that we don't have to do anything?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I would struggle asking the SSC to change the recommendation to match current values, and I agree we're going to have to go through a lot of motions in order to change this, but could we include it into another amendment, just simply changing the ACL recommendations?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, Amy was exactly where I was at. You know, go to the SSC and -- Like it's basically one year, I think.

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

MR. PHILLIPS: For both years? I mean, what is that 100,000 pounds of scientific uncertainty there for if we can't have some wiggle room somewhere? Small, small, small amounts of wiggle room, and what's it there for?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, but, also, the number is lower, which is what Shep is saying, and so, by law -- That's why he's saying we have to bring it in. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just so we're all on the same page with numbers here, the current ABC is 466,000, and what is the current ACL?

UNIDENTIFIED: 448,000.

MR. STRELCHECK: 448,000, and so the new ABC is 459,000 for next year, and we're good, because the ACL is below the ABC, and the only thing we would want to do is put an ABC in a future snapper grouper management plan? I think that's the option. We just put this in one of our other snapper grouper amendments sometime this year, and move forward with the revised ABC, and keep the ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are you guys good with that? If that's the case, then we still need a motion to initiate some sort of action. I don't know that Andy's was quite as specific as it needed to be, but we'll need a motion. What Andy is saying, which I think is a good plan, is we don't need to necessarily bring back Abbreviated Framework 4. We just need to change the ABC in a different vehicle, but I still think we need a motion to do that. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well --

MS. MCCAWLEY: So could it go in black sea bass, or is it going to slow down black sea bass?

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Got it. All right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So just checking back in to see -- What you all are intending for the current ACL of 458,000, and the change that you would be making is that, moving forward, that 466,000 that was supposed to go into place for next year would not go into place, and that the ACL would remain at 458,000, and is that correct, or, no, that's not correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're going to take like a ten-minute break to try to figure this out, because there's multiple discrepancies here. Thank you, guys.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, folks. Come on back to the table. We think we have a solution here. All right. Thank you for that side discussion about resolving some of these numbers and fixing this, and so, based on that discussion, we will need a motion to bring in these new numbers, and I am going to go to Kerry to make that motion and tell us the vehicle with which we're going to bring in that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sure, and I can do that, as long as I don't have to explain the rationale behind it. No. Okay, and so I make a motion that we add -- I guess we're not going to begin an amendment, and how do I make this motion? **I make a motion that we add updating the ABC and ACL for golden tilefish in Abbreviated Framework Number 5.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can I get a second, and then we'll talk about our rationale here? Charlie, is that a second?

MR. PHILLIPS: I'll second, and I guess, when you say updating, you're talking about just adding an action in that amendment?

MS. MARHEFKA: The action would be to change the ABC and the ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike has modified the motion. Is the motion maker okay with that? Okay. Secunder, Charlie, okay with that? All right. We've had a lot of discussion about this, but do we need some more rationale here? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So we're taking final action on the abbreviated framework at this meeting, and so I'm looking to Shep. Because we did not notice that it would include final action for golden tilefish, can we take final action? I think we're fine with including the ABC. I don't think the ACL change can be done at this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep, do you have some thoughts, sir?

MR. GRIMES: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Again, it's a tough one, right, because, I mean, you noticed Abbreviated Framework 5. That is on the agenda. That is out for final action. You're merely adding new actions and alternatives to it. You have no analysis before you, and that's never ideal, but you do know generally what the effects of this are.

It's an abbreviated framework, and so you don't have the full suite of alternatives, and full sort of analysis, like we would normally do. I guess, in that context, I think, you know, you have put it out there, and you have noticed that you were taking action. I would -- You know, there's always that position out there, but I think I would be comfortable with doing it that way, with final action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: So just throwing out another option for you all to think about. If we are going to approve Coral Amendment 11 in a special webinar in January, which we are still awaiting on a date, we could delay Abbreviated Framework 5 until January and approve them both at that meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: So, Myra, are you saying that they would be two separate things? I think the look on people's faces was that it would be an action in --

MS. BROUWER: No, and absolutely not.

MS. MARHEFKA: Which actually makes no sense now that I say it out loud.

MS. BROUWER: No, but during that meeting, That is going to be a council meeting.

MS. MARHEFKA: Beautiful. Love.

MS. BROUWER: But it would -- You know, you would have to agree to delay Abbreviated Framework 5 by however many weeks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so a couple things. Let me try to -- Before we vote on this motion, let me try to talk about the options here, and so we were set -- Sorry. Go ahead, Kerry, and then I'll try to summarize.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm sorry, because someone -- They just brought a really good point. Would this become then not Abbreviated Framework 5, and would this become maybe Abbreviated Framework 6?

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

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay. Let me tell you why. Then let me tell you why -- Calm down. The question is then, if we wait until January to take final approval on Abbreviated Framework 5, will the blueline tilefish specifications be able to go in place in time for this season, if we delay it, and we don't want to have unintended consequences of that idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, what are your thoughts on that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I'm no longer in the business of speculating how long rulemaking is going to take, because it has just changed dramatically in the last year, but I would agree with you,

right, that, the longer we take to then have blueline submitted to us, the less likely it could influence the 2026 season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, based on this discussion, and so I'm just going to make some suggestions here, and then we might need to modify this motion. I don't know that Abbreviated Framework 5 is the place to put this, because of the speed at which we want blueline to move. I don't think that we should put this in there and delay final action, even until the January meeting, which could be late in January, and the government may shut down again, and so I feel like we need to take -- It's just my opinion, and I feel like we need to take final action at this meeting, this week, for Abbreviated Framework 5, and then Shep is saying we can't really do that, because we don't have the analysis and everything on golden tilefish, and so I think that this -- What? Okay. Go ahead, Shep.

MR. GRIMES: So I said it's not ideal. There's no legal impediment, in my mind, to doing so, and, given that you have noticed Abbreviated Framework 5, I think you're on sound footing, probably, approving that at this meeting, even if you did add new alternatives to it, or actions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we could approve Abbreviated Framework 5 at this meeting, even though we're adding another action without any real analyses, and is that what we want to do? That's what this motion says, or do we want golden tile to go into a different vehicle and continue to approve Abbreviated 5 this week for blueline? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Just for clarification for me, because sometimes I get confused, if we change the ABC now, do we still have to come back and change the catch level, because if we --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that the confusion was that somebody said we could just do the ABC inside this Framework 5, and then we could come back to another meeting and do ACL, but this motion is to put them both in 5, and so I think maybe the question is can they both be in 5, and I'm looking down there to Andy and Shep, and can we do the ABC and the ACL for golden tilefish in Abbreviated Framework 5 and finalize Abbreviated Framework 5 at this meeting? I heard there's some risk.

MR. GRIMES: Yes, and then, like I said before, that's not ideal, right, and you open yourself up to criticism and, you know, what information did you have in front of you when you made the decision, but it is a process, right? The agency process, the rulemaking part that we do, comes after the council part.

We get to bolster the record. You know, we'll go through the rulemaking, take public comment, and, you know, have the opportunity to make sure the record is sound, and that at least the agency isn't making an arbitrary and capricious decision relative to those rules, and so there's a lot of process left to go, but, you know, that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I would also add that I think our intent is that we would want this in place for 2026, because we're trying to edit this for the 2026 season, and so, if we're trying to do that, speed is of the essence, and that's how -- This is the fastest thing that we have that could do this, I guess. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, considering what I think I just heard Shep say, that it's going to -- If this, adding this action to this amendment now, has any chance of slowing this amendment down so that we can -- Then I would have to vote against it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me try to -- There's a lot of discussions happening back here. Let me try to restate what Charlie is asking, so that we can get an answer on it. What Charlie is saying is, if by adding golden tilefish into Abbreviated Framework 5 for blue line ends up ultimately slowing down blue line, then he's going to vote against it, and so do you all have -- I know you don't have a crystal ball, but can you speak to the speed of this by adding ABC and ACL for golden tilefish?

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I can't speak to the speed of it. I mean, we're a week-and-a-half away from Christmas, you know, and there's going to be, obviously, people taking off for the holidays, and so there's going to be additional work, and analysis, that needs to be added. It will be more complicated by adding the ACL, which is a regulatory change, than adding just the ABC, but the question would really be how quickly could it be turned around and submitted to the agency and then us, obviously, get this into the rulemaking.

When I was thinking about this, I was thinking we were only going to change the ABC, stay the course with the catch limits, because there's minor differences, and we're not catching the catch limits currently, and then proceed forward in Framework Amendment 5, or Abbreviated Framework 5. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Amy, I'm going to go to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I guess the issue that's created with that, Andy, is that the total ACL and ABC are both scheduled to increase next year, and so the total ACL, and I'm just pulling it up so that people have a visual, the total ACL is equal to the ABC. Right now, it's 458,000, and, again, this is total, not commercial. This is total, both sectors, 458,000, and it's scheduled to increase next year to 466,000. Even if the ABC is changed within adding it to that amendment, the ACL would still be scheduled to increase, and then we would be in a situation where the ACL could potentially be higher than the ABC, temporarily.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think, with all that said, we're talking about fairly small differences. I think it would be best to put this in another vehicle, and just work through it with a snapper grouper amendment sometime in 2026.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I'm going to go to Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'm going to follow suit with Charlie and Andy. I think this is not the right vehicle. I really want blue line to be the major focus for Abbreviated Framework 5, and so I'm likely to push this motion down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So a question before I make a friendly amendment. From a staff perspective, do you see a logical snapper grouper FMP that would be -- Or amendment that we could add this to?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, I'm going to throw this out there, not having checked with senior staff at all, but, I mean, golden tilefish is largely a commercial fishery, and so we have a commercial amendment that's moving, and I don't necessarily see this action being the thing that slows that amendment down. There are plenty of other actions that are more complicated than this one that have a greater possibility of slowing that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Would you like to offer a substitute motion, Andy?

MR. STRELCHECK: Not a substitute if Kerry and the second are -- **My thought is to give some discretion to staff, and not try to decide which vehicle is the best here, but just to say add updating the ABC and ACL for golden tilefish in a snapper grouper amendment, based on the SSC recommendation, and then give staff some deference with regard to determining what's the best vehicle to put it in.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you okay with that, Kerry? Are you okay with that, Charlie? Okay. We'll make some edits to that. Stand by. All right. We've changed the vehicle with which we're going to bring in these numbers. I think we've had a lot of good discussion on this. I think we know why we're changing it, because we don't want to slow down other things. This will allow staff to figure out what is the vehicle. Maybe we'll be able to talk about this when we get to the workplan tomorrow. Any more discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

All right. Next up on the agenda is we're going to move into the innovation plan for the snapper grouper fishery. John is not in the room, and so John and Kerry and I worked on this document. What we're going to try to do today, although we've got plenty of time, would be to show you what we've come up with, and so we took the items from the last meeting and we put them -- Some of them are reorganized. We put them into categories. We selected items that had multiple votes on them, and so, with that, we're trying to figure out a couple things to eventually, hopefully in March, approve this.

We have some clarifying questions for you. We want to make sure that all of us know where we're going, maybe agree with, or understand, what these statements are under goalposts, and then principles, and we have a couple other categories that we created, and we put items into, and then the other thing is, even if it didn't get votes at the last meeting, because maybe people ran out of sticky dots, if there's some items that we want to add to this.

We have things like goalposts, and we have things like -- I'm trying to think of some of the other categories here without looking at the document, the whole document. The other categories are ideas for the process, and so thinking about making the Snapper Grouper Committee run a little bit more efficient, and so we have a number of items that we pulled into that category.

We also have a category called responsibility to stakeholders, and then we also talked about no-go statements and concepts, and we have those categories as well, and so what we're trying to do here, just to kind of remind us where we're going, and then I'll pass it over to Kerry to kind of help start

this discussion, but this is different than like the visioning that the council did a number of years ago.

If you think about these booklets, which came out of innovation, and, if you think about these booklets that we made, it's kind of like what we would do is, in addition to the goals in the FMP, we're saying, hey, we're trying to run a different -- Like a more efficient Snapper Grouper Committee meeting, and are there some goalposts that we can agree to, and there would be a reference for these at every meeting.

Are there some principles that we can agree to that would help us get to the goalposts, and that would hopefully also maybe expedite some of the discussion, so we're not getting bogged down and just having the same conversation over and over again.

Once again, today, we would be looking to, you know, clarify the concepts, make sure that we all understand what they mean, or agree on what they mean, discuss some of these topics, and are they in the right place, decide if anything is missing, because, once again, if it didn't get at least one vote, we didn't pull it into this document, and then we would try to finalize it in March, and then it would be a reference document that we would be using kind of from here on out to help guide this discussion, and so I'm going to pass it to Kerry, to see if you want to add anything to that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, so I was thinking, you know, that we had this discussion before lunch about the like revision of the FMU, and we were kind of getting bogged down in things. The idea is that this sort of set of principles and goals that we all agree on here would be something we reference.

When we were having that discussion earlier, if we all agreed that this council is willing to take more risk, but maybe we're hearing -- You know, we're getting hearing from the council that it's not the -- You know, I'm not comfortable with, you know, having a permit and reporting requirements for ecosystem species, then we reference this and say, well, how does that fit in with what we're trying to do?

Like, if we're being innovative, we look at this and, as a body, we say, well, we said we would take more risk, and is this a chance -- Is this a circumstance in which we do that thing we said? It doesn't mean we have to, but it's just -- It's like a gut check on, every time we're making snapper grouper decisions, especially when we get bogged down, we remind ourselves what we said we were going to do when we were feeling hopeful and optimistic and not discussing -- You know, not necessarily bogged down in the weeds over specific things.

That is sort of -- That's probably a bad -- I'm not saying that that's what we should do, and please don't take that that's what we -- That's I'm suggesting that's what we do in that specific example, but it's just giving an example of when we've talked about things like that, and so that's all I could think of, really.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so just a reminder that, what we did at the last meeting, we did that sticky dot exercise, and we all wrote down ideas that were kind of our thoughts about the snapper grouper fishery, where we might want to go, where we don't want to go, and it wasn't around a specific topic, and so we were able to get those thoughts out, and then people were voting on the

things that they really felt like should be part of this document, but we had to kind of pare that down a little bit.

There were some items in there that we definitely need some clarification on, because we're not sure that we're going to all be in agreement on what some of these phrases mean, and so I'm just looking around the room to make sure folks kind of understand what we're doing here. Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I understand the language of the summary of the goalpost, but, for me, when I look at this, there needs to be a lot more in-depth data produced before you actually get to more than these statements, and I look at like regional management to account for differences across regions. I guess this would be -- Right now, I don't know who lands what, and in what state, throughout the year, and until something like that -- You know, these would be -- You know, you've got to see the data.

These would be like the top of a statement you would like to get to, but, to me, there's a lot of work underneath before you get to that statement, and, for Number 1, the recreational is about access, and not poundage of fish harvested. Well, but is it access to fish? So, basically, Number 1, it's -- Recreational optimum yield is about access to fish harvested, and not poundage. I'm trying to understand. I mean, are we saying, in this Number 1 statement, that they don't care about pounds?

Well, they care about a fish, and I'm just saying, in general, it's -- You've got to catch a fish, I mean, or are they just going boat riding, or am I too much thinking of it, and that's the only reason I want to look at that, and, you know, maybe these are up here, but there's a lot of work to get you up to that statement, is what I'm saying, and so, these goalposts, they just didn't show up on the field. There's a lot of work that's got to be done to get them there before these statements to understand the statements. They're aspirational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That is the point, and so --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: There's a lot of work that's got to get done before the achievement part.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I think -- I'm going to start with your regional management one first, and so, yes, we are saying that they're aspirational, and these goalposts are like ideas that we would want to get to, but I agree with you. Like in thinking about regional management of fisheries to account for differences across the council region, so, in the past, we've had tons of conversation, when we're trying to work through an amendment, where we're like, okay, well, in Florida, we really need to fish in these months, and, well, North Carolina really needs to fish in these months.

You would be thinking about these more like aspirational statements as you're working through future amendments, so that, when we are working on a particular fishery, we would have a conversation like, oh, well, there seem to be some regional differences, and is there a way to accommodate those regional differences when we work through this amendment, do the analysis, pick the alternatives.

In other words, could you have, and I'm going to make it up, like a season for species X that occurs off of North Carolina and South Carolina, and then a different season, you know, opening or closing for that species off of Georgia and Florida, and putting out some statements of those things

that we keep saying wouldn't it be great if we could do this, and then we would think about these things as we are working on documents, you know, with -- That have specificity. Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and it does, and I tend to think you set your statement, and I tend to think of all the work, or all the detail, that's got to be done to get to that statement, and I know it takes forever, and so like the analysis would be the last five years of every month for every species, to see what the regional differences are, what's being landed in any state, because, right now, I have no way of knowing, without doing a data request to maybe my state, what's caught in my state for now -- The quota monitoring system that's given out by SERO tells the amount of pounds.

It don't tell where they're caught at, the time of the year, and that's why -- Not to bring up a plug for the GARFO quota monitoring page, which, when you look at it, man, it answers all these questions, and so I understand the goalposts. I can go along with like this, but I just tell you there's a lot of work before, a lot of multiple work, and data driven, before we can answer these questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I wouldn't see them as questions. I'm going to try first, and then I'm going to let Kerry go, and so I wouldn't look at it that way. Like this is not a charge to staff to go out and come back with data on all fifty-five species in the complex, figure it out off of every single state, or are there sub-regions or anything like that.

It's saying, as we embark on a new amendment on shadow shark, you know, like we would go -- We would look at these goalposts and say do we need to consider regionalization of shadow shark, and no, and we all kind of want to fish at the same time, and so you wouldn't really embark on the analysis until there is something in front of us that we want to work on, if that makes sense. Go ahead, Dewey, and then I'm going to go to Kerry.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think, in the meantime, we could look at ten or twelve species, and get the ball rolling for like a GARFO quota monitoring page, so this stuff is already answered, so maybe we don't have to take enough time with staff. I understand that, and I just -- I see where it's at. I just know how long it takes to get data, how a hiccup, or a closure, and I'm looking for something where -- I know a lot of my questions would be answered if I had a different quota monitoring page, and that ain't for the council. That's to discuss with SERO, because the stuff is already there in other forms, and the data is -- You know, it would help a lot of this stuff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I appreciate that discussion. I think that we're saying a couple different things. You're saying, just in general, and so I don't want to put words in your mouth, Dewey, but it seems like you're saying, in general, I need the data in a different form, in order for me to make decisions in snapper grouper, no matter what, and so whether we do this or not, whether this exists or not, I need the data in a different format, because I don't feel like I can make the best decisions from this seat without the data in a different format.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Real quick, because I've seen a lot of questions asked here at this table from different ones, and have still got questions, that haven't asked them yet, that, if the data was presented in that form already that's available, that the dealers report from, it would already answer the questions. That's the only reason why, and it's -- I mean, I'm not -- I just think it would -- It's time consuming.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I'm going to try to facilitate this discussion late in the afternoon on this particular day of the week. Okay, and so let me first try to take the -- I'm going to take the first two together. The recreational OY is about access, and not poundage of fish harvested, and I'll try to answer Dewey's question in a second, and then commercial OY is about providing seafood to consumers, and so, once again, these are two statements that we developed based on other statements on the sticky notes, you know, that were in the summary, that we kind of squished a couple of these together.

I want to talk about recreational OY for a second, and Dewey was saying that it's about access to fish, and harvesting fish, and I guess -- I don't know who this question is for, Gary or somebody else, but I think that whoever was writing some of these things was also saying that this is partly about closures, about not having closures, and so the fact that a species is open, and you have the ability to go offshore and possibly fish for something that's open, and having openings throughout the year, making sure that there are some snapper grouper species that are open throughout the year, and that is how I interpreted this, but maybe that's not -- Maybe that's not what the person meant, and so I'm going to start with Gary, and then I'll come back to Dewey.

MR. BORLAND: Yes, and so the good news is some of this information that we're getting too is coming out of your EFPs that you're driving in Florida. You know, I think, if you put yourself in a recreational fisherman's shoes, he may work Monday through Friday, and three weeks -- You know, three weekends in a row, the weather is terrible, and he can't go fishing. The fourth weekend, he works Monday through Friday, and he has paid, whatever, \$200,000 for a cheap boat, and he wants to go fishing on that Saturday, and it's all -- It's all shut, right?

Having the ability to use what he's worked so hard to have, and then he gets to that weekend, and everything is closed, right, because -- For whatever reason, and there's a multitude of reasons, but I think that's where they -- You know, the recreational fisherman gets frustrated. Now, if that means that he can only catch one fish only on Saturdays, but he can go -- You know, if he has the opportunity, he can go every weekend, and I think that's some of the satisfaction that they want to have, right? That's one piece.

There's multiple behavioral pieces that go into the recreational fisherman, but it isn't about, you know, catching the catch limit of 500 pounds and bringing them back to the market and selling them, right? The commercial and recreational thought process, behavioral process, is completely different, and I'm not saying that's the complete answer, but that's one of the pieces that I kind of went after with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do you think it's partly about satisfaction, like an angler behavior? Like I'm trying to -- I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but I'm trying to figure out if there's some sub-statements underneath this that we could write that would help explain kind of what we mean.

MR. BORLAND: Yes, and I think my view of that, and it's not perfect, obviously, is that they want to go fishing, right, and, when they can't go fishing, that is a dissatisfaction, and if you -- When we talk about, you know, the two-day snapper season, and I'm going to go back to that for a second, you know, the weather may be bad, or they may not have that weekend off, and you hear people complain about, you know, we had it on a Friday, and, well, everybody has got to work on a Friday.

Those are the type of things that, when they get the opportunity to go, and the weather aligns, and they have the vehicle to go offshore, they need to have -- To be able to grasp that opportunity, right, and, when one of these other factors shuts it down, that's when they get frustrated.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess my question is, taking red snapper off the table, are people satisfied with openings like -- Are there like tiers of species, and so, as long as a tier-one species is open, if you will, which could be different as you move throughout the South Atlantic Council's region, and, as long as one of those are open, that's enough for the angler to say there's something open out there that I can go access, and is that -- Is that kind of what -- If you took red snapper off the table, is that kind of what you're saying, that there are some species within the fifty-five that, as long as those are open, they're good with that, and that's good enough?

MR. BORLAND: I'm sure that doesn't -- I'm sure that's not a one-size-fits-all, but I believe that, again, that recreational fishermen want the opportunity to go fishing. They get it if something is closed, but I believe they want to be able to go when they can, whenever the stars all align, right? They can't -- You know, commercial fishermen wait for a window, you know, and they go fishing when it all comes together, but that's what they do, and a recreational fisherman has limited days that they can go, and, when the stars align, they want to be able to have access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Dewey, and then Tom.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm reading that, the first statement, and I think it's -- Recreational OY is about access openings, access openings for amounts of fish harvested, because poundage is commercial. The recreational is caught in number of fish, then it gets -- You know, it gets changed around, or whatever, and so it's about access to openings to harvest fish, is basically what it is, and so you should take out number, and it's not poundage of fish harvested. I mean, that's just me thinking and looking at the statement.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That's good. I have Tom, and then Carolyn.

MR. ROLLER: I really like the clarification of this discussion here. I think it's important to note that the word -- We can't let the word "access" trump abundance, because a big part of recreational fishing isn't just being able to go harvest that fish, and it's being able to have a good opportunity to harvest that fish. You know, fishermen want abundant stocks as well, because I have plenty of access to non-existent species now, you know, that the season is open, but I don't have any interactions with them, and, well, I can't get anyone to go fishing for them, and I ain't going to go myself either.

It's important that -- I think that's what the optimum yield is, is figuring out where that -- Where abundance and access meet. I know that's harder -- It's easier said than done, right, particularly since so many of these fisheries really aren't -- The desire, how people pursue them, aren't the same.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike is typing it, and so make sure, so one of the things I heard, and that sounded super cool, was where abundance and access meet. Do you feel like that is capturing --

MR. ROLLER: I think that captures recreational OY.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm kind of just asking for -- Is there some way we can refer to it as something other than OY, because MSA has a very specific definition for OY, and I just, again, hearken back to PTSD of dealing with that across the table, with OY and MSY, and yet they're not exactly the same thing, and so just for clarification for people, and so I understand that we're aiming for a function, you know, and we're driven more by these, which go into fish, but it's still going to have to come out as fish on the back-end of the OY.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great point. Kerry and I couldn't figure out what to call it. It's like our -- Like layman's terms of OY, and we don't know what to call that, and so it's really even not the word "yield" either, and so we're open to what you want to call that, and so can I go to Andy first, then Kerry, then Trish?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I don't know what to call it either, but optimum opportunity is what was coming to mind, which someone just wrote. I'm glad Carolyn pointed this out, because, when you think of OY, you actually think of a lower fishing mortality threshold than MSY, right, and, in reality, for the recreational industry, the access part means that we're still sustainably managing the fishery, but potentially at a fishing mortality rate higher than the maximum sustainable yield, but at some sustainable level that balances what Tom is saying, which is kind of that abundance with fishing opportunity, right, and so I think that's an important distinction, and why we've been so challenged, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act framework, in terms of achieving optimum yield or MSY in these mixed-use fisheries.

The other thing I'll just emphasize, and point out, right, because we're talking about the accessibility, right, is we have really good weather for most of the year in the Southeast, as we well know, right?

We do have, obviously, the bad opportunities, and, with that access, it's not so much -- It's openings for harvest that was emphasized, right? It's not necessarily -- It's not just the fact that we're allowing people to go fishing, and it's openings for specific harvests, and I feel like the fisheries we're most challenged by are typically the ones that are most abundant and most prevalent, right, and that have the highest restrictions on them. Overall, I mean, I think this makes sense. I think the challenge continues to be how does this fit within the Magnuson-Stevens Act framework.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just trying to think of it better -- Opportunity or satisfaction, and, I mean, I was just sort of thinking about how Gary described what the happy fisherman is, that he can do his forty, go jump in his boat, and go catch something, and that's -- That's, to me, a satisfaction, but it is also opportunity, and so I don't know whether one is better than the other, but it's satisfying for this guy to jump in his boat and go fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Just one more piece, and I really feel, maybe even through our citizen science piece, that, you know, we really -- You know, as we manage these fisheries, and manage recreational -- We're managing recreational fishermen, right, and that we need to have a better idea

of how -- When we make some of these decisions, what's the outcome for the recreational fisherman going to be, and so it's a behavioral piece, and what does satisfaction really look like?

You know, I say access, and that's only one piece of it, but I believe that there's a bigger study that needs to be done to understand the recreational fisherman. We know a commercial fisherman needs to catch poundage to make money to feed his family, and to feed the nation, but, for the recreational fisherman, it's a sport, right, and it has different pieces to it, and we need to identify them to be able to manage it correctly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I thought I saw another hand up. I mean, these are all good, and so what we'll do is Kerry and John and I can kind of come back and try to, you know, craft this into something else, and bring it back to you, but I think we've had good discussion on this one. Are we ready to move to the next one?

Okay. The next one was commercial OY is about providing seafood to consumers, and so, once again, this was two statements kind of combined into one, and so, if that's not what we mean here, please speak up. Okay. Dewey, then Carolyn.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would probably change that commercial OY is about providing access of seafood to consumers. That's why we do it, is we're giving access to that consumer, and then the end result, you know, is we have a make a living or -- I didn't say profit, and I said a living, and so it's about providing access to seafood for consumers. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Carolyn, and then Charlie.

DR. BELCHER: I was just going to emphasize that the MSA definition is it's the amount of fish that provides the greatest overall benefit to the nation, and so that's kind of more of what Dewey is getting at, but I'm just -- You know, again, that fits perfectly with the idea of a commercial OY, in my opinion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Like I told Dewey earlier in the week, commercial fishermen are basically the truck drivers that drive the public's resource from the water to the dock, so it can be delivered to them, and, the more we can haul on the truck, the better we do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It seems like we've captured that one. We got some good points on. We're putting truck drivers down. All right. Truck drivers of the resource, with a lot of weigh stations. Okay. All right, and so then let's dive into the next one. I'm sorry, and is it on that one?

MR. STRELCHECK: It's related. I mean, it doesn't necessarily fit ideally under OY, but I guess I would add, and this is going back to the recreational, right, and recreational focusing on access or opportunities. For commercial, in terms of achieving OY, you know, you want to provide kind of the greatest net benefit for the nation, but in the most efficient way possible, right, and so, in the Southeast, and especially the South Atlantic, what have we done?

We've made them far less efficient over time, through imposing trip limits and other restrictions on their harvest, and so, economically, we've created all of these inefficiencies, which are essentially contrary, in my view, to kind of achieving it optimally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So just making sure that Mike's putting it in the right place. Do we need to put something about efficiency up there with the recreational piece? Is that what you're saying? Like do we need to take that bullet and put it under recreational?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, so, down below, we have maximize trip efficiencies for recreational and commercial. If we're maximizing access or opportunity in the recreational, then that, to me, is going to negatively affect trip efficiency in the commercial, you know, and so there's a pull and tug there in terms of exactly how you achieve both, right, and that's where that balance comes in that Tom was saying.

What I'm trying to just finer point on is for the commercial fishermen. If Dewey can go out and catch his fish in one trip, versus three trips, right, that's economically more efficient, and he still could catch the same optimum yield, right? It's just going to be more efficient for him to do it in a different way. I said they're related because they're not -- That's not exactly the definition of optimum yield.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Do you think we've captured it enough there? Judy.

MS. HELMEY: How about under -- I think, under commercial, how about reaching individuals for sales?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Reaching individual for sales?

MS. HELMEY: Well, the commercial people, they're bringing fish for the individuals to sell at the market.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The definition is about providing access, and the access goes to the wholesaler, the consumer, the -- I mean, the first part of it, the commercial is giving access to whoever wants to buy it, so I'm fine with all of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think it's captured. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just to chime-in, so back to the recreational. You know, the recreational fishermen that I know, and speak with often, if they get an opportunity to go fishing, that's what it's all about, and if -- I mean, they'll go fishing, and perhaps they won't catch a legal-sized fish, and I can talk to them, and they go, but I had a great time, and I went fishing, and so they didn't have to harvest anything. They still had a good time.

You hear the -- Also, the recent discussion on black sea bass up here with the headboat fishery and charter fishery. You know, there's an opportunity to maybe catch a legal-sized bass, but you might not, but the opportunity is there, and they got a chance to go fishing, and so that's happiness for them, and I think the definition for the commercial and the additions is good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good. I think we captured that optimized opportunity above. All right. I'm going to keep moving through. Okay. Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: You know, I'm not one to sit here, you know, as a recreational person, and make comments on commercial, but I will note that the species that we manage here at this council are the most important fisheries for our local seafood economies, and our restaurants, right, and so I've always heard, from members of the commercial industry, a big part of optimization is making sure that we have stuff available for as much of the season as possible to our communities, right, because what -- I'm not trying -- I'm trying to wordsmith this, and, you know, I'm looking for help, but that's something I've heard in the past. I was surprised that wasn't brought up here, because it's something that really resonates with me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got that. Good. All right. Anything else before we dive into the next one? Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: To Tom's point, you know, availability of the fish we catch is kind of like the season, seasons of growing vegetables, and so maybe it would be consistent possibilities of year-round -- Well, I don't know if I'm trying -- I just know that like, given this blueline tilefish increase, we're looking where the majority of the fish are caught at, and permit holders, to hopefully have our season last out until September 1. That's when our restaurants here on the Outer Banks and all use the fish.

Come December, November, September -- You know, that's not when -- So it's -- You know, I don't want that we get spread so thin on the trip limit that -- Because we're trying to spread it out that the only guy -- I mean, you're going to lose anybody left, because you're spreading out seasons. I think the folks in different regions, you know, and it's important -- It would be great to have year-round species, but that ain't the case, but it's just something to think about, you know, while we're trying to -- If we ever continue to try to spread something out, we don't want to be spread too thin that you're going to lose some people.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie, then Andy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think what Tom and Dewey are saying is we need to seize, you know, year-round availability of something. You know, a lot of times, when golden tile was open, it was open for two or three months. We landed golden tile, and then we switched over to grouper, and then we switched over to something else, but we always had something for the restaurants.

It doesn't have to be year-round availability of this species, but I think we can switch species, and I think the restaurants, and the customers, will be fine, and we can use that for a teaching tool. We're selling golden tile now because they're open, and then we're going to have a spawning closure, or whatever, or whatever, and so we can use this for teaching tools and still not force the restaurants to go to imported fish and things like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, just to maybe ask a frank question of the commercial representatives, how close are we to not achieving this right now today, because I feel like we're

getting pretty damn close to not having seasonal availability of specific species, at least at the abundance levels that are provided with our catch limits, and so I hear this, and I appreciate it, but I'm really concerned that we're reaching some points of either no return or major changes with regard to how we're going to have to manage these fisheries in order to achieve this going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Similar, and I think that's a good point from Andy, but, also, before we got too far down into this, that main bullet, I would say, is almost as applicable in the recreational, because they want consistent year-round access to fishing, and so, I mean, the same argument, right, is that now we're shifting from one species to another, which leads to discards, and so there's all that aspect of it, is how are you going to maximize, optimize, that ability. There's some sort of give-and-take that will happen, but I just feel like that bullet also resonates in the recreational side of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, to Andy's point, it's not easy, which is why I bought back into wreckfish a few years ago, because I was looking for some stability in something, but, you know, I was watching a YouTube video on how to cook and clean amberjack. Normally, that wouldn't be a first choice for me, but, once I realized what they were doing, and how they were doing it, and how they were getting the blood line out, it could be a really good fish, and the customers really liked it, and so, again, we may have to educate some people.

We may have to change the way we do stuff around a little bit. We may have to look for, you know, a few of these species, and there's not many, that we may have some, you know, room to harvest more of them, and so it's -- I guess I would say that's our job, but you're right. It's not easy, especially with derby fisheries, and, you know, a long time in between assessments, and then sometimes they get changed drastically, and, if we can do more interim assessments, so, if you do have changes, it's going to be smaller, more incremental, and things like that are going to make a difference.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Again, to Andy's question, every week, it's a real challenge to try to find product for a restaurant, and a market, and I mean challenging. We have to go -- We rely on the Gulf, and we rely on the Mid-Atlantic, and less and less on the South Atlantic. You know, you have to have -- An example would be, so when you have a shallow-water grouper closure, now you're looking for some type of white meat fish, and so oftentimes that was golden tile, and so, as you lose access to these fish at the same time, you're in a real dilemma, but, yes, it's very challenging.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. There's a bullet that we were talking about that kind of captures some of this, that's like two or three bullets down, that I feel like we've already had good discussion on, and it technically goes under both recreational and commercial, that says optimize year-round access to snapper grouper species for commercial and recreational, and so I feel like we can -- That kind of encapsulates some of what we're saying here, too.

Okay. With that, I'm going to go down to the regional management of fisheries to account for differences across the council region, and so this -- Once again, this would be something that we

think about as we start working on different fisheries, and we're diving into it, and we say wouldn't it be nice if we could split this up regionally, or is there a way to accommodate a season that works for both North Carolina and Florida, and so it's just a statement saying that we're trying to account for regional differences in fisheries across the council region when we make changes. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Amendment 27 did a little bit of that, with putting the sacrifice for up on the northern part of the Outer Banks, when we have not -- The weather is not so good in January, February, March, and it was to give 70 percent of the snowy grouper to the first half and a hundred-pound trip limit is what -- They didn't need more than that, the majority, and to give -- Take the 30 percent for the second half and increase the trip limit from 100 pounds to 300 pounds.

That's a little bit -- It's almost like the first sacrifice, and I don't know about sacrifice, but a compromise that happened like that, and, when you look at other things, I think you could probably look, on the commercial side, and, well, it would be recreational also on some things, and just look at the species and when they're caught.

You know, we don't have but one golden tilefish longline permit up our way, that just recently got acquired, and maybe leased or something, and I'm not sure, but we do have the ability to hook-and-line golden tile, but, the majority of the time, up until the last couple years for that, it has been caught up earlier, where the weather is good south of us, and we don't really get access to the sharks getting out of the way, the spiny dogfish and the sand sharks, until like May and June, and so access to hook-and-line golden tilefish has been gone.

Another thing that's helped out is Spanish mackerel has migrated a little more north, and Florida had quota, and, this year, it was a savior for guys to extend the season out to about when they needed a blessing, and so it's maybe we -- You know, but you're making a -- This is for making a statement, and I'm giving a speech, and so I'm sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Dewey. Carolyn, and then Jimmy.

DR. BELCHER: I think I was thinking about that too, because of the regional within a region type thing, was more that spatial-temporal approaches to how we want to consider that, or even like market things, as they've talked about adaptations because of going into Lent and things like that, and that will allow for -- Or you know, adaptive management, for the sake of shifting quota between areas that have been identified, like you all were talking about with the mackerel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Yes, and I think that this should be one of our highest priorities to accomplish, is regional management in the South Atlantic, and the most recent example would be the black sea bass situation we're in, where, up here on the very northern end of their range, you know, they're going to be taking a hit when they still have, you know, fish, and, down at my end of the range, you know, that's where we have the biggest problem, and so it's just -- It's such a large area that this is -- Not just bass, but in other species, and regional management I think should be one of our highest priorities to attain.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Okay. I'm going to keep moving on. Next up, consider holistic view of the fisheries. We tried to clarify it there. This -- What we think the

person that wrote this statement meant was the multispecies nature of the snapper grouper fishery, things like regime shifts and other things, but do whoever wrote this, or others, want to comment on what this means to them, this consider a holistic view of the fishery? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think back to our CMOD experience with the ecosystem-based management, those more encompassing, that we saw in other regions, and we don't have a working example here for us, but we know Mandy has done work with that. That's kind of where I think we were -- Or at least that was where my brain took it to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Other thoughts on this one? Okay. We might -- Maybe we have enough on that one. All right. The next one in the list is the maximize trip efficiencies for recreational and commercial, and so we talked about this a little bit. Andy brought this one up. Other thoughts on this one, or other clarification needed on this one? Charlie, and then Gary.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a balance. It's between trip efficiency, go catch them all now, unload them, pack them, and be done with it, and stretching your trip limits out through the year, because, if you stretch your trip limits out through the year, then it gives you an ability -- Let's say you're catching 500 pounds of something, versus 1,000.

If you're catching 500 pounds, you can pick and choose higher-paying markets at times than if you're getting 1,000 pounds quick, especially if you and the dealer down the street and the dealer down the street are doing it, and you can have, to a degree, a quote, unquote, flooded market, and sometimes it doesn't take a lot, especially when you -- Like red snapper, for instance. If there has been none in the market, and then, all of a sudden, there's a lot, nobody is used to selling it, you know, and then you've got to rebuild your markets. It's not easy. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we're trying to figure out what to write there as a sub-bullet, so let's see what Mike's putting up there, and make sure that captures your thoughts. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I don't know if recreational fits here, because, if you were to figure out what a recreational fisherman -- What it costs them a pound to bring a fish back to the dock --

MS. MARHEFKA: It's not efficient.

MS. BORLAND: Yes, and "efficient" is not the word, but, you know, I go back to what I said earlier, and what a recreational fisherman thinks is efficient is completely different than what a commercial fisherman thinks is efficient, and so, again, the definition of that, that we could figure out through the questions, would be good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Are we maximizing value, or is that different?

MR. BORLAND: Good question, you know, and I think you'll get different -- You know, you're going to get different opinions on that, depending on who it is, you know, where they live, and, you know, the guy that trailers 200 miles to go fishing, and the guy that's got the boat behind his house in the creek are completely different worlds, right, in what they think, but, you know, the bottom line is a guy goes and takes his boat offshore and catches one gag grouper, and it costs him

\$500 a pound to catch that grouper that day, right, or more, when you think what it costs in insurance, and so I don't -- I almost feel like it should be completely -- You know, we can't -- It's not the same sentence.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got that. All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is an interesting conversation. First of all, I mean, yes, Gary, I don't want anyone to know the per-pound value of any wild game or fish I harvest, particularly my family. Now, but I think we have to think about recreational efficiency in a completely different capacity. I mean, it brings me back up to when we were having the optimization discussion.

However, efficiency means to me like -- You know, we talk about like these weather windows, you know, and, for three weekends in a row, the weather is really bad, and then it's closed by the fourth weekend, and efficiency may just be that we have access to these fish when the weather is better, right, and so like, that efficiency just gives us that opportunity during the better seasons, right, and so I just -- I'm just trying to think here of like, the difference, how efficiency is different.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: It's more like a return on investment, but that's my point, is I think that's where it gets to, right? It's like go back to the Forrest Gump example, and return on investment wasn't very good there in the beginning.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: It's actually kind of funny, because, when we were talking about OY, return on investment was one of the things I wrote down, and I look at this trip efficiency, for both that recreational and the commercial sector, as two very different views, as others have said, and I'm wondering if -- I don't know, and the way that this is structured, since we have sort of, at that top, from the OY perspective, if we almost like -- I don't know, but pushed them up there and had them like recreational OY is satisfaction or efficiency in commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We could do that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I hate that, only -- Sorry, because I can just hear public comments now, you know, of, well, you know, I have this -- What's your cheap boat? \$200,000? In Gary's world, \$200,000 is a cheap boat. I'm not saying -- That's Gary's world, and not my world.

You know, I bought this \$200,000 boat, and now I can only catch one red snapper, and like my -- You even said I'm supposed to have a good return on investment, and this isn't a -- Then the same example, and I just don't think it's the council's job, necessarily, for all of us -- Well, I don't know. "Investment" sounds like something you're actually going to like grow money.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It don't take a \$200,000 boat to catch fish.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I was using Gary's example. I know that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Go ahead. I'll go with Carolyn, and then we'll go back to Gary.

DR. BELCHER: I think of it -- Again, return on investment for those things, because, obviously, it's a business thing, right? You're looking at trying to make sure that you're not operating in the red, but it's more like the bang for the buck. You're going to go out, and you're going to do it, and, if everything that you do keeps you back, it's like why did I start this to begin with, and I'm not getting any satisfaction out of it, any, you know, fill in the blank. I mean, it's more of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Back to Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Yes, and I'm going to tag to both of these, but, recreational, it's not -- You can't dollarize the return on investment. Commercial, you dollarize, because that's how you make your living. Recreational is either perception or stress, but, I mean, there's all these things, right? It's more mental than anything else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and you could go down a whole rabbit hole on that. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I'm just -- I think the dollar amount for recreational is probably not the way to go. I was kind of thinking of a different -- I can't think of a different word, but, again, I come back to satisfaction. You know, I got to go out and spend the day with my husband. I caught lizardfish, but I had a good time, you know?

Anyway, but, you know, or just being out in nature, or just de-stressing, you know, and you just sit and throw a hook in the water and just de-stress. So, anyway, I think, for recreational, and thinking -- You know, myself in recreational, I just -- I just want to go have fun, and that's -- If I spent \$200 on fuel or something, well, that's better than -- I mean, it's been --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Exactly.

MS. MURPHEY: I mean, I can spend \$200 going to dinner, I mean, so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I know, right? Mike, and then Andy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, kind of listening to some of the conversation, and the last thing that Trish said is kind of in the realm of what I was thinking. You might want to frame it -- If it has any dollar amount, it's the replacement of how else you would get access, and so you pay \$200 to go to a restaurant to have your food cooked for you, to be able to get this meal, so that you don't have to cook that same food at home, as opposed to, like a recreational fisherman, you pay for your boat, you pay for, you know, your bait to be able to go out and have this experience that, if you didn't pay for these things, then, in order to have that experience, you would have to pay however many hundreds, you know, or a couple thousand dollars, to charter a vessel, and do it that way, and so that might be a way to think about it, is like that's your -- You know, that's your return, is that, instead of having to do it another way, you're able to do it in your own way, and get the value of whatever freedom you have on your trip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I've got Andy, then Charlie.

MR. STRELCHECK: So I like what Trish said, and so the primary bullet that we've been talking under says maximize trip efficiency for recreational and commercial, but I think what we're really after, for recreational, is that satisfaction, right, and so emphasizing that.

I still -- As I read through these bullets, I'm still struck by the pull and push of the different objectives here, and, if we're going to maximize satisfaction for recreational here, it comes at the expense of season, you know, year-round season, or some other factors, right, and so I think we just need to continue to keep that in mind, and, as we maybe refine this, and narrow the scope, what comes to the top is kind of the optimum priorities, or objectives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I love that. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, what Trish is talking about is an intangible benefit, something you can't put a dollar amount on, and I -- Gary can tell me if I'm wrong, but I would say most people that have that \$200,000 boat would be way money ahead to just go buy fish from the fish market, instead of -- Depending on what they caught with that \$200,000 boat. Dewey will sell you a lot of fish for \$200,000, for a long time.

Now, it may be, you know, if you're for-hire, or a headboat, then you're back into the more commercial profit thing, but we even heard it from a spear fisherman at Lines of Communication. He was excited to go spear fishing, you know, and a lot of the commercial guys care about fishing, and, if they didn't really like fishing, they couldn't do it. I mean, you can't go do this, a lot of times, for the money you make on average. You have to care about that fishery, or being a fisherman, and so intangible benefits really fit into -- Probably more so recreational, but also commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good discussion on this. We captured some of that there. Okay. I'm going to keep moving through. All right. We got one here. Don't let perfection stop progress. Maybe this -- Instead of a goalpost, maybe it goes into the efficiency of the committee section. What are you all's thoughts here? This was somewhere else in the document, and we grabbed it and put it up here.

Maybe it's in the wrong place, but I think that -- I don't want to put -- I don't know who wrote this, and so I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I think back to maybe when we were working on things like best fishing practices, or other things, and, a lot of times, and I'm thinking about some of the things that Mel used to say, and how we're like, well, what are we going to do about this, and how are we going to set up an education course, and how are we going to do this, and then we were kind of paralyzed almost into inaction, because we were trying to come up with what's the perfect solution, and so is this good as a goalpost? Do we all kind of know what we mean? Do we need to clarify this more? Is it in the right place? That type of thing. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of -- From my point of view, I think it's that idea of where -- Marcel can kick me later, but the idea of the science. We're always trying to improve the science, as opposed to this is what we have, and we're asking for a review, vote it up, vote it down, or vote it partially useful, as opposed to, well, if we tweak it, and we continue to tweak it, will it get better, because we just keep losing time and ground, the more we try to make it better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we're capturing -- All right. We're capturing something about the science there. Does everybody know what we mean? Do we need some more clarification on

this? Are we good? I kind of like this as a goalpost, so that, as we're moving through documents, we can say, wait, you know, don't let perfection be the enemy of the progress that we're making on something here. Okay.

One of the things, and you heard us talk about it multiple times this week, is we have a bullet down there, the next main bullet, of take more risk in making decisions, and so I think, to me, this partly means, but others please speak up, and it means maybe not always just going back to, well, we've always done it this way.

We don't really think outside the box sometimes, and so that's maybe sometimes being willing to take more risks, try something new to try to get us out of a box, and maybe get us to a better place, and so that's kind of what it means to me. I don't know what it means to others, and so I don't know if people want to add anything to this one. Okay. No one wants to jump on that one. Okay. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I'll say something, but it's probably -- It may not be appropriate, but I feel like we talk about taking risks, and I feel, like every time we try to go that route, everything is too rigid to take any risk, and the example was just a few minutes ago, through the hour we wasted on a thousand pounds on a 460,000-pound fishery. Enough said.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I like that. We captured it. All right. I don't see -- Sorry. Go ahead, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I feel like sometimes, when it comes down to doing something new and innovative, and we're not sure if it's going to be right, we get a little paralyzed for fear that, well, we've done it, and then it's going to be out there. You know, how often does the council -- Once we do this, when can we change it, and, you know, that's going to be the rules, and it's like, well, nothing is forever in this system. It can be really, really slow to reverse course sometimes, frustratingly so, but, you know, it really isn't forever, but we do sort of get afraid that we do something, and it's the wrong thing, and we're going to have to be living with those consequences, and it often seems like, in the moment, forever, that we're going to live with that consequence forever, and I think that holds us back some, because there is a risk there as well that is encompassed in risk-taking.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else, Amy, on this one?

MS. DUKES: Thanks for saying that, John, and that kind of got me thinking that, you know, when we say take a risk here at this body, it seems like there are avenues that other councils take that seems to be a clearer path forward than sometimes all the stop-gaps that we get, and so maybe risk could be reframed a little bit too, and you can leave it "risk", but I'm just trying to figure out ways that this body can do some of the faster, different steps to get things done so much quicker, or in a different manner, like some of the other councils do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So is it partly learning from other councils or something? Maybe that's part of it?

MS. DUKES: Absolutely. Learn from other councils, figure out other paths forward. We have a bunch of sticky-wickets, and let's figure out ways around it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Love it. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: You know, it all starts with how much available quota you have, and so, when you go look at other councils, you might take a look at how many potential millions of pounds they're dealing with to be a little bit of risk-averse, or thinking outside the box. It's my thoughts that we don't have that here in the South Atlantic, and so that starts with it all. Like, first of all, how many fish aren't you catching, and, when we heard about the PSE numbers, how much reliable are we on the PSE numbers?

You're like from here to there, and so we really don't have a good opportunity, and when you also look at -- If you go look at the SERO quota monitoring page, a lot of our recreational fish never meet their ACL, according to the SERO quota monitoring pages. Has anybody looked at that, and so, first of all, you're not catching all your fish, according to the way we monitor the fisheries. Why is that? Is that the truth?

I mean, it all starts, with me, is how much pie do you got before you start all this other stuff, all this things, and that's where it should start at, but sometimes, you know, people tend to think about something else before, and wait a second. This ain't a buffet we've got. You know, other things that people do, and they might have millions of pounds or something, and there ain't but a couple fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic here, or I mean the South Atlantic, and yellowtail snapper, and I forgot what -- I'm sure there's one more.

UNIDENTIFIED: Mackerel.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and, well, that's not snapper grouper species, but that's just what I'm thinking about, and so we don't have that quota availability, or at least I don't think we do, and so that might influence something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It might. I think that it's bigger than this. I mean, how long did we spend having that conversation about the thousand pounds and how to fix that problem? Andy, and then Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: A number of thoughts on this one. I think part of this could align with what Steve Poland and others talked about earlier in the week, where it's risk may be translating more to process improvements, and figuring out ways we could do business differently, but I was also thinking of this from the standpoint of, well, I have a lawyer sitting to my right, and he wouldn't necessarily want us to take substantial legal risk, but, you know, are we willing to take risk, or make decisions, that maybe are unpopular, or are going against what we've always done, right, and so those are the types of risk I think we are probably talking about more appropriately here, or pushing the edge with regard to maybe where this falls legally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think it's both of those things. Sorry, but that's how I intended it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got both of those already captured on there, the previous -- The next-to-last bullet there. Anything else on this one? All right. the next bullet is -- So this was

another thing that got a bunch of sticky dots on it. We'll never have the perfect solution for everyone. There's probably a better way to say this, like what do we mean here? To me, it seems like it's somewhat tied to risk. It's somewhat tied to what Andy was just saying about unpopular decisions. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think it's managing the balance of expectations, I mean, amongst -- You know, whether it's user groups, stakeholders, however you want to look at that, but it's just finding that optimization amongst the groups.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA I mean, I've often heard it said, and I think the first time I heard it was at the council, that a good law is one where everyone is a little unhappy, and so that's sort of how I think about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right, and we'll capture that. I've got Tom, and then Charlie.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, Jessica, you already said it, but, as soon as I read that bullet point, I went right to Andy's comment, in regards for the risk being essentially unpopular actions, and where my mind goes there would be an example like SEFHIER, where we know the outcome -- You know, maybe you take unpopular -- You have a program that is going to be a little bit cumbersome for the users, but you know, in the end, it's going to be better, and maybe that's the risk that you take, right, and so that's where my mind goes with this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I have Charlie next, but maybe it's also managing tradeoffs, or something like that, and so just -- Is that what you mean? Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Kerry, it's nobody is really happy, but everybody can live.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We changed it. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think a metric for this, in terms of maybe where we would have some success, is if we can see kind of a shifting of trust, right, and so we may not have the perfect solution, but they might at least trust that we've tried our best, and worked in everyone's best interest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're getting that captured. Other thoughts on this one? Okay. I'm going to move to the next one, which I expect a ton of discussion on this one. Focus on single-species management isn't serving fishery well, and so this got a bunch of sticky dots as well, but what do we want to say about this, or what are we fixing here? How can we do this? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I remember, when Duane Harris first got on the council, probably fifteen years ago, give or take, and I remember him saying -- When he came into the room, he said, I don't really know how to explain it, but I am really interested in following through on eco-based fishery management, and we are still trying to get to eco-based fishery management. We have a few complexes, but we still don't anywhere close to have our arms around how to get there from here, and is there any idea on how do we get there from here?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I see a lot of heads nodding. Somebody over here had their hand up. Gary, and then Trish.

MR. BORLAND: Yes, and this is one of my favorites. As we attack catch and release, discard mortality, and recreational fishermen, how do we take on an approach like the Bahamas has, where you are allowed X amount of finfish, and you stop fishing, and I pitched it out there, but, you know, nobody seems to -- Nobody wants to put their arms around any kind of modeling. I don't know that it can even be done, but how do you model that, and how do you --

I was hoping that, through some of the EFPs -- I was hoping, through some of that, we could see some data where a boat goes fishing, has got four people on it, and you're allowed ten bottom fish each, and you catch forty, and what does that look like, and, of course, up and down the different states, it's going to look different, because there's different fish in different regions, but how do we stop catch and release, because we're killing more fish by releasing them than we are protecting them, and so how do we get to a place where you can go fish, and have access, catch some fish to eat, as a recreational fisherman, and I'm, obviously, not talking about commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I'm also going to throw out an idea, because we've got more people in the queue here as we come around, and isn't there a difference between multispecies management and ecosystem-based management, and do we need to kind of clarify the difference between the two here, and so I'll just throw that out there. I've got Trish, and then Chip.

MS. MURPHEY: What came to my mind, seeing this, is are there ways we can manage co-occurring species, like -- Dewey has been training me up for a while here, and like snowy grouper and blueline, and I think that was an example where I think they overlap enough, and is there a way we manage them together, instead of separate, but that's what came to mind on this one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Very cool. All right. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I think this council does a lot more ecosystem-based approaches than they think. I mean, you all were talking about how to deal with whether or not species would be in the fisheries management unit. One of the reasons that you're potentially not changing is because of ecosystem management. You are thinking about another fishery starting up, and causing bycatch of species, and that is taking that kind of approach, and so it is -- You are doing it, and not always giving credit to yourself.

If you look at the snapper grouper fishery right now, you don't allow a lot of gears. That is an ecosystem-based approach, and so don't sell yourselves short, and you're tremendous slouches, but, no, and I think there are some great approaches that this council has utilized in the past, and continues to utilize. We just don't always recognize them as the ecosystem-based approaches that they might be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think, again, because there was a few of us who saw the CMOD presentations, right, but there is a difference between Ecosim and those types of approaches that we're currently running, because that's more of an ecological model than an actual ecological/fishery-integrated model, where the ones we were seeing for like the Northeast were very much more the interweave

of all the fishery dynamics, the ecology dynamics of a multispecies fishery and such. I think that's the hard part, is some of us have actually seen behind the curtain of other things, and not everybody else has.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, to add on to what Carolyn was saying, one of the things at CMOD is seeing this cool presentation about this model done on red grouper in the Gulf that kind of brought in some effects from red tide and other things like that into the modeling, and ultimately into the management system, and so that's some of what -- You know, thinking about what we saw at CMOD and how we could bring it here to this council.

Clearly they're doing some of this in the Gulf, and so maybe there's a way that we, you know, with all of our free time, think about some of those presentations that we saw at CMOD, and think about how could we adapt some of those things to what we're doing here. All right. Anything else on this one, and so this is the end of the list for -- That we had listed on goalposts.

Then we're going to dive into the principles that would -- That we could use to get you to the goalposts, and so also be thinking about, as we go through here, are there other things that we would bring up into being a goalpost, or we didn't have listed, and so I'm going to -- I'm going to dive into these principles.

Once again, these are things that you would be using, kind of like what Dewey was saying at the very beginning, and you would be using some of these principles when you think about the goalposts and so the first one on the list here is ensure local knowledge is factored into management decisions. I feel like that's kind of self-explanatory. I'm just looking around the room, to make sure we all think we know what that means. Okay. I see heads nodding. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess a clarifying question. I mean, is this beyond what's currently being done with APs and other advice that we get?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, it doesn't mean that, and so, once again, this is kind of like we're creating a little document here that would go in our little book, and it would be something that we're trying to, as committee members, hold ourselves accountable to when we're moving through various actions and trying to think about things.

In addition to these goalposts, you would be asking each other, and we did it some today when we were looking at the allocation decision tool, and we're trying to make sure that local knowledge, or the knowledge that we get from public hearings, or from APs, is really truly factored into management decisions, and kind of like what Chip is saying, and I feel like we do pretty good on this right now, but this would just be making sure, and this got a bunch of sticky dots in the exercise, and just making sure that we keep this in mind when we're thinking about this goalpost. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Also, I'm wondering to what extent it's not just that we have it in mind, but that it's okay to be included in the analysis. You know what I'm saying? I would like to empower our staff to be able to feel confident to say, in the analysis, local and traditional knowledge says that the fishery, you know, really operates best in these months, or whatever is collected, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I guess I would like to get some advice, possibly from Shep, on this topic of the weight that -- You know, we normally think of scientific knowledge as being produced by, you know, the Science Center, the SSC, and what type of weight does an aspect like local knowledge, like public testimony, like AP feedback -- What weight does that -- Is the council able to have that carry, in terms of management decisions that they make, especially if there is any type of like interact -- You know, I guess opposite direction of you have scientists, you know, saying this trend is being produced, but you have local knowledge of fishermen, public testimony, things of that nature, that is in opposition of what's being observed in a scientific aspect.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you saying how to factor it in, basically, of how to weight?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, I guess, how is the council allowed, under Magnuson, to be able to consider, you know, that type of like -- I wouldn't even say it's non-scientific, because, if you take it from, you know, a social aspect, you have -- You know, it's a form of social science, when you're getting this crowdsourced information, and so I guess what weight does that carry, versus like a quantitative approach to something?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I would say it varies based on the information, but the National Standard 2 Guidelines, the regulatory guidelines, 50 CFR 600, 300.15, in inclusiveness, specifically mentioned relevant local and traditional knowledge, e.g., fishermen's empirical knowledge about behavior and distribution of fish stocks, should be obtained, where appropriate, and considered when evaluating BSIA.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I just tried to think of examples, and so I know, recently, the SSC actually used the fisheries performance report, and for which subject was it, but to develop a scaler for something, and it's -- I went back to some of the AP guys, and I said do you know how serious you needed to be when you're answering these questions, because it made a big difference, and so I can't quite remember.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so thumbs-up on that one. Let's move to the next one, which also kind of gets to one of the goal posts we already talked about. Council take more risk and try new things to achieve goal and in making management decisions. I feel like we've already kind of discussed this one, to me, and it's like check, and this was listed out above.

The next one, and so we put some things in blue here, because we needed some clarification. There was one called develop allocations based on total catch, and so what does this mean? There were sticky dots on it, but the three of us debated about what this meant, and so does someone want to explain what this means? Kerry. Kerry, and then Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was trying to remember who put it -- Was Tim still here when we started this, because it might have been Tim, and I don't want to speak for him.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Tim was.

MS. MARHEFKA: What I believe he meant is something that's been brought up many, many times, and I'm just adding this without editorial comment, and what I believe he meant was that discards are proportionally allocated off of the ABC before the ACL is split.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I don't know who put this up, but I agree with Kerry. That was my interpretation of that bullet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't agree with that, and so, I mean, I don't know -- Because I feel like there's some issues with the way discards are handled in the assessment. Discards are also -- So I just -- I don't know that I can support it, is what I'm saying, and so just my two-cents on that one. Other thoughts, or comments, on this one? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm going to go back to my SERO quota monitoring. If you go look at 2024, you'll see, on the commercial side, out of all that's listed there, one, two, three, four, and I believe five or six that met their ACL, according to -- It's preliminary, it says on there, and, when you look at the recreational side, out of about thirty species, golden tile, gray trigger, snowy, red snapper, and blueline met theirs, and twenty-five others never met their ACL.

When I look at this stuff, there's plenty of fish. We're not meeting the ACL on some of our things there, and so what's the issue? Do we believe our accounting of the catch? I mean, it's like it's right there in front of us, and when you go back and look, and so why -- You've got to start out with what you're catching, before we can make all these goalpost analogies. I'm sitting here, and some of them, you know, are caught within the first couple months, and some of them go a little bit longer, but, when you look at the quota monitoring page that's given for us to -- I guess for the public, you're seeing a lot of the fish aren't getting harvested.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I've got John, then Andy, then Charlie.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just threw it in there extra.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think one of the challenges here is that nobody has a lot of confidence in any of our discard data. I think that's kind of Jessica's issue, I think, with this, is just that the discard data is so uncertain, and, you know, we've said you can't manage using the discard data, at least in some times, back in our past, we have official agency positions saying that, and, you know, like Dewey was saying, right, you've got to know what you're catching, and I think we look at it and go, well, in many cases, we're not sure we do know what we're catching.

You know, when we've talked about this in the past, and Tim did promote this issue, and I talked with him about it, it was like, well, we have an allocation system based on, you know, various historic periods going way back, and we went to the Science Center about saying, well, we could back of the envelope this, and see what it would look like, and it wouldn't give us discard estimates from the commercial fishery, from the discard logbook, for anything that hadn't been assessed, because it was determined not to be BSIA, and completely unreliable, and so we have troubles with the MRIP estimates of discards.

Every one of those is a fish that nobody ever saw, and then we have the commercial, where some people see a few discards, because of very minuscule observers, and that's enough to say we don't trust what the fishermen are reporting there, and so we're in a situation where we don't have any reliable discards for anything that we manage, and I think that, Jessica, if I understand your position, is really where you're coming from.

I think to, you know, to Dewey's point, to get somewhere with this, we've got to understand what the heck is being caught, and, until we can do a better job there, I think we're going to remain kind of loggerheads on this issue, and feeling how we can actually get to where many other regions are, where, you know, total available yield is divided up amongst fisheries, and then, you know, an estimate of a reasonable -- Considered widely reliable estimate of what they discard is then attributed to each fishery. Each fishery then has a vested interest in actions that reduce their discards, because that puts more fish in their coolers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, also, you know, we talked a lot about MRIP-FES and the improvements, and we asked questions, and we don't know that even the changes to MRIP are going to get us the data that we need. We've talked about state data collection programs. We talked about a federal recreational permit, and now we're moving towards some state data collection programs, and will that really get us what we need, and so, yes, John kind of said it's just the data is so uncertain, and yet we keep using it.

It's just -- It's kind of a frustrating situation to be in. Plus, if something has a formal stock assessment, the discards, those removals, are already accounted for, and so then it feels like we're double counting, like a double hit, if you start taking this off the top again, because the removals are already accounted for in the assessment, but so I have Andy, Charlie, Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, first to Dewey's point, don't equate not catching the catch limit as having fish available in the water, right? That could be a false positive, in that, if we're not restricting anglers from actually going out and harvesting that catch limit, but they still don't harvest it, the fish may not be there in the first place. The catch limit could be set too high, and it hasn't been changed in a while, and there's a lot of factors that go into that, and so I wanted to emphasize that.

Point two, with this bullet, I think this principle would challenge us in achieving some of the things we talked about above, right, and so I just don't see how we could make this work, because it's contrary, I think, to achieving some of the things above.

The last point I'll make though, fishery-dependent data, in particular catch, I feel like is used as a scapegoat around this table quite often, and discards being a primary one, and we have other really good fishery-independent data that indicates substantial changes in abundance for these species in the South Atlantic, and so, regardless of what you believe on the fishery-dependent side, we certainly have clear trends, both positive and negative, happening for fisheries on the fishery-independent side.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I leave that thought, Andy, so, I mean, it sounds like what you're saying is maybe there's a principle that would be added that's something about fishery-independent data, because it sounds like that's what you're also getting at here, and so can you think about that? Charlie, and then Kerry.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, to Kerry's point, I agree, and I would like to know what the discards are for per sector, and not that we necessarily have to use them, but, if the sectors can be accountable, if the PSEs are in some reasonable range, where we think they're useful, but remember we just talked about yellowtail. The commercial yellowtail discards were, I think, less than 5 percent, and the recreational were close to 50 percent.

If we know these numbers, or at least have a number with some kind of PSE range around it, then, at the council level, then we can start saying this isn't a good number, and this is not a good PSE, and what can we do to make it better, but just being told the discards are really high, and we're just going to take them off the top, doesn't really help us get us down the road.

If we know what -- Exactly what we're missing, then we've got a chance of trying to make some management, and have the sectors be more responsible for, you know, what their discards might be, and so I would be inclined to go down that path, and go ahead and break it out and see what we need to do to make it better, because, if we don't ever separate it, we're never going to know what we need to do in particular to make it better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But the PSEs are so high, and NOAA already has a policy on using the numbers with the PSEs that high, and so that's -- I mean, like there's already a policy about this, and we're breaking that policy, because those PSEs are well over 50 percent, and some of them they're well over 100 percent. Go ahead.

MR. PHILLIPS: That's kind of my point. For where they're stupid high, we need to start having those discussions on how to fix it, instead of just -- But we keep spinning our wheels, and somehow, some way, we've got to figure out how to get the answer to the question, or we're never going to get management where we want it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I just want to say I feel like that we try to do that, and I think that this council has put in a lot of comments about MRIP-FES. We have talked about what it would take to get the data that we really need for management. We've talked about a federal recreational permit, and now we're talking about state-by-state recreational permits, to try to get better data, get that PSE down. I mean, so I feel like we are trying to do it.

I feel like this body does have those conversations, and we have gone through various vehicles to try to -- Whether it's taking action ourselves or put in comments to the entity, like to the MRIP folks, telling them what we need here, and so I just -- I don't want you to act like we haven't been trying to get ourselves what we need to do the best job that we can here around this table. I feel like that's what we do every day that we're here, is to say what do we need to make this decision, and, if we don't think the data is good enough, or it doesn't meet NOAA policy standards or whatever, to talk about, okay, how do we make this decision now, and how do we fix this in the future, and so I feel like we've not been shy about that. I'm just saying. Okay. Go ahead.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think Dewey talked about Florida moving Spanish mackerel up to North Carolina, so they could have a better season, or from the south to the north, and that's still a possibility, of moving fish between one sector and another. You know, we know it's probably possible, but we really don't talk about it a whole lot, and that could be a way to make things more efficient for various sectors.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I also -- I like that example, because I think that that example accomplishes two examples. It also gets to the regional component, and so, in another FMP, there's language written in there about how you can transfer quota from one region to another region within the year, and so I think that -- But we don't have a mechanism like that in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so I think that there might be a way to do that, whether it's among sectors, but, also, if you're going to look at things regionally, maybe there's a way to take those concepts that are in this other FMP and put it in snapper grouper, and so, to me, that gets to the regional component too, and so, yes, I think it's a great example. I have Kerry, who has been waiting patiently, and Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: So I don't -- I would be uncomfortable totally dropping this, but what I would like to do is revise it in some manner, that this is more aspirational, and that wouldn't it be great if we had -- I'm not giving words yet, Mike, but I'm just talking out loud. I mean, wouldn't it be -- What can we do to move towards making this be possible?

An example would be, you know, state management is -- If you all think that's one step towards having better data, that makes this possible, maybe it's as simple as, when we do our research and monitoring, or our requests, you know, our requests, that we start pegging for more commercial observers, you know, so that we can validate the logbook. I mean, we have some control over this, and I'm not saying we can fix it, but is our ideal that someday we have such good data that we are able to do this?

I'm not saying we have to start doing this right now, but I think that's also what Charlie was going to say, but let me just ask one more question, and the people that need to answer it -- Did I hear you say -- So discard information in the logbooks, and discard numbers through MRIP, are good enough for -- They're used in stock assessments, but they're not good enough to use in management, and is that an accurate statement?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think that's one way of putting it. They're not considered good enough to just generate estimates for all the species across-the-board, say from the logbooks, and we know, when you look at MRIP and just get an estimate, you see the PSEs -- It says this is not recommended for management, because it's so high.

The stock assessment is not a single piece of information, right, and so the thinking there is, when that's used as input to a stock assessment, and everything that's input to a stock assessment has some uncertainty about it, you're analyzing that in this overall framework, where one piece of information can't go too far awry out of what it would be expected to be, because of the modeling and the error structures and all that are put in there.

If, you know, you get a real big spike in something in a catch series, but that's contrary to the index, which gets a lot of weight, and it's contrary to the age comp, and it's just contrary to other fishery sectors in that year, then what the models say is I don't believe you so much, and I'll give me an observation, or I'll give me a prediction, that's quite a bit different from that observation, and so it allows those uncertain pieces like those discards to not be used so much it's face value.

When you go and like use those numbers as like part of quota monitoring in an individual year, well, you're not having all that structure and process that's in the assessment, and other sources of

information, to say, no, I don't trust that number, and so it becomes a lot more risky to use it that way, and so that's why I think it's more comfort using it in the assessment than using it just standing alone.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. I've got Dewey, and then I'm going to try to move us. Okay. All right, and so we added some things there about the aspirational aspect of this. I'm going to try to move us to the next guiding principle here. This one is also going to be fun, and so there was a concept in there that was don't continue to bring up ideas that the council has decided not to move forward with unless there is new information and you know the history, and then there were some examples here or more commercial IFQs, sector allocation, and I would say another one is VMS, and so what do we think about this as a guiding principle? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Upon further reflection, Madam Chair, I'm not super comfortable with this. I don't -- I personally don't like the idea, even for things that I personally don't like, am not thrilled with the idea of taking tools out of the toolbox, but that's just me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Ditto, and I'll throw some, you know, context beside it. You know, I have wreckfish IFQs. It is probably the only thing I catch that I can build a business plan around. Are they easy, or are they controversial? Sure. Is there a possible way, in some instances, to make something like that work? Yes. You know, VMS, nobody really wants to have one on a boat, but, if that's what we need to show that we're doing what we're supposed to be, it should be a tool in the toolbox. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We put a line through it, and so we'll consider that checked off. The next one actually had a lot of sticky dots on it, and it just said be proactive, and so someone help us on what this means to them. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I know, from my standpoint, it's getting ahead of the issue, as opposed to being reactive to this. Every time we're waiting on a stock assessment, to react to it. The idea is like, similar to what's going on with black sea bass right now, where we don't have the full information from the stock assessment, and so we're getting ahead of that, recognizing that there are issues that need to be addressed, and so I think that's what the difference is, is it's just, you know, again, thinking more forward than waiting until we're being told we have to do something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That was helpful. Andy, and then Tom.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I fully agree with Carolyn, and I also look at this as, you know, what other tools do we have available to us to just be proactive, and so Chip gave the great demonstration yesterday of the SAFE report, with that information, right, and that's something that we can look at and go, oh, well, maybe we have a problem, or maybe we're doing better with a fishery, and we need to take a look at this and make some changes. The Gulf also has gone to trying to request more interim analyses, and I brought that up earlier today. I think that's something that is a proactive approach, for both stocks that may be in decline, as well as stocks that are improving.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Love that. Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, you guys captured a lot of what I was going to say. I think the idea is to identify tools to be proactive. You know, I think about -- We've had a lot of discussion here about looking at the current ACL levels, right, and I think that we need to look at them to see, if ACLs are not being caught, that needs to be a proactive measure in which to say, hey, maybe we need that interim analysis, and maybe we need to look at this a little bit closer, knowing that we don't have a stock assessment coming.

That's something that we've mentioned in the past, but we need to use the available data in front of us to try to be proactive. You know, I think about what Dewey is saying and having, you know, access to more of that real-time quotas, to be seeing what's caught, and those are the type of tools that we need in order to try to identify these problems before we necessarily will see it in an assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I guess, going back to what Carolyn said, what I thought it meant was also not just wait -- Don't wait for a stock assessment, but don't wait for the Cadillac of stock assessments, and be willing to use interim analysis, and is that -- Okay. I'm just trying to understand a little bit more. Others that want to comment on this one, about what it means to them? Go ahead, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: On that note, I think that's an important point. It's not just the Cadillac assessments, or with these interim things, but we also need to have red flags that we're seeing, and that may indicate that we need to do an interim analysis, right, and so there's -- I think there's several layers to this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're capturing that, red flags or indicators. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Simply just don't -- Don't settle for status quo, you know, and thinking outside that box a little bit, too. I think that kind of, to me, gets back to proactive as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this one? Okay. I'm going to keep moving. There was another guiding principle about minimize wasted fish, and so can someone help me with what -- I don't know that I know exactly what this means either. Maybe we reword it, or maybe it's already captured, and I'm not sure who wrote it up there, and so if someone wants to offer what we think it means or -- Was it discards? I thought -- I took this -- I thought this was something about commercial, and so clearly I don't know what it means. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, that was my immediate interpretation, is the conversations we've been having about the amount of discards we have in fisheries, and how do we turn that more into landed catch.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Something like deal with discards issues, turn discards into landings, and I don't know. Somebody else help. Amy, thoughts?

MS. DUKES: Yes, and, I mean, I definitely think discards, discards into landings, and this goes back to probably more so on a recreational side, but, you know, that trip efficiency and things like that, but there's lots of different ways we can look at this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, Amy nailed it. I was thinking the same thing. This is kind of a principle that aligns, I feel like, with the conversation about trip satisfaction and efficiency.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got it. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would also think it could mean, you know, not having the ability to catch fish that are in the ACL that's delivered to us for whatever reason, and so those fish go by, and they were delivered to us to catch, but we didn't catch them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else on this one? We're capturing Jimmy's comment there. Then the last bullet there, act on information we have, and not what we're hoping to get, I feel like we had some discussion on that like two principles ago, guiding principles ago, about not waiting for the Cadillac of stock assessments, using interim analysis, using the SAFE report, and so is this really kind of a sub-bullet? Okay, and so it sounds like we're saying that this moves up to the be proactive section. Okay. All right. Good discussion on these.

We also developed a category where we took some of these items and we put it into a category on their guiding principles, one category called economic and one category called science and data collection, just because we were kind of trying to group this a little bit more and take some of these concepts and put it together here.

This is just an idea to do this grouping this way, but it's whatever you guys think, and so, under economic, we grouped some of the things that got a bunch of stickies about evaluating commercial portfolio fishermen, because that's kind of where we are in the fishery these days, and then ensure a path for new entrants for permitted fisheries and limited entry fisheries. What do we think about these as guiding principles to get to the goalposts? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I worry a little bit about the wording of the second one, because it sort of feels like we're mandating -- I know, but I just want to know -- I want to know if other people feel the same way, that it's mandating us to create that system, and, in some ways, is it just that's economics of the fishery, and there's a buy-in, and that's what it is, or is it we're committed to saying somehow we're going to always ensure there's a path for anyone who wants to enter this fishery to enter this fishery, and I don't know if I'm just reading too much into it, but I don't want us to commit to being the vehicle by which -- You know, does that make -- Do you know what I mean?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, but isn't even like the transfer of a permit is a path for a new entrant or something?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I took it more simplistically than that.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and so I'm over-analyzing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I don't know. It's what others think too, and like so say somebody showed up and said, hey, I'm going to call a council member, because I don't understand how to get into the wreckfish fishery, and so I'm going to call Kerry, and I'm going to ask her what, and you would explain what they would have to do to get into wreckfish, but I don't know. Over here, and, Jimmy, did you have your hand up?

MR. HULL: I might change the word from "path" to "opportunities", to ensure there are opportunities for new entrants for permitted fisheries and limited --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Other thoughts, concerns, comments? Amy.

MS. DUKES: I'm not sure what the word is, but I think we should -- In addition to opportunities, Jimmy, it's that "ensure" word that maybe could come up with something else, like, you know, we already are doing this, and consider, or continue, or what have you.

The other thing is this evaluate commercial portfolio fishing, and I don't know -- Like, in addition to that, I think, from an economic standpoint, I think it kind of goes back to what we did with the goalposts, but almost like strengthening the value of it, you know, this whole idea of safe, sustainable, local, and I hate that word, but seafood, you know, and I'm just trying to figure out how to articulate it without using those words that we always use, and so just some sort of way to strengthen the value of our fisheries, whether it be commercial or recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I took it to mean, and so -- Because it sounds like you took it a little bit different, and so maybe we need to clarify, and I don't know who wrote it, you know, if they want to help us clarify what it means, and I thought it was trying to say that now, here in the South Atlantic, commercial fishermen basically have to operate as portfolio fishermen, and that, just because of the way snapper grouper is, or the way king mackerel is, or the way these different fisheries operate, and like Jimmy has also got a shark permit, you know, and so I thought it meant like this is the current condition, and maybe we need to, like Dewey is saying, get the data for this, to make sure, when we make decisions, we understand exactly how people are having to operate as portfolio fishermen, and we need that information as we move forward and make decisions, and that's kind of how I interpreted it, but I don't -- So I don't know. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: There was an evaluation that I remember, and I don't know how many years ago it was, by staff, and so -- But I think it's -- I think that just, to me, this means we need to do that periodically, to see how things have changed, and so that we can be better informed when we're making decisions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn, and then I think Dewey had his hand up.

DR. BELCHER: I think it would be good to probably, and I don't know the best way to request it, but it went -- So that paper, it's one of Steve Cadrin's students that wrote it. It was reviewed by the SEP back in 2022, I think, 2022 or 2023, and there was discussions about it. The SSC reviewed it, and I don't know what more we had, and so I think it's one of those things that would be good to regroup on it, because I know it was kind of received a little bit lukewarm. That's why I'm saying it would be interesting to go back and look at that, and have those conversations about it, because I don't know that it ever came to the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That's good. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and it would be interesting, and, fifteen years ago, it might have been a single, or two, fisheries, but now I think it would be interesting to see if people have got to do multiple things, particularly if they're allowed, you know, throughout the year, and so I think you're going to see you're not a one fisherman. You do multiple things to make up your year, and that's vital.

That's why I think it would be better informed, and, you know, it was interesting how in, I think 2023, the data that Chip might have produced for the snapper grouper, showed, you know, two-hundred-and-sixty-some fishermen, forty-five and sixty-some that landed snapper grouper species, and that was very educational, and stuff like that, but, you know, fish houses report their data, a federal dealer, every seven days, or something like that, and so the data goes in there, you know, for what fish you're catching, but not the part of the different permitted fisheries, but an extensive thing about what you're catching, where you're catching, your permits and different things, and exclude everybody.

That snapshot would be answering a lot of questions that we're all around the table asking, and it would be better if it was like in one form, and a continuation of that form, through the quota monitoring page with different things, but it would help us in all our deliberations, and looking, because the numbers are given by fish caught every week. That number goes into the system, but it just don't -- The system that we presently have here in SERO doesn't allow for expansion, basically, like the GARFO region, and so it just -- I think it would be very informative, and I don't know how -- I'm just going to continue on until maybe one day it happens. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I feel like there was another paper in regards to portfolio fishing that Kari MacLaughlin, or Kari Buck, had produced, and it specifically looked at the snapper grouper fishery, and exactly all the fisheries that they were -- That they kind of had to be involved to remain a commercial fisherman, and so we can definitely give you both of those papers, and send those along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I know this isn't going to prevent Dewey from bringing this up anymore, maybe at even this meeting, but I did have a chat with our Science Center, and so this is some information that we actually run, and have available to us internally, but we're not publicly displaying some of the information that you're asking for. It is a challenge, and limitation, of our IT staff right now to make that possible, but it is something at least we're exploring and can look into further.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I've learned that, and I promise won't bring it up here, but we'll talk about it in March. A progress update, and I understand that. I just -- When I find something that's way better, I like to share it, and maybe not with fishermen running off to get there, that I've caught a few fish, but at least it's better. Thank you.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll just emphasize the message has been received, okay? I heard you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Okay. Good discussion. Let's move on to science and data collection. I'm hoping we can get through this whole document before the end of the committee here, and so science and data collection, and so we're still in the guiding principles component here. I'll read off some of these things, and maybe we can kind of take this as a group, to see if you want to comment on this.

There was a paper over there that said simplify science and meet management needs, and then we had some papers that were behind it to try to explain what we meant by that, and so we had support interim assessments, more timely info needed on stock status, stock assessments that match the available data, less reliance on traditional stock assessments, timing, single species, all of that. I feel like we kind of already talked about this above, and so I see heads nodding that, yes, we kind of talked about it.

The next main bullet there was support and promote efforts to provide/obtain ecosystem and multispecies analyses for supporting catch recommendations and evaluating management alternatives. This kind of gets us to one of the guiding principles we already talked about as well, and then use more cooperative research projects to get data. To me, this is also citizen science, but we had some papers behind it that were also about more engagement with stakeholders and more engagement with the states to get that information, and so do we feel that we're thumbs-up on that? Okay. I see thumbs-up on this. All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Sorry to hold you up, Madam Chair. I just was curious about the potential to either reframe or to add, and so less reliance on traditional stock assessments. I'm almost like more confidence or trust or assurance in simplified stock -- I know it's the same thing, and it's just reframed in a different way, but I was just curious about like another sub-bullet or something, and I want to make sure that that thought process is understood.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that sounds good to me. That's also partly -- We have a component coming later that's about stakeholders, but -- Because I think you're getting to the other side of it, which is we're trying to get more confidence, not just in the management process, but in the new stock assessment process. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of feel like the idea that you're saying, stock assessments that match available data and traditional stocks, it's basically going back to being more of a generalized approach to a stock assessment, as opposed to being highly specified in a stock assessment approach, because an interim assessment is another form of stock assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and we have a SEDAR Steering Committee meeting in February. I proposed an agenda, which I'll be discussing, or agenda topic, which I'll be discussing, which is a procedures-type workshop for South Atlantic and Gulf species. We're doing that in the Caribbean right now, to look at kind of what are the best analytical methods for the data and information we have, and I feel like that could be well suited to look at also South Atlantic and Gulf species, and so it's not just stock assessments. It's just kind of what we can do to analyze and evaluate the health of populations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Very cool. Amy.

MS. DUKES: You brought it up, and I think it would just be really nice to see it on the screen, to use more cooperative research/citizen science projects, to make sure that that is clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're fixing that. Okay. Anything else here? All right. Let's see what else we can get through before we come to the end of the committee, and so we had another category that we were putting things under that was called ideas for process for the Snapper Grouper Committee, committee efficiency principles, those types of things, and so -- These are some of the things that got the stickies on it. One of the items was more communication and collaboration between states and NOAA outside of the council meeting. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I would like a little bit of clarification on what's meant by states, because it's -- Is it the state agencies, or is it involving the other folks, because there are times when I look to Charlie to help provide me with information about the commercial fishery, because our fishery is much smaller in scale than everyone else's, and so I may not be the best person at the table.

You know, like we do these subcommittees, and like when we did the wreckfish one, and I felt like I was not the best person to sit on that committee, because I don't -- Other than liking to eat them, I don't have as much, you know, input to that process, but yet I would want Charlie to sit there, or something like that, and so I think it's just being clear how you want to do that. I don't know that it means agency to agency, and is that what we're talking about, or otherwise?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I also think that what you're saying goes back to the use subcommittees for specialized issues, or something, because that wreckfish had a subcommittee, and Charlie, I think, was on it, but maybe as a wreckfish shareholder, and not as a council member, and I can't remember. Okay, and I -- Maybe the subcommittee process partly gets to this. I'm not sure what else falls under here in this how to run the committee to be more efficient. Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Andy, is that something that you brought up, about the discussions between NOAA and the states or --

MR. STRELCHECK: To be honest, I don't recall. I mean, I know we've met periodically at council meetings, and I certainly support this. I think I would read it more as agency to agency, you know, and I think, right now, kind of where we're at with EFPs, it's a great example of something that, you know, would be a huge opportunity to go forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good. All right, and so we have a whole category here that had a bunch of Post-Its behind it called be more responsive and timely, and so, underneath that, or behind that Post-It, were Post-Its that said push for shorter timeframes for actions, make hard decisions faster, optimize use of expedited procedures, timely response to assessments, make better use of our right to use informed judgment when presented with conflicting and incomplete information, and so, once again, this is kind of the procedure for the committee, and I feel like we worked on this today.

We had a discussion about golden tile, and, instead of kicking the can, like how do we get a shorter timeframe for this action that we are required to take following a stock assessment, and so I feel

like we did multiple bullets under that list just today. I don't know that we need to edit any of this. Are we good with these? Okay. I see thumbs-up. Thumbs-up. Okay. All right.

The next main Post-It was get out of the rut, and so -- I can't make this up. All right, and so there were some Post-Its behind it, Post-It notes that were behind it, that we had grouped behind it, called be solution oriented, get away from single species management, be willing to test new and innovative ideas, make difficult decisions when needed in alignment with fishery goals, and so I think this also goes back to the principle that we talked about above, about like don't be paralyzed with inaction or something. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Don't we have all of this covered elsewhere? I don't see anything there that isn't -- That we don't have covered elsewhere, and so it feels redundant to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Check. All right. The next category, with some sub-bullets, was maximize meeting time, and so this would be for the Snapper Grouper Committee, and so one of the bullets under there was use the subcommittee to tackle niche issues, like the Wreckfish Subcommittee, so this can save time and streamline the process.

Another Post-It behind that was minimize informational discussions, and so this was a Post-It behind there, and so I actually thought this was not just about the committee. I thought it was about running the council meeting week as a whole, and then it didn't get but maybe one dot, but Amy's safe word to stop discussions, and so I was trying to put some stuff out there under this maximize meeting time category for the subcommittee, and what do we think about this, and do we think the minimize informational discussions really isn't just about this committee, and it's really kind of about the whole council meeting week? Okay, and I see heads nodding yes. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess, when I first read this, I took this as minimize informational presentations, actually, because that's kind of what I took it. I mean I does say discussions, because I sort of think, when we discuss things, it's not -- It's trying to get to a solution on something, and it's not gee-whiz stuff, but, anyway, I wonder if that was actually presentations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we fixed that. Good call. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm hesitant to say it, but we can always call the question quicker.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're capturing it. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Doesn't that kind of go to your safe word, I mean, because --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think the way I took the safe word, but I don't -- I'm going to let Amy explain, try to explain, it better, and it's her idea, but the way that I interpreted the safe word is so let's say we're down a rabbit hole on a discussion, and we don't even have a motion on the table, and we are just down a rabbit hole, and someone can say -- I don't know what the word is, but apples, and like we just kind of stop, and we maybe reorient ourselves back to what are we trying to accomplish here, kind of what are the goalposts, what are the principles, and that's how I took it, and so I'm going to go to Amy first, then Dewey, then Trish.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, you actually did a wonderful description. It is literally a mental and physical and verbal timeout for our brains to just have a hot second to reset, and then take that conversation, and whatever we're doing, and reframe it get back on track.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Elmo. Enough and let's move on, from like facilitation training.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Dewey, then Trish.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was going to say let all thirteen voting folks put a piece of paper in a hat, or bowl, and we'll let the chairman of the council pick it out, and that will be the word, our safe word, and that was just that was just something I thought. At the next meeting in March, we'll all put a letter in, and it's got to be a family-oriented.

MS. DUKES: I was about to just say that.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: If it's not, you don't get to vote on a few things, and we'll let the chairman pull out the thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like it. Okay. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and that sounds good. I was I was just going to share that what we do in internal meetings at DMF is we actually have a piece of paper with a picture of a rabbit hole, and we just hold it up. That's what we do, and that's what we do that's what we do at DMF, in our leadership, is you just hold the picture up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think we should be a little careful in how much we minimize things that aren't directly related to the actions that we do, because we have folks who are representatives on various things at a higher level, like HMS, Protected Resources, take reduction teams, ICCAT, and we never talk about this. We spend very little time, you know, make very little time, to talk about CCC reports. It's very brief.

You know things come up from the agency, and they look to the councils to provide representation, and it's really difficult to generate interest and representation on something when we never talk about it. and it seems that we're kind of doubling-down now on only talking about the things that we have an FMP on, and I think that's potentially damaging, because our folks potentially go to these meetings, and don't know what the council's perspective is on it, and how are they going to provide that representation, or they come to me and say, hey, send somebody, and I'm like what are you talking about, and we don't talk about this stuff.

I'm seeing this being kind of detrimental to our broader mission, and so I would like to put in a plea that we find a time to make sure we can talk about these issues that are important to our fishermen, and our constituents, and, when we have when we have an obligation to represent the South Atlantic region, the folks here around the table that are doing that actually feel like you can do that effectively.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. We captured that, too. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: John, I couldn't agree with you more, because I also want to point out that a lot of our stakeholders utilize these council meetings in order to inform themselves of fisheries in these areas. and it's important for us to capture that other information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. It's a good discussion. I feel like we've had good discussions on that, and then, the last bullet in this category, we can just put a check-mark by that. It was to provide this booklet of important information for council members that would include the goalposts, the principles, SEDAR schedule, workplan, types of amendments, et cetera.

Done, and then it seems like, as we've gone through the week, we've thought of other things that we want to add to our book, and so it's exciting that we've already implemented one of these things that we came up with at the last meeting, and so great job. Okay. We're almost done. Only a couple more categories here, but go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can it be made digitally available, so that I can have it on my laptop and not to carry a binder around?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Love that, too.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't think I'll need it as much as maybe other council members.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Oh, burn. Okay. All right. Phew. Okay, and that's such a great segue, and I'm just going to go right to these no-go statements and concepts. I'm going right to that. I felt like -- So I feel like it's like just no shaming each other, no sector shaming, no NOAA shaming, no state shaming. Other no-go statements are there are too many fishermen, and that's too much work to do that, the recreational sector is unaccountable, and then there were some other Post-Its behind that there are too many fishermen, because there was the Post-It for there's too many commercial fishermen, there's too many recreational fishermen, and get hooks out of the water.

Let's -- Since we just burned our colleagues here, let's go to the no-go statements that we came up with, and so what do we think? Is this a good a good list here for trying to minimize the finger pointing and jabs at each other, I guess, when we're trying to get our work done? Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, there are different ways of saying the same thing. I'm just going to pick one, the get hooks out of the water. You can say the same thing in like how can we be more efficient in catching our fish and ending our trip, which is almost the same thing, and so, you know, just use some tact, I guess, for lack of a better word, and, as I heard you say earlier, words matter.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I got -- We're trying to capture that. That's good. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Because what jumps out at me, at that first one, it's really about effort. You know, we're categorizing the effort, and, you know, there's too many this, too many that, and it's just -- It's an effort thing, and so it's -- I don't know how to wordsmith it, but, to me, it's just -- It's really just that's the way people say there's too much effort, and effort is something you have to consider in fishing, and so, I mean, I get it, you know, about -- I get your point, but, again, it's just we've got to come up with better ways to discuss concerns of effort.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I don't see effort as a problem to have a discussion about, I guess, and so the statements we often hear, when the public comes forward, like during public comment, you might hear, from a recreational fisherman, like, oh, the problem is we just need to eliminate commercial fishing, or you might hear, from commercial fishermen, this is because there's just way too many recreational fishermen out there, and so, I mean, we took these words from, you know, kind of things that we're hearing, and I think that we're having more nuanced discussions, if you will.

It's trying to not just use some of these broad statements, I guess, because, if we as council members are saying things like there's just way too many commercial fishermen, like, are we -- Well, you're sitting here at the council table, and like, if you think that's the problem, or you think effort is the problem, then we need to have that discussion, and we don't need to just blame a whole sector.

MS. MURPHEY: So, the way you described it, you just said it plain.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right.

MS. MURPHEY: So that's what you're trying to avoid, is blame.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. All right, and so that makes more sense, because I -- You know, because it seems like -- When I just looked at it, I thought of effort, but I get what you're saying, because we see it in our state. You know, get rid of the gillnets, and life will be great, and so it's about blaming, and so, as long as that's clear, then I'm good with that, but I just -- Like I said, I just read it as effort.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, and it's about blaming. I mean, we're sitting around this table, and we're the ones that need to have hard discussions, but I don't -- I think we can do that without finger pointing to someone else, or trying to blame them, of like, oh, well, this is just because you're the problem here, and we're having this conversation because you're the problem. Thoughts? I know we're at the end of the day here, and we're getting tired on this. I know I am. Any thoughts on this? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I mean, no matter what we do around this table, to me, it ain't none of it personal, and now somebody oversteps that line, and, I mean, I don't think -- But we're looking at the data, and we're hearing from the public, and all of us have been in this a while, and I think we've got pretty thick skin, and, you know, I don't -- I probably better write this down on a piece of paper, and keep it as a cheat sheet in my pocket, to make sure I don't overstep, but I'm not -- None of it is blaming somebody.

We've got a lack of things that's available to us, and we have to make the hard decision, but I haven't got to the point where I -- You know, I might say a darn, or a hell or something by accident, but I don't think I'm sitting here being inappropriate to somebody else. I mean, you know, a little bit of fire, and it's like sitting on the front row of the church. A lot of people don't like to sit up there, but sometimes you probably should, but I don't think that we've got to the point where we're

-- I mean, I haven't seen that with anybody. They might be on a side conversation outside the mic, but I don't think we've got here yet with this type of stuff. That's just me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So I'm comfortable with all the bullets except the first one. I'm still struggling with that one, and I think it's just the no-go nature of it, because I feel like some of those statements kind of pertain to root causes of challenges we're facing in our fishery, right, and so I agree that I would not want to say them that way, but you could say them a different way and say, well, the commercial fishery is overcapitalized, and that's the same thing as saying there's too many commercial fishermen, or you could say there's too much recreational fishing effort to meet our goals and objectives for snapper grouper, or whatever the species might be. So, to me, it comes back to what are the root causes we're trying to solve, and what are our objectives, and I think we just need to be careful, in terms of how we're wording some of this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Do we want to just go with -- So let's look at the last two bullets that Mike typed up there, that are like use tact, words matter, avoid broad blaming statements. Is that better, and then just delete all of these statements? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So another solution too is Trish kind of brought up where you've got sector, NOAA, state, and it's shaming or blaming, and, I mean, is that pretty much at the top, and it's kind of the same thing. I mean, in one situation, you're blaming them for particular things, but I do think definitely the tact, because we've had that a couple of different times too, which I know we all have, right?

You move forward, and because, you've had a focus on a particular thing right away, that your stakeholders are like you're biased against this, and it's like, no, unfortunately, this is the focus that we've had, because we haven't put eyes to that. It hasn't risen to the priority, and now, all of a sudden, we're finding fault, and so I think it's just having that discussion that, when we do it, we're clear in what our intent is by making the statement.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I saw another hand go up. Was it you, Amy? Did you have your hand up?

MS. DUKES: Yes, Madam Chair, and I agree with a lot of the conversation that's been around this table. I feel like this is a little too much, the way it is on the screen. I mean, if this is in fact an innovation plan, some of that is hopefully commonsense. Some of that should be general respect for one another. We're all in this together, regardless of what sector or agency or what have you come from, and, I don't know, and I go back to my safe word. It's like, I'm sorry, and we just need to treat each other like we want to be treated. I think more or less is better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Yes, and so I highlighted those two there, that we kind of agreed on there, and so, yes, it's about being collegial, et cetera, using tact, those things. Okay. I like that. We've got one more tiny category above this, and then we're done with this document for today, and then we'll do Kerry's item of Other Business, and then we'll conclude this committee.

There were a number of things that got sticky dots on it that we categorized into responsibility to stakeholders, and we touched on this in one of the bullets above, but there were Post-Its grouped in there that said we wanted to understand our audience better, and we desire stakeholder and

fishermen satisfaction. That was a couple of bullets squished together. Figure out how to keep fishermen engaged, and I think we mean in the process, and improve confidence of stakeholders in our process here, and so are we good on those? Thumbs-up on those? Okay. Jimmy says we're doing a lot of that, and I agree, but, yes.

What Kerry is trying to say is imagine that this is in your booklet, and this is, you know, front and center, that we need to keep this in mind as we're making decisions. Okay. Are we good for today? I really appreciate the discussion. Great discussion around this. Thanks for helping us move our plan forward. I really appreciate that, and so I'm going to move into Other Business.

We started a discussion yesterday, and it was about the trip limits and sale and all of that, and can we go back to that? We weren't able to finish it, because of time, and so can we have that discussion, figure out, if we need to make changes in the federal regs, what is the path, you know, and so what is the vehicle to do it? It seems like one of the first stops of what we said yesterday was, and it's on the list, was this needs to go to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and so that's on the list already, but do we have some direction, or guidance, here on some next steps after that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: When we were having that discussion, Matt mentioned like sort of ways, you know, snap a picture, like certain ways that, maybe without changing anything, and I suspect we're still probably not going to get where I would like us to get, but, in the spirit of being efficient, maybe we can.

Maybe that's what the Law Enforcement AP can discuss, is how they would interpret -- You know, suggestions they have for how they could -- The fishermen's needs could be met without us having to change the regs, and then, when we come back in March, depending on what we hear from them, we then decide if we need to find a vehicle to make the change.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sounds good. I like that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I was just going to add, in discussions with Matt, you know, talking to him about our current processes of what we -- How we do end our trips, and unload at the dealers when they're closed, you know, and he goes to the AP meeting, and he can say, well, this is what they're doing now, and is this legal, and, you know, we can hear back from them, and we really can't do anything until we hear back from them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Matt, then back to Kerry.

MR. WALIA: Sure, and I appreciate it. Thank you, Jimmy and Kerry, and so I don't go to the AP, but we have a representative that goes there, as well as General Counsel and law enforcement, and they're both planning to be there. We're all lock and step. We've had pre-meetings before this. We've met with Andy and SERO on it, and made a couple of proposals.

I will note, just for now, to show -- This will go to the LE AP, and I didn't have time to get into it, but so, currently, the way the regs are set up, I -- There is a way to continue going forward on this, and so we talk about commercial trip limits, and there's another one about recordkeeping and reporting. It's a 50 CFR 622.176. In there, it actually gets into the dealer about going, hey, if we -- If law enforcement goes up to the dealer, the exact verbiage is "on demand". A dealer who has

been issued the dealer permit, as required, must make available to any authorized officer all records of offloads, purchases, or sales, and so, any record of offload, that's what we're talking about, is, hey, do you have a record? Do you have a text? Do you have -- We're talking about you guys are putting in papers in the box of showing the fishermen offloading X amount of pounds, and X species, and, as long as we can track that that fish was moved from the vessel owner to the dealer, that's the accountability that we're looking for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I want to make sure that all of the bases are -- If they can't be covered, I want to know where the gaps could occur. Like for instance, Matt, if -- Or you're not going to be there, and so, you know, I would like to take into consideration people that are having to drive their fish, that aren't just offloading through a traditional dealer, and maybe someone needs to be at the LE AP just for that time when they're talking about it, like one of us or something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Matt.

MR. WALIA: Just one more thing to note. If you do go down the road of trying to change the actual regulation, just keep in mind that you'll most likely also have to change the prohibition, and so you're not just changing one, because the prohibition is actually about possession of a vessel on land, or still possessing it, and so we would have to go back and revise that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Perfect. Thank you. All right. Thanks for that discussion. Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and could other like dealer records, offload, and maybe also video footage? At our fish house, there is video footage. I don't know if that has been used.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Seeing none, we'll adjourn this committee, and I'll turn it back to you, Madam Chair.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 11, 2025.)

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January 15, 2026

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Batsavage

Beal

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Binion-Rock

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Boots

Borland

Brewster-Geisz

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Bublely

Bunting

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Cody

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OCain	Elijah
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
Pace	Sara
Package-Ward	Christina
Padgett	Kathryn
Palmrose	Kristin
Papacostas	Katherine
Phillips	Charlie
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Salmon	Brandi
Sawicki	Kim
Scheffel	Trevor
Seeley	Matthew
Seeley	Matthew
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Solinger	Laura
Soltanoff	Carrie
Spurgin	Kali
Stasser	Katie
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ

Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walsh	Mick
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Westwood	William
Whitten	Meredith
Williams	Erik
Williams	Travis
Willingham	Darrin
Wilson	Jackie
Withers	Meg
collier	chip
cox	Jack
gloeckner	david
gwin	earl sonny
huber	Jeanette
leonard	edward
monk	Melissa
moss	david
peters	sophonda
sandorf	scott
thomas	suz
vincent	matthew
young	Jerome
zales	bob
Atkinson	Seth
Auster	Peter
Baertlein	Heather
Banks	Kesley
Bogdan	Jennifer
Brannon	Gettys
Brown	Hunter
Bruger	Catherine
Chandler	Alexander
Coleman	Heather
Crandall	Chelsey
Crosson	Scott
Dunn	Courtney
Glaser	Danica
HKLNdcltSsjAQdiDatg	ItcEDCXvOzBwWesnJ

Hart	Hannah
Herrick	Daniel
Heyman	William
Hull	Jimmy
Humphreys	Aaron
Judy	Gabrielle
Keener	Paula
Kolmos	Kevin
Laird	Skylar
Larkin	Michael
Markwith	Anne
Matzen	Eric
Miele	Valentina
Moir	James
Neer	Julie
ODEN	JEFF
Porter	Mark
Reed	John
Rettig	Adam
Reynolds	Kris
Ricken	Joshua
Rodgers	Phil
Rothschild	Molly
Schlick	CJ
Sedberry	George
Smart	Tracey
Stewart	Mark
Warren	Camilla
White	Geoff
Wilms	Olivia
curtis	Joe

Attendee Report: December 2025 Council Meeting

Report Generated:

12/15/2025 09:35 AM EST

Webinar ID

690-222-395

Actual Start Date/Time

12/10/2025 07:46 AM EST

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

Attendee Details

Last Name

Aman

Amendola

Angers

Anker

Atkinson

Aukeman

Bailey

Bajema

Baker

Barbieri

Barger

Barile

Barrows

Batsavage

Beal

Bernier

Bianchi

Binion-Rock

Blough

Blum

Boots

Borland

Brannon

Brouwer

Brown

Buble

Bunting

Byrd

Cheshire

Coleman

First Name

Kevin

Kim

Jeff

Shari

Seth

Trip

Adam

Jordan

Scott

Luiz

Jeff

Peter

Katline

Chris

Bob

Quinn

Alan

Samantha

Heather

Catherine

Benjamin

Gary

Gettys

Myra

Hunter

Walter

Matthew

Julia

Rob

Heather

Crandall	Chelsey
Cromwell	Lawrence
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Judd
DeVictor	Richard
Degan	Jacqui
DiJohnson	Alex
Dover	Miles
Drexler	Michael
Dubniczki	Hayden
Dukes	Amy
Dunn	Russell
Dyar	Ben
Eckert	Anne
Farrell	Delaney
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
Geeslin	Dakus
Gentner	BRAD
Gialanella	Tiffany
Glaser	Danica
Goldfinch	Stephen
Gore	Karla
Gravitz	Michael
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
Guyas	Martha
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
Hallas	sara
Halonen	Ryan
Harrell	Ryan
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hildreth	Delaine
Horton	Chris
Howington	Kathleen

Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Isbell	James
Iverson	Kim
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kent	Russell
Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Nikolai
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Laird	Skylar
Larkin	Michael
Law	Alexander
Lazarre	Dominique
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
Locke	Charles
MCGOVERN	Jack
Macek	Amanda
Mackesey	Brendan
Malinowski	Richard
Mallory	Ryan
Marhefka	Kerry
Markwith	Anne
Masi	Michelle
Matter	Vivian
McCaffity	Chris
McClair	Genine
McGuigan	Charles
McMullen	Ryan
McWaters	Mark
Mcclees	Matthew
Meehan	Sean
Mehta	Nikhil
Melz	Stephen
Merck	Nicole
Miranda	David
Moir	James
Murphey	Trish
Nejjari	Amber
Newman	Thomas
Nuttall	Matthew

ODEN	JEFF
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
P	Jeff
Pace	Sara
Package-Ward	Christina
Padgett	Kathryn
Palmrose	Kristin
Perkinson	Matt
Phillips	Charlie
Pineiro Soler	Eugenio
Porch	Clay
Ramsay	Chloe
Rathke	David
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Rodgers	Phil
Rodriguez	Jessica
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Rutherford	John
S	Emma
Sawicki	Kim
Schlick	CJ
Schliewe	Stacy
Schmidtke	Michael
Sedberry	George
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Brad
Solinger	Laura
Somereve	Jake
Spurgin	Kali
Stasser	Katie
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Takade-Heumacher	Helen

Treece	Andrea
Trnka	Maureen
Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Vecchio	Julie
Venker	Ted
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Welch	Rob
Westwood	William
Whitten	Meredith
Williams	Erik
Willingham	Darrin
Wilms	Olivia
Withers	Meg
Woodward	Spud
bonura	Vincent
collier	chip
cox	Jack
curtis	Joe
gloeckner	david
gwin	earl sonny
huber	Jeanette
monk	Melissa
moss	david
peters	sophonda
sandorf	scott
shaffer	charles
thomas	suz
vincent	matthew
young	Jerome
zales	bob
Addis	Dustin
Aines	Alex
Allen	Shanae
Auster	Peter
Baertlein	Heather
Banks	Kesley
Bogdan	Jennifer
Brewster-Geisz	Karyl

Bruger	Catherine
Cermak	Bridget
Chandler	Alexander
Cody	Richard
Cushner	Sascha
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
Dunn	Courtney
Franke	Emilie
HKLNdcltSsjAQdiDatg	ItcEDCXvOzBwWesnJ
Herrick	Daniel
Heyman	William
Hollensead	Lisa
Humphreys	Aaron
Judy	Gabrielle
Keener	Paula
Kolmos	Kevin
Laird	Skylar
Lee	Jennifer
Matzen	Eric
McIntosh	Kevin
McManus	Brian
Miele	Valentina
Muffley	Brandon
Neer	Julie
OCain	Elijah
P	Jeff
P	Jeff
Papacostas	Katherine
Porter	Mark
Reed	John
Rettig	Adam
Ricken	Joshua
Rothschild	Molly
Salmon	Brandi
Scheffel	Trevor
Seeley	Matthew
Seeley	Matthew
Soltanoff	Carrie
Stein	Max
Stewart	Mark
Warren	Camilla
White	Geoff
Williams	Travis
Wilson	Jackie

cErffJdjJMKukaXrW
leonard

IJjqPCdpjELSGqDaCOS
edward

Attendee Report: December 2025 Council Meeting

Report Generated:

12/15/2025 09:38 AM EST

Webinar ID

690-222-395

Actual Start Date/Time

12/11/2025 07:40 AM EST

Staff Details

Attended

Yes

Interest Rating

Not applicable for staff

Attendee Details

Last Name

Addis

Aines

Aman

Angers

Bailey

Bajema

Barbieri

Barile

Barrows

Batsavage

Bernier

Bianchi

Blough

Boots

Borland

Brouwer

Brown

Bruger

Bunting

Byrd

Cheshire

Crosson

Curtis

DeVictor

Degan

Dover

Dubniczki

Dukes

Farrell

Flowers

First Name

Dustin

Alex

Kevin

Jeff

Adam

Jordan

Luiz

Peter

Katline

Chris

Quinn

Alan

Heather

Benjamin

Gary

Myra

Hunter

Catherine

Matthew

Julia

Rob

Scott

Judd

Richard

Jacqui

Miles

Hayden

Amy

Delaney

Henry

Foss	Kristin
Geeslin	Dakus
Gentner	BRAD
Glaser	Danica
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Guyas	Martha
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hale	Robert
Harrison	Alana
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Hildreth	Delaine
Howington	Kathleen
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Nikolai
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Locke	Charles
Macek	Amanda
Mackesey	Brendan
Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Masi	Michelle
Matter	Vivian
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Murphey	Trish
Newman	Thomas
ODEN	JEFF
Oliver	Ashley
Package-Ward	Christina
Padgett	Kathryn
Palmrose	Kristin
Phillips	Charlie
Poland	Stephen
Porch	Clay

Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Riley	Richard
Roller	Tom
Runde	Brendan
Salmon	Brandi
Sedberry	George
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Spurgin	Kali
Stasser	Katie
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vara	Mary
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Westwood	William
White	Geoff
Whitten	Meredith
Williams	Erik
Willingham	Darrin
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
bonura	Vincent
collier	chip
cox	Jack
gloeckner	david
gwin	earl sonny
marinko	jeff
moss	david
peters	sophonda
sandorf	scott
thomas	suz
vincent	matthew
young	Jerome
zales	bob
Allen	Shanae

Amendola	Kim
Anker	Shari
Atkinson	Seth
Aukeman	Trip
Auster	Peter
Baertlein	Heather
Baker	Scott
Banks	Kesley
Barger	Jeff
Beal	Bob
Binion-Rock	Samantha
Blum	Catherine
Bogdan	Jennifer
Brannon	Gettys
Brewster-Geisz	Karyl
Bublely	Walter
Cermak	Bridget
Chandler	Alexander
Cody	Richard
Coleman	Heather
Crandall	Chelsey
Cromwell	Lawrence
Cushner	Sascha
DeFilippi Simpson	Julie
DiJohnson	Alex
Drexler	Michael
Dunn	Russell
Dunn	Courtney
Dyar	Ben
Eckert	Anne
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Floyd	Brad
Franke	Emilie
Gialanella	Tiffany
Goldfinch	Stephen
Gravitz	Michael
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
HKLNdcltSsjAQdiDatg	ItcEDCXvOzBwWesnJ
Hallas	sara
Halonen	Ryan
Harrell	Ryan
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah

Haymans	Doug
Herrick	Daniel
Heyman	William
Hollensead	Lisa
Horton	Chris
Humphreys	Aaron
Isbell	James
Judy	Gabrielle
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keener	Paula
Kent	Russell
Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Klibansky	Nikolai
Kolmos	Kevin
Laird	Skylar
Laird	Skylar
Law	Alexander
Lee	Jennifer
Levy	Mara
MCGOVERN	Jack
Mallory	Ryan
Markwith	Anne
Matzen	Eric
McCaffity	Chris
McClair	Genine
McGuigan	Charles
McIntosh	Kevin
McManus	Brian
McMullen	Ryan
McWaters	Mark
Mcclees	Matthew
Meehan	Sean
Melz	Stephen
Miele	Valentina
Miranda	David
Moir	James
Muffley	Brandon
Neer	Julie
Nejjari	Amber
Nuttall	Matthew
OCain	Elijah
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina

P	Jeff
P	Jeff
P	Jeff
Pace	Sara
Papacostas	Katherine
Perkinson	Matt
Pineiro Soler	Eugenio
Porter	Mark
Ramsay	Chloe
Rathke	David
Reed	John
Rettig	Adam
Ricken	Joshua
Rodgers	Phil
Rodriguez	Jessica
Rothschild	Molly
Rutherford	John
S	Emma
Sawicki	Kim
Scheffel	Trevor
Schlick	CJ
Schliewe	Stacy
Schmidtke	Michael
Seeley	Matthew
Seeley	Matthew
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Smith	Brad
Solinger	Laura
Soltanoff	Carrie
Somereve	Jake
Stein	Max
Stewart	Mark
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Treece	Andrea
Trnka	Maureen
Vecchio	Julie
Venker	Ted
Waldo	Jennifer
Walsh	Mick
Warren	Camilla
Welch	Rob
Williams	Travis
Wilms	Olivia

Wilson
Woodward
cErffJdjJMKukaXrW
curtis
huber
leonard
monk
shaffer

Jackie
Spud
IJjqPCdpjELSGqDaCOS
Joe
Jeanette
edward
Melissa
charles