

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**World Golf Renaissance
St. Augustine, Florida**

June 9-11, 2026

Transcript

Snapper Grouper Committee

Jessica McCawley, Chair
Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
Dr. Carolyn Belcher
Amy W. Dukes
Judy Helmey
Dewey Hemilright

James G. Hull, Jr.
Trish Murphey
Charlie Phillips
Tom Roller
Andy Strelcheck
Robert Spottswood, Jr.

Council Staff

John Carmichael
Myra Brouwer
Dr. Chip Collier
Julia Byrd
Dr. Judd Curtis
John Hadley
Kathleen Howington
Allie Iberle
Kelly Klasnick

Ashley Oliver
Emily Ott
Dr. Mike Schmidtke
Rachael Silvas
Nicholas Smillie
Suzanna Thomas
Christina Curtis
Meg Withers

Attendees and Invited Participants

Rick DeVactor
Dr. John Walter
Sonny Gwin
C.J. Sweetman
Shepherd Grimes

Kristen Foss
Hayley Stephens
Dr. Marcel Reichert
Dr. Clay Porch

Observers and Participants

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the World Gold Renaissance in St. Augustine, Florida, on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any changes or modifications or known Other Business at this time for this agenda? All right. Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. We'll consider the agenda approved. The next order of business is Approval of the Minutes. Any substantive modifications to the minutes? All right. Any objection to approval of the minutes? All right. We'll consider the minutes approved. Next up is our Update on Submitted Amendments. Rick, are you going to give us that update?

MR. DEVICTOR: I will. Thank you, and I asked Mike to bring up this document. This is in your brief materials. It's under Additional Materials, and it's called Active Amendments, and this is actually Appendix A. This is a document where the council does a really good job outlining the amendments that you're working on now, and the ones that have been submitted to NMFS, and so this Appendix A I thought was a really good snapshot of just a summary of where we are at in rulemaking.

If you look at this document, we walk through when the council voted for final action, when it was submitted to NMFS, when the notice of availability of the amendment published, and, again, that's for amendments, and not framework amendments, where we publish an NOA. Then we have when the proposed rule published, when comments were due, the final rule, and approval date, and implementation date.

Just going down this list here of documents that we have, starting off with Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 36, this has to do with gag and black grouper vessel limits and the transit with on-demand gear through MPAs and SMZs, and so I have to report on that that the proposed rule published -- That was April 23rd, and the comment period ended about two weeks ago, and so we are responding to those comments, and we'll publish a final rule on that with an implementation date. That's the next step.

Snapper Grouper Amendment 48, that's wreckfish, and that's in the proposed rule stage. Snapper Grouper 55, that has to do with scamp and yellowmouth. That responds to the stock assessment and establishes a new complex and rebuilding plan and allocations, and so I'm happy to report there that we actually had a final rule published June 4th, and so five days ago, and we have implementation date, and so July 6th is when that will be implemented.

Joint Commercial Electronic Logbook, you had a presentation on that yesterday, the implementation of that and the outreach plan, and so that proposed rule published May 26th, and comments are due June 25th, and so that's the proposed rule, and the next step after that is the final rule stage for that.

Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework 5, this would change catch limits for blueline tilefish, and we are working on the proposed rule for that, or, actually, that's been submitted to Headquarters. Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 37, this has a number of management actions for black sea bass, including establishing ACTs for the commercial and recreational sector, and we are working on the proposed rule for that amendment, and so that completes my summary of amendments we have for rulemaking in the region right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any questions for Rick? All right. I don't see any hands. Thank you, Rick. Next up is Update on Exempted Fishing Permit Applications. I'm not sure -- Rick, are you going to do that? Okay.

MR. DEVICTOR: Sure, and I'll cover that, and so we do not have any new EFPs to bring before you today. The only one I want to update you on is the one that we talked about at the last meeting, and that was the Cultimar Technologies Incorporated that requested an exempted fishing permit, and just to remind you that that was to collect 200 mature American red snappers from federal waters off the Atlantic coast of Florida, and the purpose was to establish a dedicated broodstock population at a hatchery in Puerto Rico. We published a Federal Register notice on that to accept comments, and that comment period closed on May 21st, and so the next step for us is to review those comments and decide on whether to issue this exempted fishing permit to Cultimar, and that completes my summary of that EFP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions for Rick? All right. Now we're going to move into Update on Joint South Atlantic Council and Mid-Atlantic Council Subcommittee on Blueline Tilefish, and I'm going to pass it over to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so the -- If you'll recall, at the last council meeting, there was a subcommittee that was being formed that consisted of members from the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council as well as the Mid-Atlantic Council, and then there was also one SSC representative from each council that would comprise this subcommittee.

That subcommittee met to essentially have a planning meeting of kind of how this process would go exploring the allocation of blueline tilefish into the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic regions, and so that group -- That planning meeting happened on May 1st, and I'll give you a brief summary of what they talked about.

So, as a reminder, the subcommittee, their main tasks for this meeting were to review the current allocation situation between the regions and kind of familiarize everybody with the history of allocations of blueline tilefish for the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic regions, and then kind of talk about the current surveys, and then looking at other cross-jurisdictional allocation or management situations and methods that are used there, and then, finally, identifying any data that would be useful in making decisions for this group.

Just kind of a brief summary of that process, and so they went through what's been done in previous times. The former allocation was based on a 2017 tilefish pilot survey that resulted in an allocation of 56 percent of that north of Cape Hatteras portion of the stock to the Mid-Atlantic region, and 44 percent of that portion of the stock to the South Atlantic.

Following SEDAR 92, we used the SADL information from 2003 through 2004, and that's the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey. We used that as the basis for the allocation, and that changed it to 70 percent to the Mid-Atlantic and 30 percent to the South Atlantic, and that is the allocation that kind of formed the basis for catch levels that were put in in the Mid-Atlantic and that were -- That are being put in through Abbreviated Framework 5 for our region.

That was all summarized, and there were several pieces of discussion, that I'm not going to go through all of them. Getting down to one of the -- Kind of the conclusion point that the subcommittee got to was that subcommittee members -- They agreed that they wanted to explore some type of allocation design that used a combination of different data sources, and possibly looking at weighting these different data sources based on their uncertainty and their contributions to the decision-making, and seeing how they would depict the stock between the regions, and so that was one of the pieces that we came out with.

Then there was a summary of the different methods that are used in different regions, and so some of the talking points coming out of that were that allocations between regions based on surveys alone are not a common thing, but we've also noticed that blueline tilefish is not a common situation, in the sense that there's different data availability, different historical data availability, between the regions.

There's a longer time series of information here in the South Atlantic than there is in the Mid-Atlantic, and there's different uncertainties associated with different pieces of those information, and so being able to use a survey in this context may be helpful, but the group wants to have discussions on the best way to do that.

Then, finally, there was some discussion on what pieces of information would be useful to explore in developing an allocation method. It seemed pretty clear, from the discussion, that there's desire for exploration beyond just landings between the regions, and a lot of that discussion stemmed from how management has affected the landings in the different regions. When you have management that has different rules in the different areas, that affects what your landings numbers are going to look like, and so there was discussion about taking that into consideration, but there were several pieces of information that they requested staff to go, and to put together, and bring back for a future meeting, and so staff is working on that right now.

The follow-up from this is that there will be another meeting of this subcommittee. Right now, the plan is to have that virtually in July of this year. At this meeting, some of the information that's been requested will be presented to the subcommittee, and we're looking to take another step forward of the subcommittee being able to develop a recommended potential approach that they would then propose for this allocation between regions.

Just kind of reminding of the process, blueline tilefish has separate management plans for the South Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic Council, and so we're trying to work together, and collaborate and communicate, so that there can be an outcome that both councils are okay with, that both can live with, but, as far as approvals for any changes to that method, the South Atlantic Council would have its own approval, and the Mid-Atlantic Council would have its own approval process, and, with that, I will pause and see if there are any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions? Okay. This was just an update. We don't necessarily need to do anything on this today, so no questions. All right. Next up, we will move into Vermilion Snapper Allocations Review Report.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, everyone, and so this agenda item is a follow-up from your previous meeting where you discussed the current allocations for vermilion snapper, and so, as a quick reminder, this species was triggered for evaluation of the current allocation based on the

council's allocation review trigger policy, which, among other things, specifies that species should be reviewed every seven years, and so this is one of the species that hit that seven-year timeline.

You reviewed a series of information on vermilion snapper, and that information is captured in this report, in the appendix, and discussed -- Had a general discussion on the current allocations, and so there's a summary of those comments in the latter part of the front page of this report, but, generally speaking, as a reminder, you felt that the current existing allocations for vermilion snapper are sufficient.

You noted that neither sector is currently harvesting its sector annual catch limit, and, thus, not necessarily fully utilizing either sector allocation, and so, overall, you felt like it's working well for the fishery. You also noted that it's working well for the recreational. The recreational allocation is working well for both the private and for-hire components of the recreational fishery, and so you felt that Goal 2 of the Snapper Grouper FMP goals and objectives, and so focusing on management, was being adequately addressed.

You noted that there are updates to recreational data that need to be brought into the annual catch limit for vermilion snapper, and that that will be done through the next assessment for vermilion, and, also, that will be the time when sector allocations will be reviewed again by the council, and so, generally speaking, you have this summary report in front of you, at the end. I'm happy to answer any questions, but, in accordance with the council's allocation review policy, I'm looking for a motion to either amend or approve this allocation review report.

Really quickly, I'm going to scroll down. This is the appendix I was speaking about, and this is all the information that we reviewed last time, looking at the goals and objectives, landings by sector, landings overall, sort of the information that you reviewed last time, and so, if you want to look at any of that, that is captured there in this report, but, with that, I'll turn it over to the committee, and, again, looking for a motion. There's a draft motion there for you at the bottom. Assuming that this report looks good to you, it would be an approval of this report.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. Any questions or comments? Just to restate this, we talked about this at length at the last meeting, that this is the direction that we were going to go. This is a document that's codifying the discussion that we had at the last meeting, and, basically, that we would look at -- We looked at allocation here for vermilion on the timetable, but saying we're going to push the next review to when we are doing a stock assessment, and so, if there aren't any questions, I would entertain a motion here on vermilion. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I would like to make the motion to approve the allocation review report for vermilion snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Charlie, and seconded by Jimmy. Any further discussion? All right. Any objection? All right. The motion carries. All right. Thank you, John. Next up, we're going to move into the Wreckfish ITQ Program Review, and Christina is going to lead us through that.

MS. CURTIS: All right. Thank you, and so I'm going to talk today about the wreckfish individual transferable quota program review. If you'll remember, just as sort of a refresher, since we haven't talked about wreckfish in almost a year, because wreckfish is considered a limited access program,

it is required to undergo review every five to seven years. The last review for wreckfish was completed in September of 2019, and so we are right at that sort of seven-year mark.

That previous review, that was completed in September 2019, found that the program had been successful in achieving its stated goals and objectives, but did make a number of recommendations for improvement, and, in response to that review, this council developed Amendment 48 to the Snapper Grouper FMP, which included a series of actions and alternatives that were needed to improve and modernize the ITQ program.

That was approved by the council and submitted for secretarial review in December of 2024, and I'll touch on that again in a minute, but, at your March, this previous March meeting, you did direct staff to begin work on the next review, with the goal of having it completed by the end of the year to meet that sort of seven-year timeline, and so here is the rough timeline that we had reviewed with you in March.

We did receive the data from NMFS for the selected contractors, and so thank you to Jessica Stephen and Dave Gloeckner for providing that information. At this meeting, we're going to review the draft outline. We'll work with the contractors this summer to get that ITQ review completed, so that you all can review it in September, and work on drafting conclusions and recommendations.

We will bring together your Wreckfish Advisory Panel in the fall to provide comment on those conclusions and recommendations, and then we will bring their feedback in the final report to you in December for approval, and so a quick timeline, but we think that it's possible, given sort of where some of the things stand with wreckfish, and so that's why we're bringing the outline to you today.

There is a full outline in the appendix of this document. I'm not going to go over that in huge detail, but, to sort of summarize, it covers everything that's described in sort of that NMFS guidance for conducting review of catch share programs, and each of those sections falls roughly into what we've sort of categorized as three different ways. Either it can be simply incorporated by reference from the previous review, and think of things like descriptions of pre-ITQ management that are static, and don't change, and those can just be incorporated by reference. There are other sections that will have their data and analysis updated to represent the most recent seven-year time period, and then there are sections that would be addressed by Amendment 48 that I just talked about, that amendment that came off of the last wreckfish review.

The NMFS guidance does note that, if a particular component of a program is the subject of a management action, that component does not need to be addressed in a detailed manner within the review. It does describe a current management action as an issue currently being deliberated by the council, and so Amendment 48 is sort of in this weird gray area, where it's been submitted for formal review by the council, but it has not been implemented, and so the status quo we're operating under right now doesn't reflect the regulations that are currently undergoing secretarial review.

To address this discrepancy, council staff is proposing to just add a section to the introduction of the wreckfish review that would cover Amendment 48, the actions in Amendment 48, the council's rationale for its decision under those actions, and its current status, and then, remaining sections

in the ITQ review that would be addressed by what happened in Amendment 48, we would just reference that initial section with all of those details.

You can see here a summary of what section those would be, and I'll just go over those briefly, since it's been a long time since we talked about Amendment 48, sort of a refresher of what is proposed to change in that amendment, and so, data collection and reporting, that was addressed by Action 2 in Amendment 48. You'll remember a big part of Amendment 48 was moving the wreckfish ITQ program from a paper-based system to an electronic reporting system.

Another section is the number of wreckfish permits. In Amendment 48, you all proposed removal of the wreckfish permit, and just requiring that snapper grouper unlimited permit, and that would be -- The numbers of those permits would be analyzed, as well as the number of shareholders.

Eligibility and participation, those were addressed sort of extensively in Amendment 48 as a way to move into that electronic reporting system, and so establishing eligibility requirements to get into the shareholder accounts, requirements for obtaining and maintaining wreckfish shares, protocols for share divestment, et cetera, were all addressed in Amendment 48. The recreational allocation was modified, or proposed to be modified, through Amendment 48, and so, again, we won't address that, aside from mentioning that there's proposed changes.

Monitoring and enforcement was changed substantially during Amendment 48, and now requiring pre-landing notifications, expanding the offloading site requirements, and then requiring pre-approved landing locations, and then last, but not least, administration and cost recovery won't be addressed in detail, because that was addressed in Amendment 48, proposing the new cost recovery system, and so, with that, I'll take any questions.

All we're looking for, and I don't think we need a formal motion, and we're just looking for confirmation from the committee that you're comfortable with how we're proposing to handle this sort of gray area that Amendment 48 is in relative to the wreckfish ITQ review.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Questions? Comments? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think the outline looks great, and I certainly support the approach that you're suggesting for Amendment 48, recognizing the gray area we're in. Two comments I'll make, and one is, given limits on staffing resources, you know, I think there's opportunity here for us to look at what we did previously and make some decisions as to do we really need to update that, right, and so I do appreciate, you know, you've identified everything that needs to be updated, but, if it's going to be a substantial heavy lift, and really doesn't change the outcome, and the analysis, right, I think staff should consider, obviously, whether or not the update is needed.

The other thing is, just because it's such a small fishery, you know, please work with the Fisheries Service with regard to confidential data, and make sure that we're aggregating that data in a way that can be presented to the public and the council. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions, or comments? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Christina. I agree with Andy. I think you guys did a really great job of outlining the relevance of Amendment 48 in this sort of weird

period we're in right now. I see no problem with you guys continuing to move forward with your approach, as you continue to work on this review, and I appreciate Andy's comments about staff time. I feel you guys will be able to make that best judgment of your time and commitment for this project, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree. I think it looks good, and it is a strange position that we're in, that we haven't implemented all the things from the last review, but I think that you've developed a path forward here that will kind of get us past that, or get us through this strange situation. All right. I don't think we need a formal motion here. This is -- We are embarking on this, and we're all good here, and, just looking around the table, I see heads nodding yes. All right. Thank you.

All right, and so Marcel is with us now. We're going to jump into his SSC report. We aren't going to get the AP report yet, because Haley is not here yet, and so, if we get done with that, and there's still time before lunch, we will then dive into Amendment 60.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two topics to update you. One is the South Atlantic Red Snapper Research Project Review, and the other one is the wreckfish MSE. The SARSRP review took place in January in Charleston. We had three CIE reviewers, and Luiz Barbieri and myself were representatives from the South Atlantic SSC. Will Patterson, Nathan Hostetter, and David Portnoy were the primary team leads, and we received four presentations covering two main project components.

One is the close-kin mark-recapture method, and the other one is the Bayesian Hierarchical Integrated Model. Just as a reminder, the CKMR, the close-kin mark-recapture, method is a genetically-based method that's kind of equivalent to a traditional mark-recapture method, but it uses genetics, or the genetic relationships in the population between parents and offspring, and also between siblings, to estimate population size. The other method, the Bayesian Hierarchical Integrated Model or the BHIM, is using information from the video transects, traditional chevron video trap catches, and also effective sampling area of the traps and knowledge of habitat in the region to model the population size.

For the BHIM, the sampling design and sampling locations were sufficient to estimate the red snapper counts from the cameras in the SERFS sampling frame, and these are the results, and the comments, from the review panel. The research team also concluded that red snapper abundance over unconsolidated, or sandy, bottom was very low in the South Atlantic region.

Determining the effective sampling size, effective sampling area, or ESA, of the video trap was really critical to estimating total red snapper abundance. The determination of the ESA was attempted in two areas, but it was only successful in one area, the so-called Chicken Rock location. The review panel accepted that study, but we noted also that the results were only from one area, and one timeframe, and, because of that, the review panel had little confidence in this effective sampling area estimate, and we really didn't feel comfortable that represented the entire stock area.

Also, the SERFS video data and the ROV density estimates were expanded to the entire study area, but there's considerable uncertainty in the information of hardbottom habitat, and so red snapper densities over sandy bottom were low. Red snapper over live bottom and structured bottom was

estimated using the SERFS video and ROV, and that was expanded, and so the knowledge of habitat was really critical in that study.

The analysis indicated that the population estimate was sensitive how bottom type was identified, and classified, and this habitat uncertainty was not included in the overall CV of the BHIM population estimate.

Also, in terms of independence, this was meant to be an independent estimate of red snapper population. The review panel noted that the population estimate was not entirely independent from stock assessments, because the video trap data were also used, or are expected also to be used, in the assessment. However, this may not be a big issue, depending on how the estimate, or the method, is incorporated in the assessment.

Ultimately, because of these issues, in particular the habitat and the ESA uncertainty issues, the review panel had little confidence in the BHIM population estimate, and the SARSRP team actually concurred with that conclusion.

When the SSC reviewed this in April, the SSC agreed that this estimate could not be used in the assessment. However, I want to mention that it's important to mention that does not take away from the value and the tremendous amount of work that the SARSRP team did, and the amount of work that was involved in this project, both in the field work and the modeling, and we feel that future research can definitely build on this, and potentially provide a population estimate with an acceptable uncertainty.

The close-kin mark-recapture methods, as far as that methodology is concerned, the review panel concluded that the methodology and the study design was robust, the sampling effort was sufficient for an initial estimate of population abundance, and the analyses were developed consistent with the theory and the modeling, and was also applied appropriately. However, the review panel had considerable discussions about the uncertainty, which the review panel felt was underestimated, or likely underestimated.

As with the BHIM methodology, the CKMR results are not entirely independent from the stock assessment, as well as the CKMR share data, such as egg production and other life history information. Again, depending on how this is all incorporated in SEDAR 90, this may not be a major issue, but the review panel at least acknowledged the fact that it's not entirely independent. The panel recommended some tech clarifications and some additional sensitivity analyses to fully assess the potential model misspecifications. Ultimately, the review panel agreed that the close-kin mark recapture method should be used in the assessment, but, also, of course, the review panel's comments should be taken into account.

Also in April, we discussed the review panel reports, and how the SARSRP team included the recommendations of the review panel in that report, and the SSC supported the review panel's recommendation to accept the CKMR method and its integration into the assessment.

It was reiterated by us, by the full SSC, that the results are not independent of the stock assessment, but, again, that may not be a major issue, and we had substantial discussion about model overdispersion, in particular related to fecundity estimates. Overdispersion refers to a situation

where there's greater variability in the data set than what is expected, and this can lead to a mismatch between observed data and model predictions and increase uncertainty.

The project team investigated the impact of no overdispersion and extreme overdispersion in fecundity at age and found that it had little effect on the overall estimates. However, I have to admit that some SSC members remained a little skeptical. However, the use of fish biomass as a proxy for fecundity, something that was recommended at the life history working group during the SEDAR 90 data workshop, is something that is being explored by the assessment team, and, as you know, that process is ongoing, and so, again, that may address some of the overdispersion issues that the SSC and the review panel discussed.

In conclusion, the SSC did not accept the use of the BHIM population estimate in SEDAR 90, but did support the integration of the CKMR, or the close-kin mark-recapture method and its estimates, and, Madam Chair, I can pause here, or I can -- If there are any questions, or I can move on to the next topic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks, Marcel, and so you talked about the habitat and bottom characteristics being a limiting factor on the first -- I forgot the acronym, but, if we had better habitat and bottom characteristics over the entire region, especially for the region of red snapper, then that methodology may be -- Give us a number that's usable, and is that what I heard?

DR. REICHERT: Well, there were two -- The review panel and the SSC identified two major issues. One was the uncertainty in the habitat characterization, because there -- Judd can jolt my memory, but there were three different ways that they looked at to characterize bottom habitat, and that had different outcomes, and, depending on what bottom map you used, the resulting population estimates were vastly different, and so that was one issue.

The other issue was the effective sampling area. That's critical if you don't know -- If you do not know what the effective sampling area is from a video trap, then it's difficult to estimate the population abundance, and that study was done in one area, at one time, and so that was another source of uncertainty. The review panel, and the SSC, felt uncomfortable expanding that to the entire stock area, and so I think those were two -- For that methodology, were two of the main reasons. Uncertainty was higher than initially thought, because that was not included in the overall population estimate. Does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

DR. REICHERT: Sorry, but, back to your answer, yes, if we have better bottom habitat maps, that can increase the certainty of that estimate.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Marcel. The second bullet point, overdispersion and fecundity-at-age could result in underestimation of the close-kin mark-recapture abundance estimates, can you further explain to me overdispersion and fecundity-at-age, what that means?

DR. REICHERT: As I mentioned, overdispersion is that situation where there's a greater variability in the data than what is expected, and Judd can perhaps help me explain that better. The

main issue there was that initially -- That the methodology needs egg production, number of eggs produced. In previous assessments, the relationship between length or weight of the fish and egg production was used in the assessment.

At the most recent data workshop, it was concluded that there was too much uncertainty in that relationship, and the recommendation was to use fish weight as a proxy for fecundity, but, in order to make that methodology work for the close-kin mark-recapture methodology, you then have to still translate that into eggs, and that introduces that original uncertainty in the relationship between fish weight, or fish length, and egg production, and Judd gives me a heads-up in terms of explaining what the key issue here was, and so that's -- But, again, as I said, depending on how all of this is integrated in the assessment, this may not be as big of an issue as we initially discussed in the SSC, and in the review panel, and does that make sense?

MR. HULL: A little bit.

DR. REICHERT: Okay.

MR. HULL: So in the upcoming assessment, egg production is going to be determined by spawning stock biomass and not total egg production-at-age?

DR. REICHERT: Fish weight is going to be used as a proxy for egg production.

MR. HULL: Which is biomass, basically, in my mind, and so fish eggs will be calculated by the size -- The weight of the fish.

DR. REICHERT: Well, the number of eggs -- It's my understanding, but I haven't followed the assessment process, but it's my understanding that the number of eggs is not used. It's what is used is fish weight as a proxy for egg production. Does that make sense?

MR. HULL: Thank you.

DR. REICHERT: Yes. Any other questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Marcel, for the presentation, and your leadership with the SSC. You've touched upon this a little bit, but, in terms of the underestimation of uncertainty with the close-kin mark-recapture, is that solely driven by the independence issues related to the stock assessment? Help me understand why we think the uncertainty is underestimated, and then kind of follow-on question of that, and so certainly I understand why you would recommend sensitivity analyses, but if the close-kin mark-recapture is essentially going to be kind of a scaling factor to determine abundance, then it really becomes important as to what is the base run for close-kin mark-recapture going to be that's input into the assessment.

DR. REICHERT: Yes, and a couple of things. The additional sensitivity analyses were requested by the review panel, and they were done prior to the SSC review, and the SSC looked at that and accepted -- I think the base run hadn't changed, and in terms of -- I'm not sure how the close-kin mark-recapture methodology is integrated in the assessment. There was talk about using it as a

scalar, but I think there's also discussion about another way of integrating that in the stock assessment, and so I cannot answer that particular question.

In terms of the uncertainty, both at the review panel discussions and the SSC, the uncertainty, I think, was mostly related to that overdispersion. That's where -- If I remember correctly, that's where most of the discussion came into play, the interplay between life history parameters and the life history information that is needed for the close-kin mark-recapture model to work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions? John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, Marcel, and thanks for this overview. I'll just add a little of context to how the stock assessment is incorporating the close-kin, and so one of the ways that it's doing that is actually going to the raw data, which is basically tag recapture information. It's just genetic tag recapture, because each half-sibling tags its other brother, or sister, which means that you recaptured the parent genotype.

By going to that raw data, you're essentially putting tag recapture data into a stock assessment model as one additional component of the likelihood, and so it allows for -- It avoids the concern, the original concern, of having some elements of the stock assessment be part of the CKMR estimate, in that it's all integrated into the stock assessment using the raw CKMR, close-kin mark-recapture, data, and I think that will address the concern that the SSC had originally on the potential circularity.

Then, the other concern about the overdispersion of fecundity-at-age, presumably that's all things that could be either estimated, because you should see recaptures of -- If you see more -- Like if they get older, and they have higher reproductive potential than would be expected under just a weight-at-length relationship, you might see more recaptures of that parent in time, but it's all something that could be potentially estimated, or, if not estimable within the model, then additional sensitivity runs, which could be done to address that issue of either changing fecundity-with-age, or length, or simply overdispersion in that relationship. We think that likely is going to be addressable within the stock assessment model. Thanks.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you. I really appreciate that clarification there, and, as a reminder, both the review panel and the SSC deliberately stayed away from discussing how the results of the SARSRP project could be integrated in the assessment, because we felt that that was more something that was a process during the assessment phase of the stock assessment, but thanks for that clarification. I appreciate that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you back up a couple slides about the Bayesian hierarchical model? Right there. I'm having trouble understanding, but I wasn't listening to you all's discussion about it, and so part of this, and I know somebody, either Jimmy or Charlie, were asking some questions, and so is part of the reason why this isn't being used is because of this effective sample area? Can you explain this a little bit more?

Like is that the only reason why, because it says that there's little confidence that the ESA represents the overall effective sample area for the entire stock, and is it because the way that the sampling was done, or is it because it was only over this one limited area, and then it was tried to be extrapolated across the entire South Atlantic, and then there's no way to bring in pieces of this

information, but maybe it is being brought in, and pieces of it are being brought in to the stock assessment, and just wondering how we could get some usable data out of this, and what are the reasons why? What are kind of all the reasons why? Is it because of the extrapolation? Is it because of the effective sample area that it shouldn't be used in the assessment. and so that means that the whole thing has to be thrown out, or it can just be used -- Parts of it can be used, I guess?

DR. REICHERT: I'm not sure if I can answer whether parts of this can get used, because, ultimately, it's a population estimate that the project was after. In terms of the effective sampling area, you're right. One of the main reasons was this was done in a very small area, over a very limited amount of time, and the review panel, and the SSC, felt very comfortable to extrapolate that to the entire stock area.

Initially, there were two areas, but, for some logistical and analytical reasons, one of the areas could not be used, and so we ended up with only the Chicken Rock study area, and so that was a main reason, but that uncertainty in the effective sampling area was one of the two main reasons. The other reason was the uncertainty in the habitat characterization, that, depending on what map you're using, you've got very different estimates of the population size, and so, again, there's a lot of work in there that's really valuable, but these two reasons made it -- Made the SSC, and the review panel, say maybe we shouldn't use this, and the SARSRP team concurred with that conclusion. Does that answer your question?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so, and so then is there a way to get something out of this information? In other words, could the team that came up with this estimate go back and do some additional hardbottom habitat mapping, or other things, and like so could they spend more time going and getting some additional information, and then it could be used? I guess I'm just trying to figure out why, or how, I guess, moving forward, we're not just kind of throwing away this entire -- All of this work that was done in the study.

DR. REICHERT: Well, and Judd came to the table, and so he can comment. I don't think we are throwing -- That's why I reiterated the fact that this is very valuable information, and it's not thrown away. It's just we need more information, more confidence, or maybe redoing that effective sampling area, repeating that over different habitats, so the SSC would be comfortable expanding that over the entire area, and then, of course, bottom habitat will always traditionally be something that has a high level of uncertainty, but Judd may be able to add to that.

DR. CURTIS: Thanks. Just to expand upon what Marcel is mentioning, the estimates of those hardbottom maps that was utilized in the calculations were heavily uncertain, and the project team did explore a lot of different types of habitat maps. They used multiple different sources. They used some preferential sampling, and they used expert opinions from stakeholders, combining all these best sources of information they possibly could in order to generate the best possible map, and it was still highly uncertain, and inadequate, and resulted in massive uncertainties in the estimates.

To answer the question, right, better habitat mapping would get us a better precision on the estimates. Dr. Patterson, during his presentation for the SSC, also mentioned that there is an ongoing initiative, the Florida Seafloor Mapping Initiative, that is attempting to map the shelf all along that South Atlantic region, and so, once that better habitat information is available, that is something that could then be integrated into the current assessment modeling platform they used

for the Bayesian Hierarchical Integrated Modeling and to generate a more precise estimate, and so that's hopefully a little later on down the road, but, right, there was -- We're not throwing out the estimate completely, right?

The methodology was sound, and, in fact, the review panel, and the SSC, both agreed that like the modeling itself, the work they put in, the assessment results there, and the methodologies were all scientifically sound, and valid. It was the uncertainty through the seafloor mapping that created this massive uncertainty and was made the estimates unusable.

DR. REICHERT: And the ESA.

DR. CURTIS: Along with the ESA.

DR. REICHERT: Along with the ESA.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, this kind of seafloor mapping that we're talking about, once that's complete, could this be redone, maybe with greater certainty, I guess, you know, because you're saying the methodology was sound, and so could the group come back and work on this after this mapping study is completed?

DR. REICHERT: In theory, yes, if that effective sampling area issue can be addressed too, and then, of course, there are logistical and financial funding issues, but, if there would be funding available, I think theoretically this could be revisited.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Trish, and then Charlie.

MS. MURPHEY: Just going back to the habitat mapping, so I was -- I think you had said you used three different habitat maps. Did -- I was just wondering if you -- Like how you played with them, if you like consolidated all the maps, to see if that would make a difference, or, you know, lower the uncertainty, and that was sort of what came to my mind early on, was -- Because I think you mentioned three separate, three different, maps, but, if you consolidated all three maps, would that have made something -- Or if you already did that.

DR. CURTIS: Yes, and so these -- This is kind of getting into the weeds of the methodologies, right, and these are all explained during the review, the CIE review, and during -- Somewhat during the SSC meeting presentations, but there was -- I'm looking at the slides from Will's presentation now, and there was -- The base kind of map was a Nature Conservancy map that had been utilized in the past, and then, in addition to that, we had -- Or they had, the project team had, expert opinions generating and ground-truthing on those hardbottom habitats across areas of known, quote-unquote, hardbottom habitat, and then a third mechanism called preferential sampling, and I would have to go back and see exactly what that entails, but that was a third mechanism adding on to that TNC hardbottom habitat map. They looked at each of those individually. They also had combinations of how -- Of including all three of those different mechanisms into their overall estimates of the hardbottom habitat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just to -- I think we also discussed this when we were going over, I think, our citizen science priorities. I think we did add, you know, trying to get more information on hardbottom, and so hopefully that will help in the long run. I mean, that will probably be slow, but, you know, if you start getting those, at least presence-absence information from your citizen scientists, and those might be useful as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie, and then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, we've got CMOR maps, and some of the bathymetry is in very limited areas, but it is very accurate, and I guess the overarching question would be how long will it be before we get enough habitat maps that we can really start using this, and it's going to be more important than just red snapper. This is going to be for grouper and a lot of other species. This is really, really important stuff that has to be done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any idea of like -- I mean, how long is it going to be? I mean, do you guys know how long it would take to get the better maps? I guess the answer is no, we don't -- Everybody is shaking their head up here, and so I guess no one knows. It's a great question. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Marcel, it sounds like the SSC has a lot more confidence in the CKMR part of this estimate of abundance, and so, with the results of the CKMR, are they anywhere close to the -- Let's say the SEDAR 73 estimate of abundance? Are they up, down, close?

DR. REICHERT: I don't -- We didn't specifically look at that, because we were to review the methodology and the confidence in that methodology. The complication is also, and maybe John Walter can comment on it also, and I don't want to put you on the spot, but it also depends on how that is integrated into the stock assessment. Ultimately, the ultimate population estimate may be less significant than how it is incorporated in the stock assessment.

In Will's presentation, I believe he indicated that the close-kin mark-recapture population estimate was close to the previous stock assessment estimate. I'm looking at Judd, but I believe that that's what I remember. I have my presentation up here, and so I can't look at -- I can't look at that on my computer here right now, but we, as an SSC, and as a review panel, we did not discuss that specifically, because we kind of wanted to stay away from that, and just look at the methodology and how the ultimate estimate was compiled.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John Walter, did you want to respond, and then Andy.

DR. WALTER: I think Marcel answered it. Yes, the CKMR estimate was closer to SEDAR 73, but I think the caveat there is well taken, in the sense of really the -- It's how it's going to get integrated into the stock assessment, and then the Bayesian hierarchical modeling was several times higher than SEDAR 73, and I think, for a number of the reasons about the uncertainty in habitat, maybe it might've overestimated the amount of habitat.

Basically, the more habitat that you put into it, I think the higher that abundance estimate, but the caveat about the effective sample area being applying to only one location was key, and I think

one of the things that we're talking about moving forward here, I think that's a really good consideration here, because we've got two methodologies that are really quite advanced science that we are wanting to try to employ, both the genetic close-kin mark-recapture, combined with epigenetic ageing, is something we think is going to be a growth area for us as we assess stocks, and, also, the trap video gear is something that is part of our mainline advice for SERFS and SEFIS.

I think the question is what do we -- Where do we go from here, and, well, we say, okay, we're good at -- We've already got relative indices from the trap video, and we've got the potential to get this effective sample area in --

We've got it for one location, and then do we do studies to be able to expand that, so that we could take the trap video survey and try to get absolutes, and I think we need to do the cost-benefit analysis of that versus genetic close-kin mark-recapture for getting absolute population sizes. I think that's the take-home I get, is we've got two really valuable technologies. They both can be expensive, and so the question is what do we use moving forward for the most cost-effective way to get -- To really assess the population and provide management advice? Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A comment and a question, and so the comment is related to the mapping effort, and so I just was looking at some data and information from the Office of Coast Survey, and it indicates, I guess, 44 percent of the EEZ across the entire United States has been mapped to-date, at least at a hundred-meter resolution, right, and we're talking probably needing finer-resolution mapping, and a much smaller portion of the Gulf and South Atlantic have been mapped relative to other areas of the EEZ, and so the bottom line is it's going to take some time. It's not going to be something that happens overnight, but there are initiatives in place, it looks like, to try to map as much of the EEZ as possible in coming years.

My question, and so Will Patterson was involved in both the Gulf and South Atlantic red snapper counts. Was there much discussion by the SSC about the abundance estimate over unconsolidated bottom, uncharacterized bottom, because it's a pretty marked difference from what I'm seeing with regard to the Gulf versus South Atlantic, and I'm just curious as to the reasoning, or thought processes, of why there may be those substantial differences.

DR. REICHERT: I don't remember having extensive discussion about that. They're two different regions, and it may have to do with bottom habitat, and what's under areas with sand, but we did not discuss that extensively. I think it's the -- I don't know why that difference, in terms of red snapper densities over unconsolidated bottom differ between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.

It's -- You know, I'm putting my former South Carolina DNR SERFS hat on, and we had not seen a lot of -- When we were traversing, and we've done that for several years, we had not seen many fish over that unconsolidated bottom, but, the reason, I don't think I can answer that. I don't think we know that. There are some differences in recruitment also between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic that we I don't think have clear answers of yet, but that's just some personal comments, but we did not discuss that as an SSC.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other questions? I don't see any more hands. I'm going to turn it back to you, Marcel. I think you have a few more slides for us.

DR. REICHERT: A few more about the wreckfish MSE. The SSC thanked the team for incorporating the previous recommendations. The SSC considered the level of complexity, and we were wondering if there's enough information, in particular about the length composition, to support an age-structured assessment model. We thought that perhaps a more reduced data-limited method would be more appropriate, but, ultimately, the SSC was fine with moving forward with the current age-structured approach.

We also discussed that the MSE model assumes a closed population. Given wreckfish life history, as you know, it's likely not the case, because recruits are coming in from areas outside the U.S. waters, and the associated uncertainty is unknown. However, we also noted that the high steepness value of 0.9 that's currently used actually nearly decouples the recruitment from the standing stock biomass, which is likely assuming an open population for wreckfish, or, sorry, a closed population for wreckfish.

On the other hand, high steepness values are typically more associated with shorter-lived species with a high productivity. In other words, a stock that can sustain higher fishing pressure. With wreckfish being a long-lived species, and it has a maximum age from between eighty and ninety years, the expected steepness would typically be much lower. Therefore, the SSC recommended investigating a model run with a lower steepness.

The SSC also made some other recommendations relative to the data and the model configuration related to time, in particular in the index standardization, trip length, catch, and length composition, and so, in particular, we would like to see a stock-recruit curve from that high steepness run, and we also, as I mentioned, recommend investigating a lower steepness value, for instance one below 0.6.

Then, in my last slide, I have some kind of more general recommendations. The SEP, with the SSC report, is requesting to receive more information about the adaptable implementable management, or AIM, including the human dimensions, management procedures, and other aspects, and Dr. Jennifer Sweeney-Tookes, our SEP chair, may have more details in her report later today.

Furthermore, there was considerable discussion within the SSC about how the results of these MSE, or the adaptive implementable management, fit into our ABC control rule and the SSC's role in providing fishing level recommendations. We actually had similar discussions when we were discussing the dolphin MSE, and I will come back to that later this week, and so we are requesting a presentation to provide some clarification, and that would allow us to discuss this further in one of our upcoming meetings. This, Madam Chair, I believe concludes my report.

Sorry, and I meant to move this slide forward, and so these were these last two requests, and that indeed concludes my report. I'll leave that up, so that gives you some time to read through that, because I forgot to forward that. Any questions? I'm happy to answer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Marcel. Any questions? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Did the SSC consider the lack of a substantial amount of fishermen, you know, exploiting this fishery, and the large area that these fish can be found at? Did they have any discussion about that?

DR. REICHERT: I don't remember us discussing that particular issue. I think the SSC -- Some members were on the SSC when the previous assessment was done, so I think SSC members in general understand the nature of the fishery, but I don't think we discussed this particular topic in detail.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, and we'll talk about the incorporating, I think, the MSE products into the ABC control rule in dolphinfish, and I can give some context there, but one thing that seems to be timely here on this MSE is, and I don't know if it came up at the SSC conversation, is about the management objectives of the council for this stock.

When you embark on an MSE, you want to evaluate what are the objectives that you're trying to achieve, and sometimes those objectives are specified by Magnuson, and they're the biological must-pays to not overfish, and to keep a stock status in healthy status, but there may be other objectives which you're looking to try to achieve in an MSE, and so has that been brought up, and, if not, when, and it's probably something that needs to be considered in terms of what the council wants to achieve out of this. Thanks.

DR. REICHERT: I don't believe that's something the -- It was probably presented in one of the previous MSE updates that the SSC received. I don't think the SSC in particular highlighted, or discussed that, at our SSC meetings, because we, obviously, generally focus on the scientific aspects of that. Chip is coming to the table, and maybe --

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and hopefully I can provide some clarity on this. As Charlie had mentioned, this is an extremely small fishery, right, and it's only six or seven individuals that are typically involved in it, and we have those individuals on our panel, in order to inform how the MSE is going to be developed, and they're looking at exactly what they want to have the fishery look like, and so that part of the AIM process is being developed with the fishermen right now.

We're going to come to another meeting, two more meetings in the fall, and I think one in the spring, where it's really going to be hammered out, and, also, those desires of the fishermen are going to be brought forward to the council, to make sure the council is aware, and make sure the council would be considering those as potential management options.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Not specific to wreckfish, but a little bit. In general, regarding MSEs that we're dealing with now, with part of the snapper grouper fishery, wreckfish, dolphin wahoo, I get a little concerned that sometimes it's the cart driving the horse, and not the horse driving the cart. As Marcel so pointedly mentioned, you know, it is not within the purview of the SSC to talk about management objectives. I'm not entirely sure that this council would be looking at different -- Or management procedures, sorry, for wreckfish if it wasn't for this MSE.

I have some feelings I'll bring up when we talk about other ones, but I just get nervous, as this is a tool that is increasingly used, that it's fundamentally changing the way the council looks at management measures. You know, it's always been sort of science -- You know, the science side deals with the science side, and the scientific uncertainty, and then it essentially gives the piece of pie, and then the council decides how to use the pie.

I feel like, with these MSEs, it is fundamentally changing that process, and it makes me very uncomfortable, and I'll say that, because -- I'm not saying this to denigrate people, but then you're having people who don't understand all the things that we understand about the fishery, what's happening on the water, et cetera, talking to the fishermen, like involving themselves in development of possible management procedures that are normally council actions, and so sorry about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I share your concerns. Any more questions for Marcel? Thank you, Marcel. Thank you, Chip. Thank you, Judd.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. At this point, we're probably at a good stopping point, and so we'll go ahead and break for lunch, but we'll come back at 1:15, instead of 1:30, if you all would do that. That way, we'll be able to jump into Haley's report, and that gives her time to get here, because she's supposed to be here at 1:00, but some wiggle room, and that still gives us a little long for lunch, and so, if everybody could just come back at 1:15, that would be great.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get started. The first thing we're going to do is we're going to back up, and we're going to go to the Snapper Grouper AP report. We're going to talk about items that aren't on our committee agenda, and we'll also go over some items that are on the committee agenda, and so, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Haley.

MS. STEPHENS: Awesome. Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for having me. It's nice to see everyone. For those of you I have not met, my name is Haley Stephens. I am the vice chair of your Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel. I'm filling in for our chairman, Captain Chris, today.

All right, and so we are going to cover topics not on the June 2026 council agenda, starting with golden tilefish. Should the council consider changing the start date for the recreational golden tilefish fishing year? The AP recommendation was to consider changing the recreational fishing year to begin on May 1, that it would align with the season start dates for blueline tilefish and snowy grouper, with the following benefits of fewer discards for areas where the species are found co-occurring, greater trip efficiency for deepwater fisheries, including outside of the snapper grouper fisheries, such as swordfish, and avoiding the harvest of golden tilefish early in the year when fishermen have observed spawning fish. Overall, the AP did recommend that this was a lower priority issue. With that, it did highlight another example of the high priority possibly needed for sub-regional management.

Another item not on the agenda for this meeting was the black sea bass 2025/2026 observations. We asked the group for those observations from last season. From North Carolina, the black sea

bass fishing was significantly better, more and larger fish, bag limits caught more frequently, more keeper-sized fish closer to shore. It was observed that more recreational vessels on the water, even during winter months.

For northern South Carolina, the bass fishing was consistent with recent years. Southern South Carolina indicated they saw a decline in black sea bass, even after the pots were removed, continuing concern about effects from red snapper, and, in Florida, members noted better black sea bass fishing than seen in a long time, noting cold water intrusion affected several fisheries, including possibly bringing black sea bass back to the areas, and closer to shore. Florida did have a really heavy thermocline last year.

Another topic not on the agenda was the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation, or MSE. The group received a presentation on angler attitudes, a survey conducted by the University of Florida. Members raised concern about the sample potentially over-representing anglers without a strong interest in the fishery. Members also expressed concern with how this survey might be used to support future management, and members recommended a specific separate survey in the future to capture perspectives of the for-hire component.

The group also discussed commercial SG 2 permits, stating that the SG 2 permit has become an essential part of the commercial fishery. Generally, it's fewer larger boats. They stated loss of working waterfront has led to a shift towards smaller, quote-unquote, dayboats, which comprise a large portion of the SG 2 permit holders. It has kind of become a boutique fishery, with less expectation for large amounts of fish.

Some members supported making SG 2 permits transferable, expressed concern with greater access potentially leading to wealthy recreational fishermen acquiring permits to have higher recreational limits, and, generally, changes to the SG permit should wait until after there is some time to see any potential effects of Amendment 60, and they also noted a permit pool to maintain the current number of SG 2 permits may be useful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do you guys have any questions on the topics we've already covered? I don't see any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and Haley is going to cover an item that is on your agenda, but it's listed later on in the week, after she will have already gone back on Thursday, and so she's going to cover Regulatory Amendment 40 concerning black sea bass right now, before we move on into Amendment 60.

MS. STEPHENS: Awesome. Thank you, Mike, and so Reg Amendment 40, black sea bass, should black sea bass pot trip limits reductions be considered in Reg Amendment 40, the AP recommendation was that the black sea bass pot trip limit should not be reduced. If it is decreased any lower, that component of the fishery will no longer be profitable.

In North Carolina, the market for South Atlantic fish is affected by the Mid-Atlantic trawl fishery, which lowers the price. The larger Mid-Atlantic trawl fishery catches more of the fish at a time, and floods the market. Mid-Atlantic black sea bass catch levels were recently increased, and members noted uneven regulation between the Mid and South Atlantic creates a situation where the South Atlantic fishery cannot compete in the markets.

Continuing on, the AP recommendation was that they supported opening nearshore seasonal closures to the on-demand gear. Members noted the pot fishery has little bycatch, and few discards, and several members stated it's a relatively clean fishery. Increased access will not likely significantly increase discards. It's not likely for the black sea bass pot fishery to become a derby-style fishery, due to the low number of active endorsements and even lower number of fishermen currently with on-demand gear.

The AP noted that on-demand gear has a significant expense to it. Fishermen would need to balance whether the fishing access benefits are worth the financial cost for the on-demand gear. There were some concerns for the for-hire industry about balancing access to nearshore areas that currently have seasonal closures to pots, and possibly consider adjusting the fishing years to balance that access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's go ahead and take questions on this component. Questions on Amendment 40? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm curious with the last statement. Well, first, Haley, thanks for being here, and your representation on the AP. The last statement about consider adjusting the fishing years to balance access, did they have any specific recommendations with regard to that?

MS. STEPHENS: No, there were not any specific recommendations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Did I see another hand up for questions on black sea bass? Okay. I don't see any more hands.

MS. STEPHENS: All right. Thank you for that. That is going to move us into Amendment 60, commercial management, and we'll kind of go through this, I believe, action-by-action, with the recommendations and input. Action 1, remove the two-for-one policy on SG 1 permits, the panel has been discussing this for quite some time, as you guys have as well.

Overall, there's mixed opinions. There's no general consensus recommendation at this time. Some support for the removal is only allow active permits to be exchanged for two-for-one, or, excuse me, one-for-one, and still require a two-for-one exchange to transfer latent permits. This could mitigate immediate increases in effort. We talked about leasing, and some ability to lease permitted vessels is necessary as an avenue for newer entrants to participate, kind of try it out without the full investment of ownership, and, while the AP acknowledged that some leasing practices are problematic, it is difficult to develop a workable solution that wouldn't have loopholes.

Action 2 was the bottom longline stowage requirements and species restrictions. We discussed VMS. Generally, commercial members didn't want a VMS requirement. However, they may be willing to accept it if it allows for additional access or higher trip limits, for example multi-trip limits for multi-day boats. Members noted communication benefits and financial expenses needed to acquire, maintain, or transfer VMS units.

Bottom longline stowage requirements may need to be more flexible. Some members noted smaller vessels may not have the space to stow gear below the deck. Longer longline

configurations, for example, golden tilefish longlines, can take several hours to bait, and need to be able to be stowed onboard with bait and hooks, to maximize efficiency. Also, clarify differences between bottom longline gear and buoy gear.

Action 3 discussed greater amberjack trip limits. Some members supported higher trip limits of 1,500 pounds or 1,750 pounds. Others supported maintaining the current trip limit, stating concerns for localized depletion in some areas, for example, around Morehead City. All members stated that 2,000 pounds was too much of an increase at this time.

Action 4 was vermilion snapper. The AP generally supported increasing the vermilion snapper trip limit. One member specifically supported the 1,500 pounds, noting longer trips would particularly benefit and increase -- May help rebuild trust with commercial stakeholders. Action 5 was red porgy, and generally supported increasing the red porgy trip limit. Some members supported thirty fish, and other members supported forty-five, noting the small size of the species.

Action 6, hogfish, the Georgia and North Carolina trip limit, also generally supported increasing the hogfish trip limit. Some members supported the 750 pounds. Action 7 was red grouper, and generally supported increasing red grouper trip limits. Low harvest relative to the ACL may not actually be due to trip limits. Red grouper, and some other snapper grouper ACLs, just may need to be revisited, and, Action 8, gray triggerfish, the AP did express concern about increasing the trip limit for gray triggerfish. They can be a go-to recreational target, with red snapper being closed, and so members noted that this species has been fished pretty hard in the recent years.

Action 9, the golden tilefish trip limit, generally supported increasing the golden tilefish trip limit. Some support for 750 or 1,000 pounds, noting increased trip costs and offshore location of golden tilefish have reduced trip profitability at the current trip limit, especially off of North Carolina, where weather is a big factor when harvest can occur.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions for Haley on the AP comments on Amendment 60, and then we're going to dive into Amendment 60. I don't see any hands. Thank you so much Haley. All right, and so the first thing that we're going to do is I'm going to give a little summary report on the Snapper Grouper Commercial Subcommittee that met April 20th through 21st. There were some preferences and other things selected. You'll see that in the document, and we can review those today, and so the subcommittee wasn't actually making any motions.

The subcommittee met April 20th through 21st, and approved the agenda and the minutes from our March meeting, and then went right into Amendment 60, and so there was some progress made on the document since the March council meeting, including draft actions and alternatives, and SERO staff presented information on commercial snapper grouper permits, information on potential notification systems to verify at-sea gear changes to or from bottom longline gear, and a preliminary trip limit analysis for requested snapper grouper species.

The subcommittee reviewed the actions and alternatives and provided the following guidance for further amendment development, and then you'll also see this when we get into the document. The purpose and need statement, the subcommittee clarified that stability refers to maintaining the current number of commercial participants. There were portions of the purpose and need statement that were removed that were pertaining to temporarily adjustable trip limits and revision of possession requirements. This is because you'll see later in the document that the subcommittee

removed all those temporarily adjustable trip limits and just went with what we were calling static trip limits, and so we modified the purpose and need to reflect this.

The subcommittee also discussed the potential need to control permit ownership, and how to encourage permits to be held by fishermen that will actively participate in the fishery. The subcommittee discussed that this could potentially include minimum catch or sale requirements, or additional outreach to permit holders with current reporting requirements for permit maintenance. The subcommittee discussed a use-it-or-lose-it provision may be useful if a permit pool is established. This could promote permit usage, while also not decreasing the number of permits over time.

The subcommittee decided that actions to establish a usage requirement or a permit pool would not be included in Amendment 60, but may be considered through a future amendment, if necessary. The subcommittee directed staff to include language in the introductory sections of Amendment 60 to indicate the council's intent for the snapper grouper commercial fishery to be comprised of permit holders that are active participants in a professional commercial fleet that harvest with the intent to sell their catch, and then the subcommittee discussed that a potential action aligned with this intent could be a requirement that all commercial harvest is sold, and such a provision is in place in the Gulf.

Then the subcommittee went into Action 1, which was to remove the two-for-one policy for the snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit. The subcommittee reviewed permit-related information, including breakdowns of vessel leasing, co-occurring permits, and latent permits. The committee noted the current high number of latent permits, which may be inhibiting the fishery from reaching its ACL.

The subcommittee decided that actions to directly address permit latency should not be taken in Amendment 60, because this may be positively impacted by removing the two-for-one policy and increasing commercial trip limits. Instead the council should continue to monitor permit activity versus latency for the years following the implementation of Amendment 60, and, if latency does begin does not begin to decrease, the council can consider action in a future amendment.

The subcommittee noted that the 225, which is the SG 2 permit, is not being addressed in this amendment. Further discussions about the long-term role of the SG 2 permit in the fishery will be revisited following the Snapper Grouper AP's April 2026 meeting.

Then the subcommittee went into Action 2, which is to revise bottom longline gear stowage requirements and species that may be harvested while gear is onboard and stowed. The subcommittee directed staff to revise Alternative 3 to require an at-sea notification prior to switching to or from bottom longline gear, rather than a notification prior to departure. This provides more accurate information for data collection and law enforcement.

The subcommittee also directed staff to include an additional alternative that considers requiring a vessel monitoring system, or VMS, to be able to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip. The subcommittee directed staff to compile information on different types of VMS-associated costs and information on potential financial assistance for acquiring these systems.

The subcommittee noted that the requirement for VMS would only apply to commercial fishermen intending to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a trip, and the subcommittee noted that further discussion is necessary about whether the VMS needs to be turned on only for trips that switch to or from bottom longline gear or for all vessel trips, and the benefit of the VMS over at-sea notification is more reliable communication. Connection strength can be an issue for satellite phones.

The subcommittee requested guidance from NMFS on whether consideration of alternatives under this action could affect the speed, or slow down the implementation of Amendment 60, considering established federal VMS and at-sea notification structures, and whether this action could be perceived as regulatory or deregulatory, and the subcommittee directed staff to incorporate wreckfish into the considered alternatives, to allow wreckfish fishermen to carry bottom longline gear onboard and possess other snapper grouper species.

Then the subcommittee looked at all of the adjustable trip limits for the selected snapper grouper species. These were alternatives under Actions 3 through 10. The committee discussed a potential process for temporarily adjusting trip limits for these species based on harvest relative to ACLs in the previous year.

The committee reviewed the timing and components of the process, and the committee decided that the alternatives considering adjustable trip limits should be removed from those actions, and only the static trip limit changes should be considered in Amendment 60. The subcommittee noted that the steps of this process were too complicated, and too reliant on catch projections that would need to be estimated relatively early in the fishing year for all steps of the evaluation review and implementation to be completed before the beginning of the next fishing year.

The subcommittee is interested in further exploration of methods to quicken the process of changing trip limits outside of Amendment 60, and so the subcommittee staff directed staff to explore -- The subcommittee directed staff to explore other avenues to accomplish this, such as revising abbreviated framework procedures or clarifying ways to use current framework procedures to quickly implement these changes. This would include NEPA implications, explore how other councils have established processes for more expedited actions, and include consideration of faster changes for similar recreational management measures as well.

The subcommittee also directed staff to provide information on commercial landings and performance of trip limits every two years through the stock assessment and fishery evaluation, or the SAFE report, during the same meeting as the annual report on the Southeast Reef Fish Survey is presented.

Then, in Actions 3 through 10, which is revising the commercial trip limits, the committee directed the following changes to trip limit actions be made, and made recommendations for preferred alternatives, and this would be considered at this meeting. In addition to the species-specific changes, the subcommittee requested a discussion about whether the emergency actions could be considered to speed up the implementation of trip limit increases.

I'm just going to hit some of the highlights here, because we're going to go through this in detail on the document, and so, for Action 3, greater amberjack, the subcommittee selected a recommendation of 2,000 as the preferred subalternative. For vermilion snapper, the

subcommittee selected 1,500 pounds as the preferred subalternative for both the seasons. Action 5, red porgy select forty-five fish as the preferred. Action 6, hogfish, the Georgia through North Carolina stock, add an alternative to consider 750 pounds, but they did not -- Yes, they did. They did they selected a preferred of 300 pounds gutted weight as the preferred for hogfish. Then, for commercial trip limits for triggerfish, an alternative was added to consider trip limit changes of 1,200 and 1,400 pounds for both the seasons.

Action 9, revising the trip limits for golden tilefish, and this is hook-and-line only, adding alternatives to consider trip limit changes at 600 and 750 pounds. For gag, and this is Action 10, the subcommittee is selecting removing this action from further consideration in this amendment, and then, Action 11, modify commercial trip limit and possession requirements, the subcommittee noted several issues that require further discussion to address this action, including a plan for impending change to electronic reporting, examples of actions that could convey accountability to law enforcement, necessary information that needs to remain with the fish, and necessary timing for communication between the fishermen and the dealer.

Beyond these issues, the subcommittee determined that addressing the issue of allowing fishermen to complete a trip, and begin a new trip during times when a dealer is not open to receive the harvested fish, extends beyond the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so similar changes would need to be made in other FMPs, such as Coastal Migratory Pelagics and Dolphin Wahoo. Therefore, the subcommittee directed staff to remove this action from further consideration in Amendment 60, and the subcommittee directed staff to explore options to address this issue through another more comprehensive amendment.

That is everything from the subcommittee report, and I'll look and see if there's any questions, or if any other subcommittee member wants to add anything at this time. Okay. I don't see any hands, and I'm going to turn it over to Mike to dive into the decision document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Jessica. I'm going to do a brief introduction, and then I'm going to pass over to Andy, and he's going to be presenting Dominique's presentation today, but, just to reorient everybody, this amendment has largely been developed through the subcommittee that you designated, made up of some commercial members and some state representatives.

At this point in the process, now that it's being -- It will be evaluated potentially later this meeting for being approved for public comment, and, now that we're at this stage, the amendment is going to be handled by the committee, by the whole committee, and then the council as well, and so we won't be having the subcommittee meeting to get this over the finish line. This is going to be through the full Snapper Grouper Committee and the council.

We've had discussion about the last meeting, and I do want to point you to some resources, because, when the subcommittee met, they received a lot of information from the Regional Office concerning information on the snapper grouper commercial permits, potential notification systems that are being talked about in Action 2, various levels of trip limit analyses, and so I do want to show you -- Within your decision document, you have links to all of the previous presentations, and I would recommend, you know, kind of having those available for you to reference as you're making your decisions.

We're not going to go through all of the previously-presented information. It's contained there. Andy will present some of the information that has been added since the April meeting. The subcommittee requested some additional trip limit analysis runs, and so that will be included in Andy's presentation, and we have several objectives to try to cover within this meeting.

We've had feedback from the advisory panel, and you all have gotten the report from the April meeting, and, after we get the report from the Regional Office, then we'll start working through the purpose and need and going through each action.

You all, if you have the desire to do so, you can select preferred alternatives, initial preferred alternatives, before you go out for the public hearing document. If you don't want to select one at this time, you don't have to, and then, when we get to the end of the decision document, we would be looking for a motion, if you all would consider approval of this amendment for public hearings to be conducted, and so that's kind of where we're going to go today. I'm going to switch over, right now, and pull up the presentation that Andy will give on the trip limit analyses, and then we'll start working through the document after that. All right. Andy, whenever you're ready.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mike, and so I'm pinch-hitting today. Dominique wasn't available, and so what I'm going to do is try to walk through, maybe species-by-species, and I'll pause and give people an opportunity, if you want to ask questions about that, and there's quite a few slides, and I think it would be good if we kind of had a little bit of discussion throughout, if there's questions.

Mike has walked through this, and so we have, you know, Actions 3 through 10. What you're going to see in this slide presentation is we're going to discuss the trip limit analyses for Actions 8 and 9 first, since those were newly added, and then we'll come back to Actions 3 through 7, which were discussed by the subcommittee, and looking at, obviously, the range of trip limits to be considered.

I think you've seen this graphic, but, just to kind of reorient you, that black dashed line is essentially if you catch 100 percent of the annual catch limit, and the blue represents percentage of trips that did not catch the trip limit, whereas red represents the percentage of trips that are catching the trip limit, and so you can see that, for some species, the trip limit is rarely, if ever, caught. Other species, like golden tilefish, 40 percent or more of the trips are catching the trip limit.

The numbers that are associated with those bars represent how much the trip limit would have to be increased in order for the annual catch limit to be met, and that assumes, one, the fish are available, and the fishermen have the capacity to actually harvest those fish and return to shore with those fish, and so there's definitely some assumptions there, especially the bigger the increase needed in order to fulfill the trip limit and ultimately meet the catch limit. You'll see, in some of the projections, we don't even achieve the catch limit, despite large increases in trip limits, and others we do,

For the analysis, we took a look at the last ten years of data, and we looked at the recent monthly landings, to get an idea of kind of the distribution of landings over the last three years, and then also plotted the distribution of recent trip landings, and summarized those both regionally and by state, and then we do cumulative sum scale projected landings for each alternative, to allow us to compare it to the ACL and predicted closure dates.

Kind of putting it in a more, you know, cartoon graphic form, right, we have landings data by month, or time period, and we use that to then look at the proportion of trips that are actually catching the trip limit. If they are catching the trip limit, then we apply a percent change to that trip limit, to increase it to that new trip limit that would be caught, and we then project the new levels of landings, and so there's, obviously, some assumptions there.

We can't, obviously, predict fully the behavior of commercial fishermen, and whether or not, by increasing the trip limit above what they were catching previously, if they would catch that new fully caught trip, but we, obviously, assume that would be the case, and these projections are just for purposes of analysis, to indicate, obviously, what possibly could happen as kind of an upper bound.

We can go into gray triggerfish, and this is the first action, and so what you can see here is the landings broken down by year, both January through June on the left, as well as July through December on the right, and they do show a little bit different pattern, in terms of the actual catches, but, notably, at least in more recent years, there appears to be a kind of declining trend, not catching the catch limit in recent years, and landings have fallen, since 2021, each season.

Then, if you break down the trips during that January through June time period, if you look on the right-hand side, it's very similar patterns across states, in terms of most of the trips are landing between zero and about 300 pounds. A very small fraction, about 1 percent of trips, actually land up to the trip limit, and, for purposes of trip limit analysis, we're assuming, you know, 900 pounds or more landed, you know, that trip limit, or within the range of that trip limit.

As you can imagine, increasing the trip limit above a thousand pounds is not going to make much of a difference, if people aren't catching the fish currently, unless they're avoiding them, and not targeting them, and then they could go out and catch higher amounts.

From the standpoint of projections, you can see, January through June, the current trip limit fishing days is projected at 181, and, if you increase it to 1,200, or 1,400, pounds, those lines are almost on top of one another, and so it makes very little difference. We don't come close to catching the commercial ACL, and this fishing season would be that full 181 days during that January through June time period.

Similar graphs, and I won't go through it. It's pretty much the same story. Very few trips are landing the trip limit, and, obviously, the kind of representation by state is very similar to the previous graphic.

We do have a little bit different pattern, in terms of the landings, but the bottom line is that, by increasing the trip limit by 200 or 400 pounds, you're still not making a marked difference in terms of the overall harvest, and we're still not bumping up against the catch limit, based on current landings rates in the most recent years. I'll pause there for questions about triggerfish.

If we go to golden tilefish, it's a little bit different. We did have some closures that were projected in recent years, but landings only exceeded the catch limit in 2024, and this is for the hook-and-line sector. Landings are more variable throughout the year, in part because we've had some

closures that have been regularly projected, but you see, obviously, landings tend to be higher in the first half of the year than the second half of the year.

As mentioned earlier, a very different picture than maybe triggerfish, in that you do have a lot of trips that are bumping up against that trip limit, and, in doing so, obviously, by increasing the trip limit, you have the capacity to, obviously, increase harvest and catch the catch limit faster. The distribution is a little bit different across states, but most pronounced with kind of the North Carolina fishermen bumping up the trip limit more so than some of the other states.

Here is where, you know, looking at the different alternatives of 600 or 750 pounds, if you base the increase on just kind of average landings in recent years, you would go from a projected closure date of mid-October to either the third week of September or late August, depending on the trip limit increase that's implemented, and so all of them are projecting closure dates, and, if you, obviously, look at standard error around that, it could be even a shorter season, if catch rates are higher than estimated.

Unlike the gray triggerfish graphics, obviously, here you see the status quo line crossing the commercial catch limit, indicating that we would project a closure just under status quo conditions. By increasing the trip limit, you would speed up when that, obviously, closure occurs by some amount, depending on the trip limit that is selected. I'll pause there on golden tilefish.

Okay, and so similar graphics from what have been shared, and I don't feel like I need to go through and orient you to these, but we do have about 6 percent of greater amberjack trips that are bumping up against the trip limit. The patterns are a little bit different across the states, as you can see there, but, for the most part, they indicate, obviously, most trips won't catch the trip limit.

If you look at March through August, even if you increase the trip limit by that 300, or even 800 pounds, we're still projecting that we would be well below the commercial annual catch limit of 583,000 pounds. Then, in the September to February timeframe, kind of a similar story, but less trips actually catch the trip limit during that fall and winter season compared to the spring and summer time period, and so you would expect, obviously, that increasing the trip limit during that time will have even less of a benefit, or effect, in terms of trying to achieve the annual catch limit. I assume no questions, and so I'll just plow through.

Okay. Vermilion snapper, we do have 11 percent of trips that are catching the current trip limit, and so that, obviously, can make a difference with regard to catching the full annual catch limit, and so this is the January to June time period, and so you do see a little bit bigger of an increase toward the annual catch limit, but, even if you go from 1,000 pounds to doubling the trip limit to 2,000 pounds, we would not project a closure during that time period, but we would estimate greater utilization of the annual catch limit.

Similarly, July through December, 14 percent of the trips were catching the trip limit, and so a similar story as kind of the first half of the year next. This one actually could potentially get into a scenario where you would close the fishery at 2,000 pounds, and we would estimate, even at 1,750 pounds, you potentially could run into a closure right at the tail-end of the year, in December, to maximize use of the annual catch limit. We're under the annual catch limit based on kind of status quo and some of the lower trip limits of 1,500 pounds or less.

Red porgy, the current limit is fifteen fish. Based on that, you know, most trips do land close to that, right, but it's such a small trip limit that it doesn't -- You know, it isn't surprising. 47 percent land thirteen or more fish, and so, obviously, increasing this trip limit could result in, obviously, faster catch rates, but we are well below the annual catch limit. It's already a fairly low annual catch limit, and, even if you increase the trip limit by threefold, we're still projecting that we would only land about 6,000 pounds of fish relative to that 14,000-pound catch limit during January through April.

A similar story, and I'll go to the next slide, and similar graphics for May through December. We do, obviously, estimate that a little bit higher proportion of the catch limit for the second half of the year would be landed if the trip limit went up to forty-five fish from fifteen fish.

Hogfish, a small fraction of the trips are actually harvesting at or around the trip limit, and so 2 percent, and so it's not going to make much of a difference in terms of catching the annual catch limit. As you can see here, we do get a little bit closer to the catch limit if you go up to 750 pounds, but we're not projecting a closure, as well as a thousand-pound increase, and so, a doubling of the catch limit, still we're not estimating the catch limit to be met.

Red grouper, a small fraction of the trips currently land around the 200-pound trip limit, and pretty much the lines are overlaid on one another, and so, even if you increase the trip limit to 300 pounds, very little difference with regard to maximizing use of the annual catch limit.

The bottom line is golden tilefish landings, obviously, come closest to the ACL in most years, and so changing that trip limit would lead to earlier closures. Baseline trip limit increases for vermilion and hogfish are the most likely to increase landings that are more closely achieving the ACL for each of those species.

For the remaining species, the proposed trip limit alternatives really do not provide large enough increases to come close to achieving the ACL, and we just put how much of an increase would be required for some of those fisheries, and you can see that some of them really wouldn't even be realistic, in terms of harvest levels, and so those large increases, obviously, are unlikely to be attained, and we would expect that you would not likely achieve the annual catch limit. I think that's the last slide, and so I'll take any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. That was super helpful. I don't see any hands. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just have one comment. Something was stumping Amy and I about the sort of larger buckets of red porgy that were far beyond the trip limit that we have now, but, upon investigation, it was I forgot that we had changed -- Reduced the trip limit in 2023, with Amendment 50, and I think there might be one or two other species where management happened during the 2020 to 2024 span used in the analysis, and it just might be worth asterisking, or noting, that, so that it's just clear why those bigger buckets exist, and why it may be more weighted towards the smaller buckets, and it's not necessarily that -- It's not necessarily a reflection of what the fishery is doing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Along those lines, like one of the ones that would fall into that category, Kerry, is greater amberjack, and season two specifically, because you all increased that trip limit, and that might have been implemented in 2022 or so, something like that. I think you increased it. It was lower than season one, because I think it was at 1,000, and you made it the same as season one, at 1,200.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good points.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so we're going to start going through the decision document, and you have a version of the draft amendment in your briefing book. You will notice -- One thing that I wanted to point out is that the data analysis appendix is not in the amendment document just yet. The turnaround time, going from April to now, to be able to get that information that was in presentation form, plus the additional analyses, and then get that also into report form, was really quick.

We do intend to have that included when we actually release the document for the public hearings, but it's not there right now. The information that would go into that section is contained in those presentations that you've received, the ones that are linked there, as well as the one that Andy presented today, and so a lot of the that information is going to get converted into report form, and you'll see that there, but, if we need to pull up the actual amendment document, if there were any concerns with any of the draft language that's in there at this point, then let me know as we're going through going through the decision document today.

First, we will address the purpose and need, and so this is where our purpose and need statements are at this point, and I'll pause so that folks can give those a look over, and you can let me know if any of the language there does not reflect what you intend to do with this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm pretty sure we had a significant discussion at the subcommittee level about, under need, discussing increased access, because that -- It's a miss -- It's not the right word for what we're trying to do, and nothing is increasing, as far as, you know, the number of vessels, the amount that is given, that sort of thing, and it's just -- I forget what we decided, and I can go back and look at the minutes, but I thought we had a discussion about that, and I'm certainly not comfortable with that language.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can't remember what we said either, and is it that efficiency -- I can't remember, and I know we debated this. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, I don't -- I think it's not just efficiency, and we wanted to be careful about saying that, and so that word might have been in there, but with some other -- Some other language as well, and I can go back and look, you know, between now and Full Council, but I would like to talk about that a little more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good. Any other comments or changes on the purpose and need? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Since you're flagging the language, Kerry, about access, it's also listed in the purpose section, and so is it appropriate there, or do you want to consider changing it, or removing it?

MS. MARHEFKA: I think I personally need to sit with it a little more, because I'm trying to recall our discussion, and so, if I can have a little time, that would be amazing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I agree, and I don't think "access" necessarily fits. I mean, we have access. What we want to do is, you know, land our quota, and so it's not access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Do you all want to think about it more, and we can come back to those where -- Okay. I see heads nodding yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and so then I'm going to move us down into Action 1, removal of the two-for-one requirement for the snapper grouper unlimited permit, and it was noted, in the writing process, I need to change this, but, rather than "policy", it be listed as "requirement" in most places, and I think it is in the amendment document, but I will make that change.

What we have here the purpose of this action is to facilitate the transfer of permits within the snapper grouper commercial sector, specifically that the SG 1 permits. Alternative 1 is to have no change to the permit requirements, which would keep in place the two-for-one requirement. In order to have a transfer occur, it must be exchanged in a two-for-one fashion.

Alternative 2 would allow for transfers of SG 1 permits to be exchanged in a one-for-one fashion, and so some of the discussion that you've had related to this action is listed in the bullets below. Some of your intent, and I'll just highlight it, is you do continue to intend for this to be a limited access permit.

You've talked about a permit pool, and you decided that you do not want to consider a permit pool at this time. There was some outreach made earlier in this year notifying SG 1 permit holders that you were considering a change from the two-for-one exchanges, and you've discussed kind of the latent effort that's associated with this permit. That was highlighted in some of the previous discussions that you've already heard today, and you have discussed that the SG 2 permits would not be affected by this action. SG 2 permits are not being addressed within Amendment 60.

There is a preliminary summary of effects that's included within the amendment document. Just hitting some of the some of the bullets from that one, there is some discussion about, if there are current SG 2 permit holders that desire a larger role in the snapper grouper fishery, under Alternative 2, there may be more of an avenue for them to acquire an SG 1 permit, and so they may end up switching from an SG 2 to an SG 1. Only one snapper grouper permit can be on a vessel, and so they wouldn't be able to hold both of these types of permits, but there may be some desire if that if that component exists within the fishery.

Alternative 2 could have effects on the associated costs with SG 1 permits, though there would still be some easier acquisition of an SG 1 permit by only needing to find one permit holder that is willing to transfer or sell, rather than two, and, if easier acquisition of SG 1 permits reduces latency

under Alternative 2, then increased effort could make the commercial sector more likely to reach ACLs, increasing revenue, as well as increasing the risk of closures for some species, and so that's some of the discussion of effects associated with that action.

I'll pause here to see if there are any changes that you want to make to the alternatives themselves, or if you have any desire to select a preferred alternative, or if there's any additional discussion that you want along with this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Madam Chair. One of the things I've learned in the past couple of weeks is we've sort of taken for granted that we understand what an SG 1, quote-unquote, unlimited permit is, but that it actually is a misnomer. There's nothing unlimited about the permit. Getting the permit is not unlimited, and the amount of fish you can catch under it is not unlimited. There's nothing unlimited about it, and I think that it has -- There are certainly stakeholders that have a different impression because of the name, that may not be as involved in the process.

One of things that I would like to see if we can figure out, between now and Full Council, is is the unlimited name codified, or it is just something we've used, in which case I highly recommend that we all try to stop referring to it that way, and just call it SG 1. If it is codified, I think we need to remove that part of the name, and either it's just SG 1 or SG 2, or we come up with different descriptors, because that is a very inaccurate descriptor of that permit. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds good, and Mike is capturing some of that. While you still have the microphone, would you like to select a preferred on this action? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Sorry, Madam Chair. Do you mind scrolling back up to the actions? Thank you. The only other thing that I thought of -- Never mind. You got it. I'm done. I must have an old copy. Mine still says "person", and yours says "entity".

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just noting that, if you printed out before the second briefing book posting last week, then there was a revision that was printed, that was released with that, and so, if you go to the website, the website has the current version, and that was put on there last week, on Wednesday.

MS. DUKES: Touche, Mike. Touche.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would we like to select a preferred here, since this going out for public comment? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we select Alternative 2 as our preferred action.**

MS. DUKES: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Moved by Kerry, and seconded by Amy. Under discussion. We've had a lot of discussion on this at past meetings. Anybody else want to bring up anything else relative to this preferred, or relative to this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Moving to Action 2 --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can we back up for just a second? Kerry, it seems like you just learned that this is codified in the text, and so would you like to add something here under Action 1 about how we need to fix this, what it's called, in the codified text?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and Amy is looking at the text right now, and she sees it in the CFR, that it -- That is in there. It's referenced that way. Allie has got the citation, if it's needed. Yes, and I would like to make a motion. **I would like to make a motion to change the name of the Snapper Grouper 1, quote-unquote, unlimited permit to simply the Snapper Grouper 1 permit.**

If, between now and Full Council, people have better ideas of what to call those two permits, and I think 1 and 2 is sufficient, and, again, I would like to make sure that it's clear the rationale behind that is that those boats have the same trip limits. They have trip limits, and they are limited in your ability to buy them, and there is not one unlimited thing that I can think of. I think that was the case in 1999, but it is certainly not the case now, and so there's just -- It just doesn't even make any sense to have that name in the permit anymore. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have a motion. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Tom. Under discussion. I saw -- Tom, do you want to speak to it first, and then I'm going to Shep.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to say this is a really interesting way to think about this, Kerry, and I really appreciate you bringing this up, because it's a branding issue, and it's really the permit is only unlimited in comparison to the SG 2 permit, which would really probably -- The way to think about it is we have a Snapper Grouper 1 permit, and we have a Snapper Grouper 2 limited permit, but I definitely support this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep, and then Andy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just going to note that you will get the reg text for your deeming before you vote to submit this, whenever you finalize the amendment, and so you'll see what the reg text looks like, and you'll have another chance to wordsmith whatever at some point. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll just that I'm certainly not in opposition to what Kerry is trying to do. What I'm wanting to talk to my permits team about is any sort of downstream effects with regard to permit applications, Paperwork Reduction Act requirements, and so it will be more complicated I think than what I would like to deal with, but we'll work through that, and we'll come back to you, but I appreciate your suggestion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion on the table. Any further discussion on this motion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Now moving to Action 2, this is the action to revise bottom longline gear stowage requirements and the species that may be harvested while that gear is onboard but

stowed. Just giving some background for the members that were not part of the subcommittee, bottom longline gear within the commercial fishery -- Under current regulations, vessels that have that gear onboard may only possess snowy grouper yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish, and you see that species grouping listed here in the no action alternative.

That regulation was put into place quite some time ago. It's listed within the document, within the draft amendment document, but that essentially made the longline fishery for snapper grouper to be a deepwater fishery.

The alternatives that are being considered here would not change the ability to catch those species with the particular gear. You would still only be able to catch that group of species when using bottom longline gear. The change here is that, in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, there would be allowed for possession of other species, and the requirement would be that fishermen would need to switch the gear, and either they would need to fish some other gear, and not bottom longline, but they would fish some other gear first, and then they would switch, and they would fish their bottom longline gear second.

They would switch, but they would be allowed to keep the species from both of these gears, or they would fish the bottom longline gear first, put it away, and then they would be able to fish some other gear, and they would be able to keep fish from both of those on their vessel at the same time, and so that's what is being discussed here.

The variety between Alternative 2, 3, and 4 has to do with potential ways to help law enforcement be able to enforce this regulation, and be able to see that there was some type of switch from one gear to another, to better tie the fish that are onboard that vessel to the gear that they were caught with.

Alternative 2 would just remove the species restriction, and it would allow vessels that have bottom longline gear onboard to be able to possess the fish that they caught using that bottom longline gear from that deepwater complex, along with fish that were caught using other gears that would be outside of that deepwater group.

Alternative 3 would require that any vessels that intended to do this switching to or from bottom longline gear within a single trip must submit an at-sea notification prior to switching gears. That notification would inform law enforcement that this vessel is switching to, or switching from, bottom longline gear, and so they would be able to have that recorded.

Alternative 4 would be a similar type of requirement, except that would be through a vessel monitoring system, and that wouldn't be simply an at-sea notification using a sat phone, and that would be through VMS. Now, for both Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, any type of notification or VMS requirement, that would not be required of the entire commercial fishery. That would only be required of those vessels that intend to switch to or from bottom longline gear within a given trip, so that you could still have a commercial permit, be a commercial fisherman, and, as long as you're not switching to or from bottom longline gear, then you wouldn't have to have the notification requirement, or the VMS requirement, for your vessel.

It's the added flexibility that you would get from being able to switch gears is kind of the benefit that you get from having the responsibility then to give that notification, or carry that VMS system, depending on the alternative that is selected.

There's discussion that's listed here, and some CFR references related to the requirements associated with this, if you wanted to dig into the actual language there. There's been discussion, within the subcommittee, about the prohibition of wreckfish on vessels with bottom longline gear aboard, and there was direction from the subcommittee to be incorporated into these alternatives, and I just wanted to point that out, because there are -- There are essentially two different longline species restrictions.

There's one that says you can only keep this group of species, and then there's also another within the wreckfish portion of the regulations that says wreckfish cannot be on vessels with longlines, and so what this would do is -- We're intending that this would address both of those sections, and so wreckfish would be able to be on vessels that have longlines, even though they would not be able to be caught on longlines, and you would also have the ability to keep other snapper grouper species, and so that's why it's not specified for wreckfish, and it would be any of the snapper grouper species that be allowed onboard, and so I just wanted to point that out, because that was a discussion point from the last meeting.

I've already summarized Alternatives 3 and 4. Alternative 4, for that one, the requirements related to VMS, minimum requirements being spelled out a bit more clearly, what we are planning to do -- Because that was added in April, and we didn't have the time to have a full presentation on VMS for you here at the June meeting, and we will have more of a presentation for you at September that will discuss, you know, kind of the minimum requirements associated with VMS, and that would be something you would then be able to have included into that alternative.

Right now, it's generally stated that that would have a VMS requirement, kind of the nuts and bolts of what comprises a VMS, and what qualifies for a VMS in this context, and that would be spelled out within the September council meeting.

There was discussion, within the last meeting, about this is the place where it was -- This action, how would it be viewed, and would it be considered regulatory or deregulatory, and the subcommittee noted that actions that were being perceived as regulatory are taking a bit longer to get through Headquarters, whereas deregulatory actions may move through to implementation a bit faster, and there's a little bit of confusion, depending on the alternative, because sometimes it's -- You know, one might view it as regulatory if it's adding a requirement, but deregulatory because it's adding flexibility, and so what the balance of those two components would be, and I think Andy may have some comments related to that when we get to discussion.

For the summary of effects, there are -- The expected effects depend really on the number of snapper grouper fishermen that would participate in this type of flexibility, the switching to or from bottom longline gear, and we're going to dive -- Between now and the further steps of development, we're going to dive a bit more into looking at the overlapping permits, those that would have permits that would set them up to use longline gear, such as the golden tilefish endorsement, or possibly those that are dually permitted between snapper grouper and HMS, and so we'll see what the potential numbers would be related to this, but it's not expected that it would

be all snapper grouper commercial fishermen that would take advantage of this added flexibility, necessarily.

Alternatives 2 through 4 could result in additional fishing mortality for snapper grouper species, but any negative effects from this would be mitigated by the catch ultimately being limited to its annual catch limit. There could be economic or social benefits from Alternatives 2 through 4, from increased harvest and more efficient commercial trips, and also potentially lowering overall fuel costs for commercial fishermen, because, instead of having to fish one gear, and come all the way back inshore, switch gears, and then go back out, they would be able to do so -- To do that gear switching within the same trip.

The requirements for notification in Alternatives 3 and 4 could have mixed effects, with the costs of installing and learning any new required equipment, but there could be benefits of improved communication with law enforcement, and access to additional flexibility in the catches on the water, and so those are some of the pieces that have been put together for this.

There did come up a kind of a question, and concern, and I believe council members have all gotten emailed from Vincent Bonura, one of our AP members, and he brought up this point of whether -
- The stowage requirements, as they're listed right now, the stowage requirements are that hooks are un-baited, and that the longline gear, when it's is stowed, below deck, and so a question to the committee would be are the stowage requirements, as they're listed right now, adequate with consideration of different forms of longline gear used in the commercial fishery, as well as the different vessels, and you heard some of the commentary that the AP gave in Haley's report earlier.

Then another point, that I noted before, is that you'll hear more information on VMS systems at the September council meeting, and so, within today's discussion, I would hope that we -- That you all would be able to address this question, and, if there are changes that need to be made to those stowage requirements, kind of direct staff to do so.

To keep this thing on the timeline that you would like it to be, we would probably need that direction to be pretty precise coming out of this meeting, so that we can turn it around quickly and get it into the public hearing process, and so I guess pause here to see if there are any questions, or if you all would like to discuss those stowage requirements.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know at least one of my boats that catches golden tile has a permit for longline, and wreckfish, and he really doesn't have a place below deck to put gear. I mean, I guess I could put it on top of the pilot house, which is not below deck, but it's above deck, and the Coast Guard would probably be content with that, but there's -- He just doesn't have a -- There's just not a place below deck to put it. His fuel tanks are lazarette, and there isn't any -- Short of putting it in the pilot house.

If it was un-baited, and there's been quite a bit of comment talking about how long it takes to bait hooks and get ready to longline, and that may be a reasonable alternative to -- I know, some gears, some boats just do not have anywhere to put it below deck.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Other questions, or comments? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I have said all along that I understand -- I'm for people to be able to use their permits that they already have, and I think, given -- Except for maybe the golden tilefish longline endorsement, everything else that somebody would catch a grouper, or something like that, is almost crumbs. It's 300 pounds, or 200 pounds, stuff like that, you know, and I just think we're really making this more complicated than it should be.

You also are allowed to use buoy gear, and that's ten hooks. You can set -- I believe the regulation is an unlimited amount of buoys to get your gear, and I'm not sure, and I haven't asked law enforcement, and so about the only thing that I would be in favor of is a call-in before you left the dock to say you're going to go do both things.

Somebody in the golden tile fishery should be allowed to come in and catch something else, some other way, and be able to land it, to make the trip efficient, or something like that, and I just think we're getting too many different things. People has got permits that are available, that they want to use to maximize the trips, you know, and I just think too simple, and there's not a problem here, and let's don't make one. Allow people to use their permits and maximize their effort to make a living and to put seafood for the consumers.

A call-in, or when you leave the dock, that I'm going to go do this, and that should be good enough, and, when you get close in range, you can call back in and say I did it, and so I don't see any other -- I mean, I'm just not for any other thing but very limited. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to add a few thoughts. In terms of the regulatory or deregulatory question, I think a lot of it is going to come down to the analysis, and the evaluation of the cost versus benefits, right, and so I think, if the council is able to clearly demonstrate, based on this flexibility, based on any sort of increased costs, that there is still going to be offset by the benefit of being able to use multiple gears on trips, then that will go a long way, obviously, to the Fisheries Service consideration of the action when we review Amendment 60.

I say that because of kind of what Dewey was going at, I do have greater concerns with the VMS alternative than I do the at-sea notification, or prior-to-trip notification, just simply because it's going to increase cost to a greater portion. The VMS units we're talking about are going to have to be satellite-based, and not just the cellular-based, because you're going to have to be at-sea using them, and so we certainly are going to get more information in September, and I think that really needs to be a key component to look at this cost benefit tradeoff.

We had extremely late-breaking news, and I don't even know if council staff is aware, but we've gotten some information from HMS about certain restrictions that they have that relate to this, and some of those restrictions I guess are being eliminated through some actions, but we want to, obviously, do a clear cross-walk of those restrictions, to make sure that there's nothing that -- If we do all of this work, and we still can't allow for, you know, shark harvest, you know, as part of this, because of other restrictions, then what have we accomplished, right, and so making sure that they're in alignment will be key.

Then the last thing I'll say, and this is where -- So I love this action, right, and I think it's great. We're thinking outside the box for flexibility, and I also appreciated the emails we got right before this council meeting about like baiting hooks on longlines, but we can't solve everyone's unique situation, right, and I think we have to think about this of how many -- You know, what proportion of the people can we help with this action, and try to help the greatest percentage, or proportion, of individuals, knowing that some might not qualify, or may not have to have the flexibility that would be offered to others, just simply because of their unique situation, how they operate their boat, how they have to rig their gear, et cetera. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: So this -- I may just not be familiar enough with this fishery, but, when I was going through it, it kind of -- What came to my mind was suppose you did your bandit gear, your you know, your longline first, while you got your -- You've got your longline stowed, but you doing hook-and-line or whatever, and you've got all those snappers and groupers onboard from your hook-and-line, and then you pull your gear, your longline gear, out, and then you're technically out of compliance, though you didn't use that gear, and do you see what I -- Does that make sense?

In other words, you've -- If you started out longlining first, and then stowed your gear, and then went bottom hook-and-line, you know, bottom fishing, you would be in compliance, but, if you went the other way around, you would not be in compliance, and so I was kind of going towards the fact to address that issue, would be to just have some sort of notification, be it VMS or just a call-in, but I don't know, and it looks like Dewey can set me straight here.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know about that, but I just know, in a perfect world, everything would be easy, doing it like that, and I think it don't work that way. If somebody is going to go set -- I'll just use -- You know, if somebody wants to offshore to say catch seventy-five pounds of red snapper, and they come back in, and they set their longline gear for sharks on the way back in, and then they fish like that, and it don't always work going longlining first, and then go try to catch your snapper grouper, because, predominantly, if you're sharking, you're going to be closer, or closer outside of three miles, than, you know, going offshore.

The weather don't work different ways, you know, and it might hamstring it, someday like that, but, you know, a notification before you left the dock, to say I'm going to go do these things, it puts -- You know, we're not talking -- I guarantee you're probably talking a maximum of ten or fifteen vessels.

I mean, there ain't many left, and so it puts law enforcement on notice of, hey, this vessel called in and said they're going to go do two things, and he goes out there and does his two things, and he comes back, and gets in close, in cell range, and he calls back in and says, hey, I'm coming in, and I've got both things onboard, and this is what I did, or something, you know, but that initial call-in to tell them that he's going out there already alerts law enforcement, if they need to be alerted or whatever, that he is going to go out there and exercise his permits and use them to catch the fish he's allowed.

You know, in a perfect world, everything would be right in line. All kinds of fish would be right in line, and so you would just go down there and catch -- It don't work that way. Everything is

strewed everything different way, and so it's just a way to maximize it, but I think the call-in, and the hail back in on your way in, would be the cheapest and easiest.

MS. MURPHEY: I think that's where I'm going with this, and, again, that example I gave, to me, complicates things, and so, if you just called in and said I'm going with both gears, and so I'm kind of following what Dewey is supporting, and so just kind of thinking of the logistics of just fishing, you know, and I'm tending to lean to at least Alternative 3 at this point. The other issues of not being able to stow, I don't even know how to address.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to try to interpret what you guys are saying, and so, if this isn't what you all are saying, then then help, and so a couple of things. It sounds like you all are trying to lean towards a preferred, but, if that's not what you're trying to do, then then I don't -- I don't understand.

I think that what you all are saying is covered in Alternative 3, except for we got some information from Vincent Bonura, leading up to the meeting, that maybe the next-to-last sentence of Alternative 3 needs to be edited, and same thing on Alternative 2, the last sentence on Alternative 2, but I guess I'm also trying to understand what you all are saying relative to taking this out for public hearing.

Are you trying to say that Alternative 4 for VMS needs to come out of this action, because you don't want that to go out for comment for public hearing, or are you suggesting that we need to select Alternative 3 as a preferred? I guess I'm just trying to translate what you all are saying into something into the document, so it can be ready at the end of this week to go out for public hearing. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I know what I kind of prefer, but that doesn't mean everybody else does, and so, instead of choosing a preferred, we would go out to hear public comments, unless somebody has got more. I know what I'm thinking, but everybody else might not be thinking the same thing. I think I expressed some less intrusive using the permits, the simplest thing, and there's not many folks left. Law enforcement has already got a profile or something on individuals, what their landings could be, you know, and know what everybody is landing, or see if there's any hiccups, or what's going on, but I'm for that, and so I would say go out to public comment with no preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. 10-4. Thank you for that clarification. I have Charlie, and then Amy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I can live with 3 or 4, personally, but, when it says submit an at-sea notification, can we use text, or does it have to be a phone call, because, obviously, we know the sat phones don't work very well offshore, and, if I had to use a sat phone, I would probably be inclined to want to use VMS and text. If I can use a text, you know, a Zoleo, or a Garmin or something like that, then 3 might work better for me, and so a little clarification on what the options -- What at-sea notification really means would help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I appreciate this conversation, and discussion, and I really do like this action, from the availability of allowing the commercial fishermen to maximize their trips while they're offshore, and, Dewey I appreciate you saying that we are talking about a few boats here, and, finding a mechanism that's going to be efficient for them, as well as making sure that there's some sort of notification involved, I am for.

I do think that not going out with a preferred is fine but, I'm struggling with the at-sea notifications versus the other conversations that we had earlier, Dewey, about the opportunity for boats to indicate before they left the trip, and so that option is currently not a part of these alternatives, and so I just wanted to see if that's something that you would like to put in here as another alternative, because, right now, it's just at-sea notifications, and not prior to, and I apologize that I'm not -- I cannot recall the conversation that we had at the last subcommittee meeting.

I'm not even sure if it was an on-the-record or off-the-record, but Jessica Stephen was talking about different avenues that NOAA Fisheries already has, or is currently working on with contracts, and it may be good for us to remember, and have a refresher, on what capabilities are currently available within the contractual worlds of NOAA Fisheries, and maybe what's on the cusp that we could be utilizing for at-sea notifications or prior-to notifications.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go back to Dewey, so it used to say before you left the dock. We got a presentation from Jessica Stephen at the last meeting, and had a lot of debate about that, and, ultimately, some people on this side of the table were thinking that that it needed to be when you were intending to switch back and forth, and that the, you know, prior to leaving the dock wasn't necessarily going to work.

I guess I would say, yes, I feel like Jessica Stephen maybe needs to talk to us a little bit more when we get to the September meeting, but, if you think that that's something you might want to bring back in, maybe it needs to get back in the document for going out to public hearing, and so I guess I would say think about that, because we had a whole discussion, after we saw that data from Jessica Stephen, that led us to believe that the notification prior to leaving might not be good enough as you switch back and forth throughout the trip. Jimmy, Charlie, and then I'm going to come back to Dewey.

MR. HULL: To that point on that discussion, I remember her specifically saying we needed a time stamp that you would get with the notification at-sea when you're changing gear, so that law enforcement would have a time stamp to refer back to, you know, if you were intercepted, and that's what I remember from that discussion, but, you know, Alternative 3, with at-sea notification, is -- It seems to me like where I'm mostly landing too, and I like the idea of keeping it as simple as possible.

Also, on the appropriately stowed longline hooks, I mean, baiting the hooks is the issue. If they're baited, they're ready to deploy, and so, if they're not baited, they're not ready to deploy, and so, whether you have them down below baited or up on the deck baited, they just can't be baited, and so, the stowage part that Charlie is concerned about, I think you could eliminate that concern by just saying they can't be baited, no matter where they are, because in some -- You know, there's different types of longline gear.

There's short bottom longline gear, which I use, which is less than a mile, eighty hooks, and you've got gear like Vincent uses, which you're talking hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of hooks, and it takes a long, long time to bait, and so maybe some -- A little bit of change on that, but, from Jessica's conversations, I remember that at-sea is what she thought would be -- Is used in the past, in other fisheries, because it gave them a timestamp.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm thinking outside of the box, which is always scary, and you might just do, on a single trip, must submit prior to switching gears, and (a) is a call before leaving, and (b) is a text, or (c) is a sat phone, and take it out to public hearing that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Like as subalternatives or whatever. Okay. Mike, then Dewey, then Robert, then Kerry.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: For the stowage requirement, would it be any type of helpful middle ground -- Just thinking about the different components of the longline fishery that exist, would it be any type of helpful middle ground if it's an either/or a situation, of either you have your hooks not baited, or you can have your hooks baited, but it needs to be stowed below deck, and either one keeps you in, you know, compliance, and you're able to do that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Heads nodding yes on that. Okay. Back to my list. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Also, because, when you look at the golden tile fishery, when they stow their gear, their leaders are tied up, and they're put away, you know, and so I think Mike's example is a good middle ground. Also, when you -- When I say like call before you leave the dock, or at-sea, you know, if you're going through the sea buoy, you could call and say, hey, I'm going fishing, and I'm going to do both things.

You kind of probably know what you're going to do that day sometimes, because of the way the weather is, and so, you know, at what point does it -- You know, the call-in, and you do the call-in, and it's just whichever is the least intrusive to allow somebody to go use their permits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Next up is Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Just as we work through call-in or text, would it be better to just have a must communicate, so that, if text changes to some type of internal message or something, and I think what we're trying to get to is communicate before you leave, or while you're out at-sea, and I'm not sure that the method really matters, as long as we approve a method.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'll let Andy speak to that, or maybe Jessica Stephen could speak to that. Kerry, you're up next, and then over to Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm pretty sure we have had a conversation, and Amy is saying that I'm right, and I forget if at a subcommittee or a full committee before, and we've been told that text is not acceptable. There's no method to do that now, and you have to -- You can text your person on land, and they can call, but, right now, the only thing available is a phone call, and so I just want to make sure that you guys are aware of that.

I guess my question -- I have two questions, the first one being, you know, we need to think about slowing -- You know, if we slow down this amendment one meeting, I have some concerns about that, and my second question is I've been trying to work out, in my head, and maybe it's not an issue at all, but, the golden tilefish longline endorsement holders, does this change -- It wouldn't change their access to the golden tile hook-and-line allocation, would it? Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, you're up next. Is there a way that you also verify, from Jessica Stephen, before we get to Full Council, that texting is not an allowable method at this time, and could you try to verify that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Done, and, yes, it's not an allowable method at this time. What I would say, and I agree with Robert's comments, is that I think the mechanism is less important than just the how we accomplish it, right, and so IFQ -- For example, in the Gulf, you have either a VMS form, or you can contact someone on land, that will then fill out the form under our website, or you can contact the call service, right?

The VMS, obviously, allows for information to be provided when you're out of cellphone range, unless you have a sat phone, or a Starlink phone at this point, and you're able to contact someone from shore, but then we've also heard about the ability to use VMS devices to communicate to people on land, that then populate forms.

With all that said, I think the most important component is, whatever the information is that we're intaking from the fishermen in order to have the notification, we have to have kind of a standardized process and ability to bring that in, and, if text is a future option, we could consider that, but I don't think it's critical to be prescriptive of that right now, and it's just a matter of kind of what we would want in terms of that level of communication and what information we would receive.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that clarification, and so I'm going to try to summarize where I think that we are right now, and so it sounds like we -- We've had a lot of good discussion on this, that we're going to try to make this about general communication at-sea, and you heard that there were various ways to do that, but, unfortunately, text isn't one of them at this time.

Also, you've heard it seems like the desire of the committee is to not select a preferred at this time, that this would go out for public comment, and then, when it comes back, we would select a preferred. You also heard some concerns with the VMS component staying in there, but what we heard from Jessica Stephen was also maybe even just the at-sea notification system, and possibly having to get a contract in place, or modify an existing contract to have a phone number that people could call, could still take some time, and so I think that, when this comes back after public hearing, we need to figure out does this action stay in the document, even though it affects the speed, and just lots of things in thinking about how to move this forward. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm fine and taking it out for public hearing like it is, and kidding, but, if it slows it down any, I would still -- I would still rather have VMS, and then just send it in like that, and we know it's time stamped, and we know we can probably get rid of some of our other tech stuff,

and just use the VMS to text who we need to text at home and whatnot, and so I'm -- Anyway, but let's see what public hearing has to say.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other comments before we go to the next set of actions? All right. We're going to take a ten-minute break, and then we'll come back and dive into the trip limits, and so we're going to leave this action for now.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going here again, and so we are diving into the trip limit actions, and just a reminder that the subcommittee suggested removing all of the floating trip limits, the temporary trip limits, and we -- Instead we're going with static trip limits, but I'm going to turn it over to Mike to start walking through the trip limit actions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so, as we're going through the next few actions, Actions 3 through 9, I kind of gave a preliminary summary of effects for the first two actions, and Actions 3 through 9 are generally all kind of similar at this stage.

Given the changes that were made in April, some specific numerical analyses still need to be done, and so, right now, we were coming at it more from a qualitative perspective, just kind of evaluating the overall impacts of increasing a trip limit, and, as we move into further stages of development of the amendment, we'll be able to get you more information from an economic perspective, or a social perspective, and information concerning, you know, how this may affect on more of a numerical, or a percentage, type of level, but, right now we're -- We kept it pretty high level, as far as summarizing the effects, and so, generally for all these species, increasing the trip limit would be expected to have some effect on increasing the commercial landings.

Overall, the commercial landings would still be constrained, on an annual scale, by the annual catch limits, which are sustainable levels of harvest, and so increasing the commercial trip limits is not expected to result in a significant risk of overfishing. Positive economic and social effects are expected from the increased trip limits, provided that they do not result in significantly shorter seasons due to the ACLs being met, and that's just kind of a general summary for the effects related to these actions.

Now, going into a species-by-species breakdown, Action 3 is addressing greater amberjack. This is one of several fisheries -- One of several species for which the commercial fishery has a split season, and so there's an ACL for one part of the year, and a separate ACL for another part of the year, and I'll give the example for greater amberjack, but it applies for the other split seasons as well.

Season one, if the annual catch limit is not met for season one, then any remaining ACL is able to be rolled over to season two. Season two, if there's any uncaught ACL, that does not roll over into any future year, and so it's only from a season one to a season two in that context.

For greater amberjack, season one is March through August, and season two is September through February, and we kept the -- We kept the decisions on the trip limit to be season-specific, and you can have the same trip limit in both seasons, and I think, for all of these at this point, the current

trip limit is the same in both seasons, and so you don't need to have separate trip limits for the different seasons. It's just you're able to if you want to.

Action 3, we have Alternative 2 that addresses season one, and you have subalternatives with the various levels of increase to the trip limit. Alternative 3 addresses season two, and the subalternatives have various levels of increase to the trip limit. The subcommittee recommendation was for a 2,000-pound trip limit.

I do want to kind of re-point out, just because it was at the beginning of this discussion, Amendment 60 -- The Amendment 60 conversations at the advisory panel, the general impression was that the advisory panel is in favor of increasing the trip limits, but some of the -- Some of the higher-end trip limits that were being proposed in this amendment, they weren't totally onboard on going that high.

This is one of the cases where, for greater amberjack, they said 2,000 pounds was too much, but a 1,500, or a 1,750, could be viable, and there was some discussion that greater amberjack might not be in as good of a state as the last stock assessment would suggest, or possibly have some localized depletion off of North Carolina, and so there were some members that supported not increasing the trip limit at all, and so just reminding you of that discussion.

Underneath each of these actions, we have tables that are listed, with the commercial regulations in the most recent fishing year, and so we have the annual catch limit, the seasonal annual catch limit, as well as the trip limit. Sometimes the ACLs from one season to the next are split evenly 50-50, and sometimes they're not, and greater amberjack is one of the cases where there's a higher annual catch limit in season one than there is in season two. Like I said, there is rollover from season one to season two.

We also have included Table 2 that shows, through 2024, in the case of greater amberjack, because it's not a calendar fishing year, and this is the 2023/2024 fishing year, but the percentages of the commercial ACL that were caught in those three years -- You would have probably a more in-depth look at that if you take a look at some of those presentations that are linked that Dominique provided in the full trip limit analysis.

This is more of just a quick snapshot, just to remind you of what you've seen in other places, and so I'll pause right here, to see if there's any discussion from the committee, and if you all have any points that need to be added to this action, or if you have any preferred alternatives that you want to select.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Based on everything that we heard, both from the AP and the data that you saw, I'm not sure if the committee would like to select preferreds for this particular action, for season one and season two. We had a subcommittee recommendation, and it sounded like, the AP, that wasn't their preferred, and so thoughts on this one, so we can go out to comment? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I'm definitely getting increasingly uncomfortable with the subcommittee recommendation of 2,000 pounds, based on what I'm hearing from people, and so I wouldn't support that as a preferred. I'm torn between going to 1,500 each season, versus not having a preferred and hearing what people have to say at public hearing about it.

I think probably we're going to get a lot of different opinions, maybe based on where people live, and that's not going to provide us a path to clarity, but I think I've heard from enough people, enough fishermen who have been doing it a long time, and that I truly trust, that 2,000 would not be a good move for this fish, and so that's just where I'm standing, and I wanted to let the committee know what I was thinking.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and I could live with 1,750. You know, I think, if we wanted to go out with a preferred, that would probably be the number, and so it would be, you know, in line with what the advisory panel said, and at least give the public an idea of, you know, kind of what we're thinking. **I'll just make a motion that we make 1,750 our preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: For both the seasons, for season one and --

MR. PHILLIPS: (Mr. Phillips' comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: **So that is Subalternative 2b and 2c.** All right. Is there a second? It's seconded by Jimmy. Under discussion. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: So, of all the trip level changes, this is the one I've heard from fishermen on, and there was a lot of concern, and I think some of it was echoed by what we also heard at the AP level. You know, I think -- Again, you know, I know that we can't accommodate every community and every thought here, but, you know, fishermen in North Carolina have told me, and one I can concur with, is this fishery, while it's not doing purely, is not as healthy as the stock assessment says.

They're not as available as they were, and it's also one of the only fisheries in this snapper grouper complex which I've experienced some user conflicts with, and I've also heard of more user conflicts with, and so I would just caution that, if we're going to increase the trip limit, I think we could be potentially increasing some of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other comments? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Do we have the -- I'm just curious, because we'll, obviously, look at this again when we do another assessment, and when would be the next assessment for amberjack?

MS. MCCAWLEY: 2028. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't feel strongly about the preferred, and what I will note, and I'll comment on this for many of the species, is I'm looking at this SERFS indexes, because I feel like that's an important indicator for us, with regard to how these stocks might be trending, and amberjack is showing kind of above average catch rates, or video index rates, for the last four years, but that's through 2024, and there was a decline from 2023 to 2024. We just don't have recent data thereafter.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So any more discussion based on what everybody heard? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to make sure that I have this right. Mike, I see that's the wording in the motion. Up above, it doesn't remove what the three other subalternatives are, does it, and you're just putting --

DR. SCHMIDTKE: (Dr. Schmidtke's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MARHEFKA: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. More discussion to select this as a preferred? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. Just it's not something that I'm proficient with, and so I would lean on the commercial guys to really hone-in on this, but, ending in fifty pounds, is that going to cause anything? I'm thinking about baskets of fish, and how you guys are proportioning weight out, and is it something that we should be considering just rounding up to either an 1,800 number, or a 1,700, and you can get a fifty-pound-plus -- You can get a hundred-pound AJ, and I'm just curious if that was anything to be considered about.

Then, just from a mathematical rationale, I was looking at all the future actions, and, in most of those instances, there's some rationale of we're like we're going to increase the trip limit by 50 percent, or 100 percent, and it just -- I don't know, mathematically, my mind was wrapped around this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this? All right. **Any objection to this motion?** Okay. I see one objection. Any abstentions? All right. **The motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Moving next to vermilion snapper, vermilion snapper, you have potential alternatives. You do have a, I guess, a difference here that was noted within the April meeting, and it was -- The subcommittee directed for this to be the case of season one has alternatives ranging from 1,500 pounds to 2,000 pounds, whereas season two has alternatives ranging from 1,250 to 2,000 pounds.

The recommendation coming out of the subcommittee was for 1,500 pounds, and you see the tables associated, and I won't dive into these, but those are there for your reference on the regulations and the recent harvest relative to the commercial ACL, and so I'll pause here to see if there is any discussion or any motions for a preferred alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on vermilion? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: **I think we've thoroughly discussed it, and I would like to make a motion to select 1,500 pounds as the preferred for both seasons.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Seconded by Charlie. Let us get that on the board there. All right. Under discussion. Any additional discussion on the 1,500 pounds? **Any objection to the 1,500 pounds?** All right. **Seeing none, the motion carries.** Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: **Just for to keep things clear, do we want to remove the 1,250, just so everything looks the same?**

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's only on Alternative 3. Do you want it to come out? Okay. I'm going to consider that a motion. Okay. **All right, and so the motion is to remove Subalternative 3a, and that's 1,250 pounds gutted weight for season two, from Action 4.** Do I have a second? Seconded by Jimmy. Does everybody understand why? Okay. I see heads nodding, yes, that we understand why we're removing it. All right. **Any objection to removing that subalternative?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Now moving us down to Action 5, and that addresses red porgy. The current trip limit is fifteen fish, and that applies for both of its seasons. This is one where the seasons are not of equal length. Season one for red porgy is January through April, and season two is May through December.

The alternative commercial trip limits that are being considered are thirty fish and forty-five fish, and you have a subcommittee recommendation for forty-five fish. At the advisory panel, there was pretty mixed discussion on thirty fish versus forty-five fish, but there was general support for an increase of some sort for red porgy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on a preferred here? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: This is one I'm concerned about, and, although I certainly want to see greater utilization of the catch limit, to put it in perspective, red porgy -- The data point for the trap survey is the lowest in the entire time series for red porgy in 2025, and the second lowest for the video survey for 2024, and so this stock continues to not rebuild, and is struggling, and I don't think it would be appropriate to increase the trip limit at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What do other folks think, and, if we're not inclined to increase the trip limit, do we need to remove it, or put it in Considered but Rejected before it goes out to public hearing? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I'm just going to agree with Andy on this, and I would prefer not to see it even go out, but I'm sure I'm in the minority on this, but that's kind of how I feel on this particular species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Unfortunately, I would like to say that I don't agree, but I do agree with Trish and Andy's concerns, just because it has been where it has been since the very first SEDAR that was done for it. It's not rebuilding, and --

MS. MCCAWLEY: So it sounds like some folks are inclined to not take it out. If that's the case, I would suggest putting it into Considered but Rejected. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: You know, Carolyn and I were having a sidebar on hammering pinkies, and, whether we go from fifteen to thirty fish, or fifteen to forty-five, I just don't see it making a difference, and they're interacting with these fish anyway, and so they're probably going to catch them and throw them back, or catch them and bring them in, and you might go move somewhere

and just say you can catch that forty-five fish, and you've got a hundred pounds of fish to come in, but I don't think the stock status is because of overfishing.

It's one of those poor recruitment patterns, or regime shift, or something, but I don't think it's fishermen, and I don't know that going up to thirty or forty-five fish is really going to make a difference, and, if nothing else, I would like to leave it in there just so the public could say, and we could get some public comment, and we can always throw it out in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're in different places on this. What do we want to do here? Do we want to leave it in the document with no preferred, to get comments during public hearing, or are we moving it to Considered but Rejected? What is the final verdict? We've heard comments on either side. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would like to leave it in the document and hear what other fishermen have to say.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: **I'm fine with that, but I'll make a motion to select Alternative 1 as the preferred, and seek public comment on that.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We have a motion to select Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred. It's seconded by Kerry for discussion, and I feel like we've had a bunch of discussion on it already, and so, by doing this -- Just trying to indicate what's happening here, and no action is selected, but it would still stay in the document, and we would get public hearing comments on the fact that we've selected Alternative 1, no action. All right. Any more discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and next is the northern stock of hogfish, from Georgia through North Carolina. The current trip limit is 500 pounds. The alternative trip limits that are being considered are 750 pounds and 1,000 pounds, and the subcommittee did not have a recommendation for this species.

Thinking back to the advisory panel report, I don't think there was kind of a consensus from the AP. Some general feeling of pro increase, and there was at least one member that stated support for 750, but not a collective overall opinion from the AP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What's the pleasure of the committee here? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I would just take it out to public comment, and we don't catch any in Georgia, and so I would just as soon see what the public has to say.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so that would be no preferred, and it would go out for public comment. Is that where everybody is? Okay. I see heads nodding yes. Just making sure. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Next is Action 7, which is for red grouper. Red grouper, I will note that the trip limit is specified in both units of gutted weight and whole weight, and so that's why you see two different numbers there. That just has to do with how it's codified, but we have the current

trip limit is 200 pounds gutted weight. Alternative 3 would be a 300-pound gutted weight, or the whole weight equivalent. The subcommittee recommendation was for the 300-pound alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on red grouper? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The reason I'm shrugging at you is because it's not one that we sort of come across, or even try to intentionally, and so I don't feel qualified to -- If I'm throwing a number out there, I'm just throwing it out there, and so, for me, I would say go to public hearing without a preferred, and let people who are interacting with these animals speak to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It seems like other heads nodding around the table that, yes, that's what they want to do. All right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Next is Action 8 for gray triggerfish. The current trip limit is 1,000 pounds, and you have alternative trip limits of 1,200 or 1,400 pounds. This is one where the AP did express some concern about increasing the trip limit. They said that there were -- Gray triggerfish has kind of been a go-to alternative, especially for recreational fishermen that are not able to keep red snapper, and so there's been some increased targeting of that species.

I will note that gray triggerfish -- Of the species that are being included for consideration of increased trip limits, gray triggerfish is the one I believe that does not have a current stock assessment. It has not been successfully assessed. There have been a couple of attempts, but we haven't gotten a full stock assessment for gray triggerfish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on trigger? Are we keeping it in? Are we selecting a preferred? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Again, I think we just take it out to public comment, and see what they say, and do it that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Others? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm fine with that approach. Similar what I mentioned for red porgy though, I have pretty substantial concerns with the direction this stock is heading, and, also, the AP has indicated that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're making some notes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then, moving us to our last action, that is for the hook-and-line component of golden tilefish. Just reminding everyone there are two components to the golden tilefish fishery, and so there's the longline component, and that's not being addressed in this action. That has its own trip limit, and its own annual catch limit. The hook-and-line component has its own annual catch limit and trip limit, and that is the one that is being addressed here, and so the longline is not being affected by this action, and only the hook-and-line component.

The current trip limit for that component is 500 pounds gutted weight. There are considered alternatives for 600 pounds and for 750 pounds, and this is one of the -- One of the species where, in the trip limit analyses, there were some projected closures. We've had some closures in recent

years for the commercial fishery, one of those being an overage of the ACL, but some of those closures happened when the ACL was projected to be -- Projected to be met before the end of the year, and so I'll turn it back to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on golden tile? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, unlike my past comments, I think this is one where we can look at the economic benefits of increasing the trip limit, right, and there's the tradeoff of then we're bumping up against the quota, and we're having -- It would shorten the season, but there would be potentially some economic efficiency for the trips that are being made for golden tilefish, and so I don't have a preference in terms of increasing it, but I think this is one where there's maybe some opportunity to help commercial fishermen with trip profitability.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I 100 percent agree with Andy. I don't know -- I don't have heartburn over 600 or 750, but I think we should probably go to one of them, and maybe just get the input from public comment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can I ask maybe Jimmy, and put you on the spot, and do you buy hook-and-line-caught golden tilefish, and how important it is to have that market more spread out, versus a shorter season, because at least our projections indicate going to 750 would shorten the season by probably a couple of months.

MR. HULL: Yes, with that information, I would say that I would be more inclined to go to 600 pounds, increase it by 100, which would have a huge -- That 100 pounds would have a huge benefit to the fishermen at the price -- At the prices that we're seeing today, and we would still have more access to the resource, and so, I mean, I would be inclined to go with the 600 pounds, and kind of split the difference between closure time and the increased benefit profitability to the fishermen for that extra 100 pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Would you like to --

MR. HULL: Every species of domestically-caught fish is vitally important.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Think about whether you want to select a preferred on that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Andy, I'm not as big of a player as Jimmy is, and one can only hope. Just kidding, but, for us, having golden tile almost all year is just such a consistent source of that white, thick fillet that it makes the market that much easier when you don't have, you know, snowy all year, and you don't have your shallow-water grouper all year. The restaurants we sell to are more likely to buy golden tile, because of its predictability of being available for most of the year, and so I'm with Jimmy that I think 600 seems to be a good balance. **With that said, maybe I'll make a motion to adopt Alternative 2 as our preferred for public hearing.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Kerry, and seconded by Jimmy. We're getting that on the board there. Once again, that's the -- Alternative 2 is a 600 pounds. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.**

Okay, and so, before we jump into the timeline for the document, I wanted to bring back three things that the subcommittee talked about that we said that we would come back to, and so one of the things was possibly -- This provision is in place on the Gulf, but not on the Atlantic, that all commercially-harvested fish must be sold. That was something -- We had this discussion when we were at the subcommittee, and is this -- Do we want to add an action like that into this document and take it out for public hearing? I see heads nodding yes. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I have a question. If say somebody, and we've heard a lot about part-time commercial guys, I guess I'll call them, you know, buying permits so they can fish above recreational limits, but let's say somebody wants to take fish home or whatever, and can they keep their -- Say their recreational limits, so they've still got a fish to take home, but they wouldn't be mandated to sell that? I don't want them to have to unload it, sell it to a dealer, and then turn around and buy it back, but if they could keep the recreational limit, which is a fish or two, or whatever it happens to be for the species, and I would just like a little clarification on how that might work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought you couldn't take a commercial limit and a recreational limit on the same trip, but I also thought that this provision in the Gulf, but I would have to look back to it, requires all of it to be sold, and so, even if you have your own dealer license, and you're essentially selling it to yourself, is what I thought it required, but I'm looking for some clarification around the room. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: When you say this is something that's done in the Gulf, of course, they're under a whole different regime, and I don't see a purpose or a need for it over here. I mean. I just don't -- I don't get it. Tell me why do we have to make this requirement?

MS. MCCAWLEY: This would be like in place of like a use-it-or-lose-it provision, or something like that, and you would do this instead. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I could see a reason to do it, for sure, one of which is, if you're catching -- If you go get a couple of coolers of fish, and you're working a commercial limit, and you pull up and take your boat out at a boat ramp, it's -- It probably happens to some degree, and I have no idea how much, but it would -- It would make sure the fish went to a dealer which made sure that they were counted, versus possibly ending up at a restaurant back door somewhere, and so I think it's probably something that we do need to put into the amendment, I would make that motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Lots of hands going up. I'm going to Kerry, and then over to Mike.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think you make a really good point. I mean, the dealer logbook is the verification method of the trip ticket vessel logbook, and those two things are heavily reliant on each other to make sure we collect the right data, and that is super important, and so, if you are not selling to a dealer, there's a link in our data stream that's happening, that's missing, and that makes me very uncomfortable, and, for that reason, I will support this motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike, and then Jimmy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just want to throw out some of the details of developing an action like this, and so one question being is the intent for this action to be in Amendment 60 or in another amendment?

If it is intended to be in Amendment 60, then, given you all, you know, have the intent that this go out for public hearings following this meeting, there would need to be at least some comfort level with staff coming up with the action, and for it to be released without you all being able to review it, but, you know, kind of in that process, I would like to maybe draft up some, you know, language in between now and Full Council, and have you all review that, so that you've at least put eyes on it, and we're not doing something completely rogue, but, yes, and I just wanted to clarify if that is the intent of the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I saw heads nodding yes, but, Jimmy, you're on the list.

MR. HULL: I just want to say that answers the question for me, and thanks for the discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I'm looking around the committee for -- We want to add it into the document, and we want it to go out to public hearing, and Mike would try to draft up some language that would go in the document by the time that we saw it at Full Council. Okay. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just point out that the language in the bullet is not limited to snapper grouper, but, since it is snapper grouper, the FMP amendment, it would be limited to snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We need a motion to add that action to this document. Okay. Moved by Charlie, and seconded by Dewey. We're getting that motion on the board. All right. **The motion is add an action to Amendment 60 that requires that all snapper grouper commercial harvest is sold.** We've already had some discussion on this. Of course. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do you think we should put in there that all permitted snapper grouper commercial harvest, or does that -- Is it already covered as commercial harvest, and do we need to put anything in there about the permit, adding to commercial, and I don't know.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I mean, the -- You have to have a permit in order to harvest snapper grouper, commercially harvest snapper grouper.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Sounds good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Remember we're going to see some more specific language when we get to Full Council. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just thinking this is -- We've really addressed SG 1, and not SG 2, and would you want to specify it be specific to SG 1, since that's what's --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think they're wanting it for everything, based on that lengthy committee discussion about this. I'm thinking that they're wanting it for everything, but it's a good point.

Thank you for bringing that up and seeking clarity on that, and so it looked like, when I was looking around, heads nodding that they were thinking it applies to both permits, and just all snapper grouper commercial harvest is sold. Okay. All right. People are saying yes. Okay. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: **Then the one thing I would like to see added is sold to a permitted dealer.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'll consider that a friendly amendment. Charlie, are you good with that, as the motion maker? The seconder, Dewey, are you good with that? Okay. Shep, did you have your hand up?

MR. GRIMES: Yes, and thanks, Madam Chair. I can look for it in the regs, and I'm scrambling here, but I'm pretty sure that's already a requirement, that all commercial, licensed commercial, harvesters must sell to permitted dealers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that they're just trying to make sure everything is covered, as the language is prepared by staff, and so are you okay that that stays in the motion, Shep?

MR. GRIMES: (Mr. Grimes' comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Okay. Any more discussion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry, and this been mentioned, but, Mike, maybe work with Jessica Stephen, and she has some language from the Gulf, to ensure, you know, consistency.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? All right. **Any objection?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** The two other items that we had -- So we had an action in the document before that had to do with the commercial trip limit and possession requirements, and we thought that this extended beyond the Snapper Grouper FMP, that similar changes were needed for CMP and Dolphin Wahoo, and I just don't want to lose that, and what do we need to do here so that we ensure that that piece moves forward?

We were discussing how to do that, and so we're thinking that we would make a recommendation from the Snapper Grouper Committee that the Full Council consider exploring making this change across these three different FMPs, and is that what folks are thinking? Okay. I see heads nodding yes. All right. That needs to be a motion to do that. Okay. We're going to start typing a proposed motion. All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I think I'm just confused, and maybe I missed it and was having a side conversation, and did we agree that this needed to be a separate amendment for all three? I mean, we have a snapper grouper amendment going forward, and we are talking, later this week, about a potential dolphin wahoo amendment going forward, and we do know, on the horizon, there's a king mackerel amendment coming forward, and it seems inefficient, in my mind, to start a whole new amendment, with everything we have going on, and so that's my only concern about this, but Mike knows more than I know, and maybe there's a method to it.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess I'm trying to think through, right now, with the conversation that was had in April, how comfortable would you be with different implementation dates for these different

fisheries, where they can do -- You know, they're able to -- Snapper grouper is able to have flexibility for its trip limit to be considered in different ways, and, you know, like the whole like Sunday sale thing. People can do it for snapper grouper, but not CMP, and not dolphin wahoo at different times, versus do them all together at once.

I will also point out that you have added an action to this amendment, that's going out for public hearings following this meeting, and we're up to ten actions within this amendment, with one of them being like put in today, and so -- I'm just-- It's going to be very difficult for us to process these and get them done in the time that you all want them done, as far as having final action to go in December, and that's going to cut down the ability to like review things as you all are going through this process, but, if the direction is to put it in this amendment, then we will do what we need to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A couple things, and then I'll go back to Kerry, and then it looked like there was another hand over here. The problem originated in snapper grouper, did it not, and so I'm -- So part of me is thinking it needs to be fixed. I thought that the drop-off, the whole sale -- Yes, it is, and that's what this is.

MS. MARHEFKA: I guess I'm confused, and so the possession of -- This motion is meant to encompass the possession and sale requirements and the requirement to sell? So that's what I've missed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We already dispensed and passed the motion to sell. We're done, and that's already in the document.

MS. MARHEFKA: I missed that, and I'm sorry. I thought that that we were given advice to think about requiring that for those other two species as well, and I am so sorry. Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I mean, I think it does need to be done for those other species, but we'll cross that bridge, but this is also saying do we just want to do snapper grouper for this whole when is the fish sold, and when is the trip completed, all of that, and this is the Sunday sale issue, and so you have a couple options here.

You could make this recommendation that the Full Council start an amendment that does this across three different FMPs, or you could just put it in Amendment 60, fix it for snapper grouper, knowing that it needs to be fixed for these other species as it comes through, and, I mean, I think 6-7 here, and, I mean, but it started with a snapper grouper. It started with a snapper grouper issue. You're welcome. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. Well, I apologize for creating confusion. **In that case, with better clarification, I will make a motion to recommend the Full Council initiate an amendment that would modify the commercial trip limit and possession requirement for the Snapper Grouper, CMP, and Dolphin Wahoo Management Plans, and that that phrase that Jessica get just used is never said at this table again.** No, and I'm just kidding.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so seconded by Charlie. Under discussion, and does everybody understand what is happening here? Okay. This is the whole when does a trip end, and when is the fish sold, and what happens if the dealer is closed, and that's what this is. All right, and so this

would not be in Amendment 60. We're recommending that the council consider it in another large amendment that crosses multiple FMPs. Okay. All right. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.** Bob.

MR. BEAL: Now that that has passed, and I didn't want to say anything beforehand, but just a question for the group, or maybe a question for the states around the table. If CMP trip limits and possession limits are adjusted for Spanish mackerel, would that trigger the states coming to ASMFC and wanting to do something for fish harvested in state waters?

I'm not pushing for that, and the commission's plan has been to -- "Plan" is not the right word, but the commission's intent has been to follow this council on Spanish mackerel, and then sort of implement things that mirror what this council does in state waters, but just, I guess, a question to think about, and probably not answered today, but, if something comes out of that, should that, or could that, result in something that speeds up the plan at ASMFC to do something in state waters, I guess the question, which, again, doesn't have to be answered today, but should be considered.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Bob. The other item that we had, that the subcommittee talked about, was the speed at which framework, or abbreviated framework, actions occur. Mike, anything you want to bring out on that part from the subcommittee as well?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and so this stemmed from the adjustable trip limits discussion, and kind of going through all the steps of what it would take to have adjustable trip limits and the associated projection timelines that would need to be completed within a given year. The subcommittee pulled those out of Amendment 60, but stated that there was an intent to potentially look at other avenues for having a quicker process of changing trip limits.

It was also brought up that like this could be for either sector, and this could be for bag limits as well, and so the idea that was brought up had to do with revising the abbreviated framework procedures, or clarifying ways to use existing regular non-abbreviated framework procedures, to get these changes to go into place faster.

Right now, abbreviated framework procedures are only for changing catch levels. They're only for changing your ABC and your ACLs, and so those procedures would need to be -- If you wanted to use that mechanism to also change trip limits, or bag limits, you would have to change the abbreviated framework procedures themselves, that you would have to change the definition of what is allowed to be conducted through an abbreviated framework.

There also is, you know, kind of the question of why change abbreviated framework procedures, as opposed to use an existing framework, you know, kind of what the difference between those two processes would be, and what's the what's the difference in timeline, and we have had framework procedure, you know, framework amendments, be processed through from, you know, council initiation to completion -- I think we've done it as fast as three meetings.

Like Reg Amendment 37, from initiation to completion, or not completion, but council approval was three meetings, and so, if that is a timeline that is fast enough, then you all could just keep in mind using that framework procedure, and keeping the amendments, you know, that would be in that type of sped-up process relatively simple. If it's only a one or two-action framework amendment, then you can get it done in three meetings.

An abbreviated framework would potentially shorten that to -- I think that's a initiate at one meeting, and you go final at the next meeting, and so it's what's what is the difference to you between a two-meeting process or a three-meeting process, and it's just that three-meeting process would be you need to kind of keep that focus of we're not making this an expansive framework amendment with ten actions, and it would need to be, you know, fairly condensed, so that staff has enough time to develop that type of thing, and so I guess I turn it back to the committee to see what the comments are, what thoughts are, surrounding those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm looking to Andy or C.J. I swear that the Gulf does the two-meeting stop for abbreviated framework, and so that that shaves off -- Because there's only four meetings of the South Atlantic per year, and there's five meetings of the Gulf, and so it shaves off some time, but I also agree that Amendment 60 is not the vehicle for this, because you would want to revise all the things that you could do with abbreviated framework, and so you would want to do that for recreational and commercial, but C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: We've had -- At the Gulf Council, we've had two relatively recent actions using abbreviated frameworks, one for a lane snapper catch limit increase and another for the red grouper quota set-aside, and I think those were done across two meetings before the council went final.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, thoughts?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, it's a quick process, and I like, you know, how we've used it in the Gulf for very simplistic, straightforward actions. As C.J. mentioned, lane snapper was a catch limit increase. For the red grouper action, it was something that we needed to address as part of a set-aside for commercial red grouper quota. It's as simple as pretty much a letter, or a short, you know, document that the council reviews.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would be in favor of us, whether we need a motion or what, to suggest that the Full Council consider revising the abbreviated framework procedure, and listing out the things that can go through that process, because the subcommittee came to this discussion when they were talking about doing these temporary trip limits and realized there were issues with the data and other things, and then kind of came around to the discussion of, if we had this abbreviated framework, that there might be ways to do the same thing within the year that was intended with part of this amendment, but we took out all those actions.

I would like to see a motion, similar to that motion that we just made, that we would revise the abbreviated framework procedures, not just for Snapper Grouper, but across all the FMP's, so that it would allow things like trip limits, bag limits, and other things to come through the process faster, basically a two-meeting approval, as opposed to three. Okay. I see heads nodding yes. All right. Mike is going to write a motion, and then you all can decide what you want to do here.

All right. **I'm going to read the motion, if someone would like to make it after I read it, and this is recommend to the Full Council to initiate an amendment that would consider revision of abbreviated framework procedures to allow management measure measures such as trip limits and bag limits to be changed through the abbreviated framework process.** All right. Motion by Jimmy, and seconded by Kerry.

Mike forgot a word here. Hang tight. We forgot the three FMPs that we want to apply it to. Okay. **Just to read that one more time, to recommend to the Full Council to initiate an amendment that would consider revision of abbreviated framework procedures for the Snapper Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, and Dolphin Wahoo Management Plans to allow management measures such as trip limits and bag limits to be changed through the abbreviated framework process.** All right. The motion has been made and seconded. Under discussion. Over to Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just spoke with Christina, who reminded me that, if we were to include CMP with this, it would have to be a full plan amendment to go through the Gulf. We can't change the framework procedures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We captured that. All right. Under discussion. Are we good with this being across all three FMPs? I see folks nodding yes, or we could just make it for Snapper Grouper, and so I'm just looking around the table, to see what people think here. I think we're good, but Jimmy.

MR. HULL: No, and it's a good move, because we need to get these decisions fast, and this is a way to do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just in relation to my last comment, I just want to say, Jimmy, I agree with you. We need to speed up some of these decisions, and I just want to make sure that it didn't sound like I was opposed to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that clarification. All right. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, just to wrap up Amendment 60, we're going to go take another look at the timeline, and so that's included in your document, towards the end. Today, you have the consideration -- Or this week you have the consideration of approval for public hearings. We would hold public hearings in the summer, probably closer to the September meeting, just so that we have enough time to incorporate the changes that have been made today and to get the analyses, the analysis portion of the report, where it needs to be before we release those.

We will need a motion to approve this amendment for public hearings, and, following that motion, if you have any guidance on, you know, kind of the format that you would like to see, or, if you have specific timing that you would prefer for the public hearings to be held, then you can give that direction at that point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. First, we need a motion to approve this document, Amendment 60, for public hearings. Would someone like to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we approve Draft Amendment 60 for public hearings.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Motion by Kerry, and seconded by Charlie. Any further discussion? **Any objection?** All right. I'm going to turn it back to the committee to talk about how you want to do this. We have had some discussion about this in the past, and I'm looking at Kerry, about how to do the public hearings. Are they webinar, or are they in-person, or is it a combo? Let's have some discussion on that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I wasn't going to say anything, and you guys know what I'm going to say. This is -- I just want to have some rationale for my very strong feelings that there needs to be in-person public hearings for this, and both. It can be webinar and in -- There needs to be some in-person public hearings for this, and I would like to point out that, the fishermen that are affected by the two-for-one, a lot of these fishermen -- You can laugh all you want, but are at the age where they are not as comfortable on webinar as they are showing up in person.

There are people that used to come in person all the time, that I'm now not seeing on webinars, and that might be for other reasons, but I feel strongly that it's -- That we make some effort to have some in-person public meetings. if possible, and I'll shut up, and, if you guys don't want it, that's okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm looking back to Kerry and Amy, and didn't we have this discussion at the AP meeting, and I can't remember the specifics, and I was asking Mike, and he couldn't remember either, and can you refresh my memory on what the AP said?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, we did, and I think that they actually -- That particular group of people is fine with webinar. They're used to it, and my argument is -- Not that they're wrong, and I think all those people are, and I think there's an entire cohort of people, that don't sit at that table, that are not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Carolyn, and then Charlie.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I just -- I want to second that with Kerry. I mean, I think it is one of those things that you start losing people after a while, when they don't feel that they have the ability to talk to an individual, and that's happening across not just our fisheries stuff, and it's -- You know, whether it's tele-med, and, if you pick it, a lot of people are getting frustrated because they don't have that interaction and build of trust with a person, because they're constantly interacting with an AI voice telling them to pick a number, and it starts shutting them down over time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie, and then Amy.

MR. PHILLIPS: They nailed it. I've always been a talk-to-you person, and so, yes, I ditto. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Amy, and then Trish, and then, if we're going to do in-person, think about where, and so we need you to throw out some places. Okay.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'll jump on the bandwagon. The folks at the AP meeting have already provided their comments, and they are very technical savvy, but they're involved in the process, and so there's a whole group of fishermen who haven't had a voice yet, and those are the ones that are going to need to have some in-person attention.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have Trish, then Dewey, then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, I mean, I feel -- I agree with what's been said before, as far as just having them in-person. This one I think is kind of a big deal, right, and it's going to impact a lot of folks, and, just to suggest when and where, what did we do with red snapper, because that was pretty -- That was pretty --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't even remember how many of them there were.

MS. MURPHEY: Anyway, just thinking that we could see what we did there, and build from there, maybe.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got Dewey, Tom, and then back to Kerry.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do you think it would be good for maybe staff to make a video, because, you know, there's the ones that might not watch the video, but then there's a lot that would, to get an understanding to see how they -- If they want to attend, or if they want to call in, if there's going to be something, and I think the staff has done an excellent job, the few times they've made a video, explaining something, and so that might be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got that. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: It's a good idea, Dewey, and I agree with you. I just want to, you know, voice support, and I think, as we look at how we hold public hearings in the future, this is one of these issues that needs to be in-person. This is a big action, and it's going to have huge implications across the commercial industry, and really across anyone who engages in the grouper snapper fishery in all of our communities, and so I think having it in-person is a really important thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you.

MR. ROLLER: I am not ready to suggest areas, but, you know, across the -- You know, I'm hopeful that we'll have them across the states.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'll go to Kerry, and then Mike has got some ideas, and then over to Jimmy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I'm going to fall back onto how it was done for a very long time, which is a minimum of two per state, and I realize that's a lot, and so I'm going to ask for the world, and expect that we might not end up there, and so I think you have to do something that is accessible to the Outer Banks guys, and then something in southern North Carolina, which also helps cover the northern North -- Depending on what you choose, the northern North Carolina guys, or, I mean, the northern South Carolina guys.

I think Charleston is fine for South Carolina, and I think then you go to one in Georgia, maybe at Brunswick or Savannah, and then can weigh-in, and then I think the big decision is deciding how you break up Florida. There have been times that we did three in Florida, and, you know, since it's been a while that we've done them, I'll remind everyone that usually it does require -- You

know, a council member shows up to run the -- You know, is really running things, supporting staff, but like taking the -- You know, taking the yelling, if there is, but, you know, yes, in a perfect world, it would be three Florida, one Georgia, one or two in South Carolina, and two or three in North Carolina, depending on where you space them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Got it. Mike, and then Jimmy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Trying to think through the timing, and being able to get the document to the place where it can be released, and where we have enough time to hold this many hearings, that would push us into -- Like it's going to be in August. It would absolutely be in August, and it's going to be very close to, you know, deadlines things like that related to the council meeting, and so it's going to be like the back-end of August, is what we would potentially do, but we -- We would need to kind of hustle to be able to find venues and such.

Those are just some of the thoughts that are going in my head, and we may need to, you know, have conversations in between now and Full Council to figure out the logistics of how we can make this work, but thanks, Kerry, for throwing out some of those locations, so that we at least have, you know, something to work on in between now and when we come back to this on Friday.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay We've got more hands. I've got Jimmy, then Carolyn, and then Andy.

MR. HULL: I'm pretty sure we have data that shows where most of these permits, the communities are in, and I would look at that and say, well, if there's a big clump in this area, we definitely need to go there, no matter what state it's in.

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

DR. BELCHER: I was just going to offer, in talking with Charlie too, is there's no reason -- Depending on where you pick South Carolina and northeast Florida, we can easily get people -- You don't have to spend time finding a venue in Georgia, and we can go north or south.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That was helpful. Andy.

MS. STRELCHECK: Well, I recognize North Charleston for the council meeting isn't the same as, you know, having a hearing someplace else, but, the fact that we're going to be in Charleston in September, you could potentially eliminate that as one of the hearing locations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That's good. Anybody else want to weigh-in on that? Otherwise, staff will come back with some ideas at Full Council. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, I have no concerns with having the in-person hearings. I think, you know, the one thing to keep in mind is the logistics in finding the time to do like eight of them, and that's two weeks on the road for Mike, we also have to allow for September briefing book stuff being due the last week of August, factoring that into there, and getting things from this for you, and then, you know, I think that's probably why, when we did a lot more public hearings, it was pretty rare to, you know, approve the document like at this meeting and then do the public hearings for the next meeting.

There was usually more time, but I think we can certainly try to get this in there. I would say that, you folks with the states, you know, be very prompt when we reach out for locations, and schedules, and who is available, because, you know, if we're going to do these in mid-August, we're going to be putting out a Federal Register notice, you know, in about three weeks, and so there's going to be a quick turnaround.

Then I think, also, logistically, we would probably do this, again, the old-fashioned way, where staff, Mike, would give a presentation, you know, and we're going to start the hearing at seven o'clock, and Mike is going to give a presentation, and then people are going to go and speak to the council member, whether it's in the same place or whatever, and I don't envision us doing like, you know, multiple presentations and stuff, because that's tougher, because that's potentially multiple spaces, and all of that thing, and so I'm just really thinking of, you know, really how we did them in the past, and I think we can probably pull that off.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Dewey, did you have something?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was just wondering if you think you'll be able to do a video, because I'm just thinking out loud about the northern Outer Banks, and I don't know if we need a meeting there. I'm just -- You know, if had a video that was made that I could go give out, and then Judd, or somebody -- You know, I'm thinking like Morehead and south, because I'm just trying to think about the players around, and what's going on, but I think a good video, like Mike has done before, explaining something could go a long way to helping. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess that's what I was thinking, is what did we do when we did Amendment 35, because that was pretty widespread, those -- I remember you came to Morehead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Reg Amendment 35, we traveled, and I did presentations at each of the locations. I think that we can potentially work a bit more efficiently than that process though, and, if people are comfortable with it, and especially if the state agencies are comfortable with hosting these things, then I will --

You know, I'm going to make a video for us to post on the website, and, if you all wanted to host public hearings, where you played the presentation video, you know, I can make myself available via, you know, webinar, or something like that, to be able to help answer questions live, but that may be a way that we're able to do this where I'm not traveling to all of the locations, but you get the information, and you get the presentation that I would normally give. I don't know, for all of you, how important it is that I'm there, versus you as council members are there, but, yes, I would certainly throw that out as an option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we're good for now. I'm looking at our chair, but I think we're going to conclude for today. We are on track here, and we will pick back up in the morning, at 8:30, with the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision, Amendment 61. All right, Trish, and I'm going to pass it back to you.

MS. MURPHEY: If everybody is good with that, we'll just go ahead and adjourn now, because there's nothing we can really pick up, and so we'll see you all at 8:30 in the morning, and so thank you, all.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 9, 2026.)

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JUNE 10, 2026

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the World Gold Renaissance in St. Augustine, Florida, on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Good morning, everybody. We are going to get started back with the Snapper Grouper Committee, and I will turn it over to our Snapper Grouper Committee chair, and we'll go on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so we are going to dive into the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit Revision, Amendment 61, and I'll look over to John Hadley. I'm thinking, because you have Haley up here, that you're going to want to do the AP comments first, but I'll turn it over to you, John.

MR. HADLEY: Yes. Thank you, and so I just wanted to remind everyone just kind of quickly -- Give a quick overview of Amendment 61, and then I was going to hand it over to Haley for the AP comments, and so, just as a quick reminder for this amendment, this is the amendment that's looking at fourteen species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Unit and whether or not those species need to -- Sort of three options are stay as-is, and so under federal conservation and management, or potentially could be removed from the fishery management plan, or designated as an ecosystem component species, and so those are the three high-level options that the council is examining for those fourteen species.

The AP had a chance to review this for the second time. They provided some additional input from the last time you saw this. I'm going to switch the display settings here. Haley is here to provide an overview of the additional comments that the AP provided when they discussed this at their fall meeting, and so, without further ado, Haley, I'll hand it over to you.

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, John. Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. Thank you again for having me back today. We are going to dive into Amendment 61, the FMU revision. Just a few highlights, and here are some additional details in the full report. AP members updated the recommendation for species being considered in this amendment. There's going to be a table there on the next slide.

An AP member noted misty grouper should remain status quo, a long-lived species, and the Amendment 14 MPAs were set up to protect long-lived deepwater species, specifically including misty grouper. The starting point for a potential bag/trip limit seems fairly high, but we're looking forward to seeing additional analysis in the future, and, as I mentioned, there's some specific discussions about spadefish and grunts detailed in the full AP report.

This is a very nice table put together by staff. We really appreciate how they did this, to lay it out and make it very straightforward, and so, generally speaking, the AP felt that the porgies should remain status quo, keep those all kind of together. Again, those notes about the misty grouper and blackfin snapper. Bar jack, we felt it could go either way, kind of remove it from the FMP altogether or move it to the ecosystem, with permit and reporting, and then, those following species below, there was a general consensus that we would be comfortable moving it to the ecosystem base.

The way we kind of viewed the ecosystem base is we sort of thought of it as like a mother-in-law house, right, and so we're not fully kicking grandma out to live on her own, but we're kind of keeping her in the backyard, where we can keep tabs on her, and we can keep those reports coming in. I know a lot of fishermen, the commercial and headboat fishery, we report all of the species that we interact with, and so that would be a way to continue gathering data, but also keep it in a flexible management with the ecosystem-based components.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and that was a summary of the AP report on this item. I don't know if there are any questions for Haley?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions at this time? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Haley, and sorry that I haven't had a chance to look fully through the AP report. I guess I'm still struggling with a species like white grunt, which is one of our top-landed species for headboats, and even some charters, and then so the interest in moving to ecosystem component, and yet, for status quo management, keeping all these porgies, which are not easily targeted, in most instances, and we don't do a lot of regulatory work on those species, and so just curious about the rationale between those.

MS. STEPHENS: That's a great question, Andy. Thank you for that. Thinking back to our AP discussions, I think we struggled slightly, as maybe previous discussions with the council have as well, as we try to navigate these recommendations. It's a little bit difficult to understand what the potential repercussions would be if we remove species. On the flip side of that, it's difficult to fully understand what the potential repercussions could be if we keep it status quo, and so, with the information that we've been given, we did our very best to navigate it, and this is what we came up with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Haley. You know, looking at this holistically, my big takeaway is that, between the conversation of the council, as well as the AP is about the only consensus we have is bar jack, but my question was, specifically, you know, when I look at the ecosystem component species that you recommended, the one that stands out to me is sand tilefish, because

that's a deepwater species. Did you specifically talk about that at all? If so, could you touch on it?

MS. STEPHENS: Thank you, Tom. I don't think that folks on the AP interacted a lot with sand tilefish, and so there wasn't really strong feelings to keep it one way or the other. We -- Given that it's not hugely interacted with, we felt comfortable saying, hey, you know, maybe move it to that mother-in-law house, and we'll keep an eye on it, but we're not seeing huge harvests of those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other comments or questions? All right. Thank you, Haley.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I will jump over to the decision document here. Give me just a second to bring that up on the screen, but what I was going to do is provide some additional background information for the committee, and just remind you of the discussion from the last meeting, and just to bring everybody up to speed.

If you recall, in March, the committee provided several pieces of direction to staff for this. I just wanted to go over those really quickly, because it leads to what we'll discuss later in the meeting, the number of species that are in the amendment.

If you recall, the committee went over the full list of seventeen species, and had a very productive discussion on, you know, how do we potentially want to structure this amendment, and the different actions, as far as which species may be considered for removal, which species may be considered for ecosystem component species designation, and alternative management, and which species do you not necessarily want to consider in the amendment anymore, and so those species were brought out of the amendment and will remain under status quo management as of now.

Generally speaking, the three species that you identified for potential removal from the fishery management unit, and so you've got to think of these as removing them totally from the fishery management plan, are bar jack, misty grouper, and spadefish. Again, you'll see this structured differently in Action 1, draft Action 1, but that's why those species are in that action, because they were identified by the committee.

Moving over to ecosystem component species, you identified the other porgies complex, the grunts complex, and the deepwater complex, as well as spadefish, as potential candidates for ecosystem component species. Within that, you wanted to maintain flexibility to perhaps identify one species or another, and either pull it out or include it, and so you'll see the way that that's set up in draft Action 2 relates back to this guidance.

For example, for the other porgies complex, you wanted the option of only including scup as ecosystem component species, or perhaps the whole complex, and so that's why that action is set up the way it is, but, generally speaking, these are the list of species that are potentially being considered for ecosystem component species designation.

Last, but not least, you noted that you no longer wanted to consider cubera snapper, queen snapper, and banded rudderfish in this amendment, and so that's why you won't be seeing these species any more mentioned, because -- That shrunk the list of species being considered in Amendment 61 from seventeen down to fourteen species.

Moving down in the decision document, there's a table, and you've seen this before. This has been updated with the revised list of species, but, as a reminder, several of these species that you are considering are part of complexes, and so Atlantic spadefish and bar jack have their own annual catch limits. They're not part of a complex, but misty grouper, sand tilefish, and blackfin snapper are part of the deepwater complex, and then the other porgies complex is included there, as well as the grunts complex, and so you're thinking of the -- You're potentially examining the whole other porgies and the whole grunts complex. However, for the deepwater complex, you're only examining a handful of species, and not the whole complex.

If, for example, and I'll take from the top of the list there. Misty grouper, if that species is either removed, or designated as ecosystem component species, to revise the deepwater complex annual catch limit, it's a simple arithmetic, and so you would pull that ACL out of the total ACL, recalculate, and that would be your new total ACL for the species that remain in the deepwater complex. A fairly simple exercise there.

Moving down, the AP feedback and recommendations were just reviewed, and so I won't go over those necessarily now, but I wanted to go over some potential amendment timeline and bring up a potential question for the committee, and it's probably better to answer at the end of this discussion, but, as you can see in front of you, there's the potential timeline for the amendment.

As it stands now on the council's workplan, this amendment would be up for approval for public hearings at your next meeting in September. If that were to take place, you would have public hearings in the fall, you would review those public hearings in December, and the amendment would be up for potential approval, a final vote, by the council in March of 2027.

Generally speaking, and, again, this is something that, you know, may be better discussed at the end, but the IPT has discussed some of this timeline. If possible, if amenable to the committee, we felt it would be beneficial to allow a little bit of additional time to develop the amendment towards approval for public hearings in December, but still maintain that March 2027 deadline.

That's something that, again, we probably need to go through the whole amendment, so you can see the whole pie, so to speak, and, you know, we can come back to that. There's an item at the very end of the decision document to come back for that specific guidance, but I wanted to put that out there now.

As far as the objectives for the meeting, and then I'll pause for any questions, we reviewed the AP comments, and we'll go over a revised purpose and needs statement, and so that is intended to incorporate some feedback that you provided in March. We'll go over the draft actions and alternatives. This is the first time you really had a chance to see the draft actions and alternatives sort of written out, and so we'll ask for feedback on that, and then, finally, ask for feedback on timing of how you would like to see this amendment develop. Any questions before I get to the draft purpose and need?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go back a little bit, to sort why the council wants to do this, and the benefit, I guess, of the ecosystem component species designation, and we've kind of touched on this stuff before, but, you know, and, as Haley said, you know, the AP

wanting to keep the ecosystem components there so you can collect data and keep an eye on it, and, you know, I guess we've recognize that, and we've talked about that, but, in the background section, it also mentions that the council has directed staff to develop an annual report, or a report of annual landings of all unmanaged species, including ecosystem component species, suggesting that there is some source of information, regardless of whether we manage them, that indicates what landings are.

We're already getting that, I presume, at least on some level, and you referenced the -- Or the document referenced the Mid-Atlantic unmanaged landings reports, and provides a link to those, and so I went to look at those, and those are similarly -- The information is collected from the dealer, right, and so all this -- You know, all this harvest information is already being collected, regardless of whether it's collected from a permitted fisherman or, you know, a permitted, actively-managed fishery, and so it just seems, to me, that there's some question about what additional information you're actually going to get that you aren't already getting, or isn't already available, and I just wanted to point that out. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Charlie.

MS. MARHEFKA: If I understand your question correctly, yes, the information is already being collected. It is not being presented to us in the same format that we see at the Mid, and that's what we would like.

MR. GRIMES: Well, then what is the benefit of keeping -- Or designating them as an ecosystem component species? So you can continue to collect information that you will continue to get, regardless of whether you designate them as ecosystem component or remove them from the FMP altogether, because those unmanaged species are already monitored, or landings are monitored.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To that, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I don't know, John, if you can scroll back up to the designations. In my mind, one of the things this body has talked about a lot is that we feel very strongly that, because this is a multispecies fishery, and these fish coexist with fish we manage, that effort matters, that you can't increase effort on these species, and so we feel very strongly that you need to have a permit for these species, and so, in my mind, that's what I'm thinking.

I don't know if that answers your question, but there has been -- All of us that are talking to people, stakeholders, there's a lot of interest in sort of, if we remove these from the FMP, and you no longer require a permit for them, we've been told there will be effort. There will be total new entrants to go catch these species, which would be fine if they were single stocks, and they were out there on their own, but they're not, because when they're catching these species, they are interacting with the species we do manage, and so we still want to contain effort on these species. That's how I see it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I guess, kind of back to Andy's point, why do we have all the porgies in there? We don't have the margates in there, and I would like -- Maybe to refresh my memory, give me some clarification on, if we move them from status quo to ecosystem,

is it really going to help lower the workload in your shop, or do we need to do something else? If we're just moving them from one column to another, but everybody is still going to do the same amount of work, kind of what's the point?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, and then Tom.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I would look at it more than just workload, right, and so what our charge is here is whether or not the species are in need of conservation and management, right, and so we should look holistically. There are ten factors that are laid out in the National Standards, that we've already walked through, but, as we consider whether to retain a species under status quo, or move them to ecosystem component, or move them to ecosystem component with some other, I'll say, minimal regulatory requirements, I think we need to keep that in mind.

Then are there other ways that these fisheries would be managed, right, at the state level, if these are largely primarily state-caught species, as well as just thinking -- I guess the way I think about it as well is what have we done to manage these species to this point, right, and so, kind of getting back to your point, well, if you take that as the bar, then a lot of these species we shouldn't be moving out of the FMP, because we're not doing anything with them, but that also begs the question then of are they in need of conservation and management, if we're not managing them in the first place, right, and so it's kind of a circular argument, but I think, holistically, we need to kind of take a look at these species from that vantage point, and really consider if they are in need of conservation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. While I remain entirely opposed to the exercise of pursuing this amendment, I do want to go back to the conversation between Shep and Kerry and when we were discussing ecosystem component species. My understanding is, you know, there is a difference between unmanaged species and ecosystem component species, being that, if it's an ecosystem component species, at least we can have some sort of limit on them, while the bar for what that looks like is a discussion we have had previous.

Now, I've said this before, and I'll go to Andy's comment, where he mentioned the holistic aspect of this, and I don't view these species like I do our other managed species. Our snapper grouper complex is very different. We talk a lot about holistic management here, and I don't believe that we can effectively manage a lot of these other species unless we look at these co-occurring species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I guess we keep moving through the document.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so, moving into the document, we're going to start with the purpose and need statements, and so there's two versions here, and, rather than provide a marked-up version, because there are a lot of edits, I just decided to provide the previous version, which is what you saw in March, with the IPT-revised version, and so, in yellow, you have the previous version, and this is the old version, if you will. In green, this is the revised version.

As a reminder, when the committee and council discussed this in March, you provided guidance to add a discussion on managed species with the resources that are available and further edit the

need statement to include topics in addition to the executive order. Also, incorporate discussion of agency funding priorities and narrowing the scope of species that are managed.

The IPT discussed this during their meeting, after the council's March meeting, and came up with the revised wording here in green. You have it in front of you there, but happy to basically, you know, answer any questions on some of the changes, but the idea here was trying to incorporate that guidance from the committee, and, you know, turning it back over to the committee for discussion on the revised purpose and need.

If this -- You know, we're happy to make edits, but also looking at trying to move this from a draft purpose and need to a non-draft purpose and need, and so, at the very end of the discussion, looking for approval of the purpose and need statements, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the draft purpose for the action, Amendment 61 is to evaluate the removal of select species from management and designate additional ecosystem component species. Can we add "evaluate" to the designation part, right, and instead of -- Like we're evaluating whether to remove them, but we know we're going to designate EC species, and so it seems like it should be the same, to evaluate the designation of additional ecosystem component species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more suggestions? Would someone like to make a motion to approve the revised purpose and need statements?

MR. STRELCHECK: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Charlie. Under discussion. Any other edits to these new statements? **Any objection to this motion? Any abstentions?** All right. **The motion carries with one objection and no abstentions.**

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you and so, with that, we'll jump into the draft actions and alternatives, and, as I mentioned, you know, this is the first time that the committee has really had a chance to look at this in, you know, full action and alternative form, and so, with that, looking for your -- You know, we've kind of looked at it from a subject matter perspective, rather than laying out all the actions in the amendment, and so, with that, looking for your feedback on the following actions.

You'll see we'll start off with a potential -- You know, I'll kind of give a high-level overview. Action 1 looks at removing species from the FMP. Action 2 looks at designated ecosystem component species within the FMP, and then Actions 3 through 5 look at how you want to -- Or potential additional items that go along with ecosystem component species designation, and so that's, you know, a high-level look at it. We'll get into it in more details, but we'll start off with Action 1.

This would remove species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and also adjust annual catch limits accordingly, and, as mentioned, you had -- In March you identified bar jack, misty grouper, and Atlantic spadefish as potential candidates for removal from the fishery management plan, and so you can see, in Alternative 2 there, remove one or more species from the following list of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and adjust the remaining annual catch limits as appropriate, and so there's subalternatives, one for bar jack, one for misty grouper, and one for Atlantic spadefish.

As noted earlier in the AP comments, the AP felt that misty grouper should remain status quo. We went over that earlier. The AP felt that bar jack could either be removed from the FMP, or designated as an EC species, and also felt that spadefish could be designated as an EC species, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the committee for discussion on this action and range of alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: One question I have in this list of removals with the bar jack, misty grouper, and Atlantic spadefish, is are they there to generate more comment from the public, because, in my mind, listening to the AP and their concerns, I would not have that as removed, and, Atlantic spadefish, it concerns me that we're having that listed as a complete removal.

I guess my -- I disagree with having them removed, but, if the point is to generate more discussion from the public, I understand leaving it there, and so I guess my question is, is it to generate more public, or, you know is this how this committee feels, because I just -- I can't support the misty grouper and the Atlantic spadefish there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This is the first time we're seeing the actions written out, and so this was based on the discussion at the last meeting, you know, and, since then, the AP has met, et cetera. Based on this timeline, we would see the document one more time before it would go out to public hearing. That was one question. My second question is, could you -- Like Trish is saying, could you have species that are in different lists, and like so could Atlantic spadefish be in the removal action and in the ecosystem component action? Can you speak to that?

MR. HADLEY: Yes. Absolutely, and so you will see some repeats here, and so that's -- That is part of that, that they could be either removed, which would be Action 1, or they could be designated as ecosystem component species in Action 2, and so presumably -- Say the council wants to designate Atlantic spadefish as an ecosystem component species, and you just wouldn't select them. You wouldn't select Subalternative 2c in Action 1, and you would select the appropriate subalternative in Action 2, and so that would be sort of the mechanism for where you may want to designate them.

As far as the point about how many times the committee will be able to see this, if you want it, if you still want to approve it, you know, we can make that happen, but, if you still want to approve it in September, that would be your last look before it goes out to public hearings. If you're willing to wait till December, you could have a full look at it in September, and then the public hearing document ready to go in December.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Trish. Did you have another point?

MS. MURPHEY: I don't really have another point, and, since we will get another look at that, maybe this is not -- You know, I guess it's up to the rest of the committee, how they feel about that, but, me, I just feel like -- I know we're not picking -- We're not picking preferreds yet, right? Okay, and so -- But my point is, you know, to me, I don't like this alternative, where this is, and so, I mean, I would drop misty grouper and Atlantic spadefish from this going forward, but if it, again, is just to generate more comments, and we can discuss it and make preferred options next meeting, fine, but I just don't support 2b and 2c.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. We have other hands up, and maybe this is what Andy was going to speak to, and so I guess I would just kind of go back to why we embarked on this amendment in the first place, which was to consider the amount of data that we have on these species, but it's not just the amount of data, and it's these complex -- Complexes of quotas, those types of things, and how the species got into the FMP in the first place, and whether or not it's really in need of federal management, because, these species that we're having the conversation about, after looking at the data, it's like they're not really getting active federal management right now.

I guess I would just -- You know, we put misty grouper in there, and I did listen to the AP discussion, but we put misty grouper in there, and I want to say the quotas like four-hundred-and-something pounds, and, looking at the data, it looked like they were never landed. In concept, I agree that having a grouper, and removing it from the FMP, is just -- It's confusing, but, based on the data, that's where we got to. Andy, then Tom, then Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so, obviously, we're not selecting preferreds, but, when we get to the point of selecting preferreds, we can discuss whether we want to select all of these as preferreds, or some of these, or none of these as preferreds, and so we'll have that option.

I think the other key to this action though is we're at least building a record at a prior meeting, and providing some rationale as to why we thought these species should be considered for removal, right? If that's evolving, and changing, then we need to think about that as well from an action standpoint, because it does look a little awkward if you have just these three species hanging out there, and we're saying these are in need of removal, or we're leaving all these others for further actions down the road, right, and so I'm fine with kind of the approach, and the range of alternatives that we have here for now, but this may need to evolve over time, based on further rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, let me make sure I understand what you're saying. Are you also saying these thirteen species, and it was seventeen, and now we're at thirteen, that every single one of them should be listed under each of the actions, like under the removal action, and also under the ecosystem component action? You're saying that all species being considered for some sort of change need to be under every action?

MR. STRELCHECK: No, and I'm not suggesting that. I'm just saying that I think we have to have very clear rationale as to why some species, for example, here would be listed on the removal action, and others wouldn't, right, and I think we had built some of that rationale already, at a previous meeting, but, as we have further discussions, the record, obviously, changes, or evolves, and so we just need to keep that in mind if we need to update or modify these alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Got it. Tom, and then Kerry.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and that's kind of where I was. I think Andy kind of touched on it, and it's just the fact that they're standing out here alone, is where I had a little bit of an issue with it, but, you know, I appreciate your answer on this, John. I think you explained it really well, but I am also going to use this opportunity to say -- To thank Trish for her comments, and say how much I agree with you, and I'm adamantly opposed to the removal of misty grouper and Atlantic spadefish in any capacity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I just wanted to remind everyone what some of the rationale was for these species. For misty grouper, we had a really well-thought-out letter from Ben Hardig, who I personally trust with my life, and is very smart on these species, and he pointed out the misty grouper actually is not a South Atlantic population. The misty grouper that show up here are coming, I believe, from the Caribbean, or the Bahamas, and we don't even have our own population, and so that's one of the reasons that was in there.

It does give me pause in that -- I don't fish down here, or aren't familiar, but I assume there's some cohabitating groupers with them, and so, you know, the discard mortality issue does worry me a little with that fish, but I don't think we can manage that fish. It's not really ours to manage. It shows up randomly, and then, Atlantic spadefish, my understanding is the support for doing that was that they're likely mostly caught in state waters, and that the states would consider looking at that, but that's my understanding of South Carolina, and maybe it's different where you guys are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I saw a hand up. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I'm going to go back kind of to my last comment and touch on what Kerry said, if we were kind of revisiting some of that rationale, and, yes, I, obviously, respect Ben Hardig a lot. He's an absolute resource on all these fisheries, though I will say that I'm not sure how much past speculation it is that that fish, this misty grouper, is just in fact, you know, larval drift. I am concerned with this very deepwater species, because I am seeing a lot of social media videos pop up in North Carolina, as well as off the Florida Keys.

We did have a fisherman in the audience, at the last meeting, who spoke to several of us about how there are directed fisheries for these fish off the Florida Keys. They're in very deep water, and I'm just, obviously, concerned about co-occurrence with other species, and, as far as Atlantic spadefish, you know, I do -- I hear the rationale from South Carolina, but I would point out that, you know, this is a very common species in North Carolina. There's a growing fishery for them, and I have been through the rigmarole of managing new species in North Carolina, and it is extremely difficult, and I do not want to try to face that again, unless it's absolutely necessary, and I believe the place for this species here is in this complex.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. We have some data, but I was going to look to C.J., since you're in the Keys. Do we have a directed fishery for misty grouper?

DR. SWEETMAN: Not that I am aware of. I mean, a lot of these deepwater fisheries, it's kind of a multispecies thing, and misty grouper are extremely rare.

MR. HADLEY: We were kind of having a little bit of discussion here. There's some trip level analysis further down in the document, and this was intended to play in the discussion of potential trip limits, but, you know, since this has come up a few times, I thought I might jump down in the decision document and just go over a few of the items.

You know, we can come back to this later, but just, you know, I wanted to go over this very quickly right now, just to show that there is some information on how these species are interacted with with the commercial and recreational fisheries. This analysis is what was provided. There's a full analysis in the appendices to this decision document, but I pulled a few figures from that analysis up into the decision document, and so I'll run through these really quickly, because it sounds like they may play into the discussion for Action 1 and Action 2.

Generally speaking, we'll start off with the commercial trip level analysis. The majority of these trips harvested less than 100 pounds of each one of these species per trip, and so several species were rarely harvested by the commercial fishery, and so that was less than 100 trips interacted with these, with some of these species, from -- The time series that was examined was the 2020 through 2024 logbook data, but, generally speaking, Atlantic spadefish, bar jack, misty grouper, scup, sailor's choice, and tomtate had a fairly rare occurrence on a trip level in the commercial fishery, and there were no recent commercial harvests of saucereye porgy.

There's several figures here that, if you wanted to examine a specific species, it shows the distribution of catches by landings bins, and so, for Atlantic spadefish for example, it's zero to 100, 100 to 200 pounds, and so on, and so that's included for each one of the fourteen species, or, well, in this case, it would be thirteen, since there were no landings of saucereye porgy, but, anyway, that information is there for you to see.

It kind of shows how, again, how the commercial fishery interacts with some of these species, as far as how many trips interacted with those species, and then, on those trips where that species was landed, from a poundage perspective, how many -- What were the landings on a trip level, and so, you know, I'll bring up misty grouper here, since those were the -- Well, I'll go over -- I'll tell you what. I'll go over the three species that we just examined.

Atlantic spadefish, you have the distribution there of ninety-six trips interacted with the species. Moving down to bar jack, you had eighty-six trips total that interacted with the species, and so a fairly rare occurrence, and landings tended to be fairly low, and then, for misty grouper, you had sixteen trips total from 2020 through 2024 that interacted with misty grouper.

I'm going to skip down to the next series, and so this is information that was provided, and so what this shows the recreational fishery, and so the previous graphs, or figures, showed the commercial fishery. This is focusing on what exists in the MRIP dataset and the headboat dataset from the recreational perspective.

This figure here, Figure 14, shows the distribution of landings for spadefish and bar jack. 429 trips interacted were intercepted and interacted with Atlantic spadefish, and 149 trips interacted with bar jack, and, again, this is from the MRIP dataset and the headboat logbook dataset. You can see that, as far as the distributions of landings per person, landings tended to be, in most cases, one fish per person, for both of those species.

Moving down, looking at the deepwater complex, you can see misty grouper, and that had two trips in that dataset and that was one fish per person, and I'll not go further because I'll just -- Again, focusing on those three species, but I wanted to bring that up, because it has been brought up by several council members, and I didn't want to bring it up later in the conversation and say, why didn't you bring this to our attention when we were discussing it, and so that's why I thought I would go ahead and jump down to these figures, but I will hand it back over to the committee for further discussion, and I just wanted to note that that information is in your decision document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think we just circled back around to what Trish said at the beginning, which is let's not choose a preferred, and let's hear what the public says.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm good with that, but kind of the way we're discussing it is also giving me some ideas on future actions, making sure that maybe those species are repeated in other actions, I guess is what -- Is how I would do it, and so do you mind going on to the next action, John?

MR. HADLEY: Absolutely, and so Action 2 shows -- It is designated ecosystem component species within the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and so this action is necessary to add additional species. One thing I did want to remind you of, because it will come up in the next action, is that there are five existing ecosystem component species within the Snapper Grouper FMP. Those species are bank sea bass, cottonwick, longspine porky, ocean triggerfish, and rock sea bass.

Essentially, this action would be adding to that list of existing ecosystem component species, and so, the way that this is broken up, the alternatives look at the different complexes, and then those specific species that are not within a complex, and so Alternative 2 focuses on the other porgies complex, and so this alternative would designate the other porgies complex as ecosystem component species within the Snapper Grouper FMP. Within that, there are several alternatives that list each species within the other porgies complex.

You know, we're not asking for preferreds today. We're looking for are you comfortable with your range of alternatives, but, to give an example, the committee could simply choose -- Once we get to that point, either in September or December, if the committee says, yes, that sounds great, and we're going to make the other porgies complex ecosystem component species, and, in that case, you could just select Preferred Alternative 2, if you were good with all of the species.

If not, then you could just say we really want to select jolthead porgy as an ecosystem component species, and keep the other porgies under management. In this case, you would select Alternative 2 and Subalternative 2a, and so that would just select that one species.

The point I'm trying to get at is this is trying -- The way that this is structured, it's intended to maintain that flexibility that you provided guidance on in March to either select the whole complex or specific species within that complex, and so that's why it's structured that way.

Alternative 2 focuses on the other porgy's complex. Alternative 3 looks at the grunts complex, and you'll see the subalternatives list the species that fall within the grunts complex. Alternative

4 examines the deepwater complex, and so, in this case, you're looking at these three species within the deepwater complex as potential candidates for ecosystem component species designation, and then Alternative 5 looks at Atlantic spadefish.

You're seeing this again because the guidance in March was that the committee may want to consider either removing these from the FMP, which you saw in Action 1, or perhaps list them as ecosystem component species, and so that's why you're seeing them again in this Action 2.

As noted from the AP earlier, misty grouper, blackfin snapper, and the other porgies complex, the AP felt that those could remain under status quo. Bar jack could either be removed from the FMP or designated as an ecosystem component species, and Atlantic spadefish, sand tilefish, and the grunts complex could be designated as an ecosystem component species.

With this, again, turning it over to the committee for discussion on the action, and the range of alternatives, and so, again, this is your first look at this, and so, at this point, it's a draft action. We want to make sure you're comfortable with the range of alternatives, and the structure overall, and not necessarily looking for a preferred. That discussion will happen at a subsequent meeting, and so I'll turn it over to the committee. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so just a question, and so all the species that we were looking at, and so all thirteen, basically are also repeated in this list? Just making sure. I saw spadefish, and I saw misty, but was bar jack in this list? I'm just making sure we've got them in all the places.

MR. HADLEY: Bar jack was not included, because that wasn't part of the guidance in March, but it could be added. It just is not in here because it fell under the list of species that were considered for removal, and not necessarily designated as ecosystem components.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and another way I guess I would interpret that is maybe we were more in consensus that bar jack should be just removed from the FMP. Those other two species, misty and spadefish, weren't in consensus, and so they were in both places, I guess. Okay. Does everyone understand what this action would do? It would designate all of these, some of which are grouped into complexes, designate these as ecosystem components, and we're good with this action? Did you have your hand up?

MS. MURPHEY: I'm sorry. Let me think for a second, and so, under Alternative 5 with Atlantic spadefish, should we add bar jack to that list, or do we have bar jack somewhere else as an EC, because I know we've got it to either remove it, up at the top, but I'm not sure if the bar jack is listed anywhere else, as far as EC or -- So, anyway, I guess, thinking out loud, I wonder if we need to add bar jack in Alternative 5 with spadefish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was part of what I was just talking about, that there wasn't a lot of debate that bar jack shouldn't come out of the fishery management unit, the FMU, and so that's why -- That's what John was saying of why it wasn't here. Amy, you had your hand up? Andy, then Trish.

MR. STRELCHECK: To that point, I mean, if there's any consideration that we might designate bar jack as ecosystem component, I would recommend we go ahead and add it here, so that it can be analyzed as part of the process. I know we felt strongly that it could be removed, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Andy just beat me to it. I think, if anything, it will help generate public comment if we add that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it looks like we're capturing that, that we would add -- We would either modify Alternative 5 or add another alternative that would have bar jack in it. John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. I just want to point out a report from last year's meeting, in June, from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, that did outline the data that comes out of that, and it notes that some of the species that are here, for grunts in particular, are in the top-five species landed on the headboats currently, and so I think that's good information, and context, for people to consider as this moves forward, in terms of what is in that survey, and that document should be available on the last June 2025 meeting. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. I don't see any other hands on other things that we want to do to this action. I'm going to turn it back to you, John.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so we'll scroll down to Draft Action 3, and so this action would establish a permit and reporting requirement for ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and so a couple of items -- You know, a couple of words highlighted there under the purpose of the action, and I'll turn it over to the committee for clarification after I go through the alternatives.

Generally speaking, as I mentioned earlier, there are five existing ecosystem component species. Presumably, in Action 2, you would be adding to that list, and so the assumption of the IPT is this action would establish a permit requirement for ecosystem component species currently in the FMP, and so those five species, and, based on the committee's previous discussion, maintain the commercial and for-hire reporting requirements for the species that are being removed from management, but newly designated as ecosystem component species.

Within this, currently there is no permit or reporting requirement to harvest or possess ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. Alternative 2 focuses on a commercial permit requirement, and so, in this case, the way it's currently worded, Alternative 2 would require an unlimited snapper grouper permit or South Atlantic 225 permit and associated reporting requirements to commercially fish for or harvest any ecosystem component species in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. Alternative 2 focuses on maintaining the existing commercial permit requirements.

Alternative 3 looks at maintaining the current for-hire permit and related reporting requirements, and so Alternative 3 is require South Atlantic snapper grouper charter-headboat permit and associated reporting requirements to recreationally fish for or harvest any EC species onboard for-hire vessels, and so, you know, in a nutshell, you can think of Alternative 2, and that's the commercial permit, and, Alternative 3, that's covering the for-hire permit.

As noted earlier, the AP felt that designation of new EC species should also be accompanied by a permit and reporting requirement, and then I'm going to take some time to go over some of the IPT comments, and so this is one that the IPT spent a good amount of time discussing, and there were several comments to bring to the committee's attention.

First and foremost, it's noted that the existing EC species, and so those five species in the Snapper Grouper FMP, do not necessarily have -- They do not have a permit requirement right now, and so the final rule for the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, which removed regulations such as annual catch limits, annual accountability measures, permitting and reporting requirements, trip limits, bag limits for these species, and so these species were essentially removed from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, along with any associated management measures, in that amendment.

In doing so, that removed the permit requirement, and so that sort of explains your status quo, or is intended to help explain your status quo, and the IPT noted that the need to clarify what permit requirement would exist, or if a new permit requirement is required for designated ecosystem component species.

Again, I'll turn it over to the committee for discussion on this, but it would be helpful for the IPT to clarify whether it is the council's intent to take sort of an overarching ecosystem component species approach, and so bring in those existing five species, as well as the new species that you're also considering, or if you just want to focus on those new species. There again, just stating the intent from that perspective.

Also of note, some IPT members had concerns about requiring a limited access commercial permit for ecosystem component species. It was noted that that's one of the more restrictive management measures that can be placed upon a fishery, and so as far as it may create a burden for species that are deemed a management-related -- Or a management-appropriate burden, so to speak, would be placed upon species that have been deemed not needing conservation and management.

To address this concern, the council could potentially allow existing commercial permits that are open access, or create a new open access ecosystem component species permit, and so that would open it up to essentially allow -- It would take away the limited entry factor on the commercial side.

It was also noted that commercial trip tickets and federal for-hire and commercial logbooks already require reporting of species, and so not requiring a permit does not necessarily mean there will be no reporting at all. Furthermore, it was noted that there may be some portions of this that could be contrary to EO 14276, since it is adding a new burden, at least to the five ecosystem component species, and so those are a few items I want to bring to your attention and ask for some discussion from the committee on.

You know, specifically, I think, if it's okay, if we could start off with the discussion as far as what is the intent of the committee? Is it to kind of look at this as an ecosystem component perspective for all species in the FMP, or are you just focusing on these new species, as far as a permit requirement, because that helps with how the IPT structures the actions and the associated analysis.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I have really strong feelings about this. I personally will not support this amendment at all if we cannot continue to require the South Atlantic snapper grouper permit. My rationale for -- These species coexist together. They do not live separately. If you are targeting one that is not in the -- That's an EC component, you are going to be interacting with these other species, and there is interest commercially in going to do that.

These are not species, and we're dealing with this all the time, that can handle discards very well, and we're just setting ourselves up for failure. I know why we need to -- I understand the spirit of this amendment, and I want to support it, but, for me, the requiring the -- John, please take out "unlimited" from that document, please, requiring the Snapper Grouper 1 and Snapper Grouper 2 permit to catch these species is the only way I will support this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so -- What you're saying, I think, is what is listed in Alternative 2 there, or 2 and 3, and so it's almost like you're maintaining the existing permit requirement, but you're adding that to the ecosystem component species. Okay, and so then, to try to get to one of John's questions, we already have a list of -- Is it four species that are in the ecosystem, or five species that are in the ecosystem, and can you scroll to them?

They are bank sea bass, cottonwick, longspine porgy, ocean triggerfish, and rock sea bass, and so then one of the questions that John Hadley is asking is so, whatever we're doing here, we don't just mean for the thirteen species that are under discussion in this amendment, and we're saying do them for all of the ecosystem component species, and is that what you're saying? Okay, and so I see heads nodding yes. Okay. All right. Everybody is nodding yes. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can you scroll down toward the bottom, right above committee action? There's a statement that commercial trip tickets and federal for-hire and commercial logbooks already require reporting for all harvested species, and so I'm, I guess, trying to reconcile -- If that's true, then we should be collecting data on the ecosystem component species we've already booted out of the FMU, and I'm not understanding why we would require additional reporting requirements beyond that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm confused, but Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't think we're asking for additional reporting requirements. We're just saying that you need the permit. Am I missing something where we have additional reporting requirements?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I'm confused, too. Shep, and then Amy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, this is great. This gets back to the point I was making in the beginning. You already collect the information on the harvest of these species, and so keeping them in an FMU, or designating them as ecosystem component, so you can continue to monitor them -- There's a disconnect there, because you monitor them regardless.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's -- I appreciate the clarification. I'm going to go back to Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just to that point, and we are not trying to collect data on it. We're trying to limit capacity on these fish. We're trying to limit effort, because effort on these fish corresponds to discard effort on all the other fish it lives with, and so this is about limiting effort by requiring these permits.

There is interest, I know for a fact, for people who do not have access to a SG 1 or an SG 2, to find other economic avenues to get on some of these fish and sell them commercially, and these are not species that can handle any more commercial effort beyond what we're trying to do in 60, and sort of cap the fishery where it's at. This will increase effort on those fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I had a list of hands. I had Amy, Andy, Charlie, Tom.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I think the question is going to be for Shep, and understanding the CFR. Currently, the existing ecosystem component species are listed under Table 2, and there are instances, for both the commercial and the for-hire permits, that state that you have to -- If you're fishing for species listed in Table 2, which is inclusive of the ecosystem component species currently, that you're still required to have the permit. Is that correct?

MR. GRIMES: What table, or exactly what regulatory section are you reading from?

MS. DUKES: Table 2, Appendix A of Part 622.

MR. GRIMES: Give me a second to look at that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I'm going to keep going to hands while that's being looked up. Andy, you were next in the queue.

MR. STRELCHECK: No, and I appreciate Kerry's point, and I think that's reasonable with regard to why we have this action. I guess I would also point out that there's other mechanisms that you could limit, you know, directed harvest of the species over concerns about bycatch of our species that are truly in need of conservation and management, through some sort of retention limits, aggregate bag limits, you know, discard amounts, or not discard, but retention amounts that are separate from, obviously, species in need of conservation.

It kind of blurs the line then, in terms of is it truly an ecosystem species, or is it in need of conservation and management, and I'm just concerned about requiring a permit, and this being viewed as kind of a regulatory burden, or additional restriction, if we're trying to alleviate, obviously, these restrictions for certain -- Not alleviate restrictions, but alleviate, obviously, the burden on management, obviously, for managing some of these species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to dive down into something you said in a minute, but I'm going to go back to the list of hands. I had Charlie, then Tom.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and it's getting kind of tangled up, but I understand Kerry, and, yes, if you have a commercial permit, we're going to have to list what we harvest and sell, but, if you don't have a commercial permit, and you want to try to target ecosystem species only, then you don't have to -- Then you don't have a logbook to fill out, and so you're not going to show landings on that.

I don't know that anybody's going to just target ecosystem only. Maybe somewhere they might, but, as far as we're concerned, you know, where I live, you know, you're just -- You're going to catch, you know, tomtate, and you're going to catch some porgies, and you're going to catch margate, and nobody targets them. That's just something that goes in the box, and it adds a few dollars to the bottom line. Nobody targets that stuff, but potentially could they do it? I doubt it, but maybe there's somewhere that I -- That it might happen that I don't know about, and I guess that's the -- Where we're really trying to figure out the answer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I heard something in there that you said that now I've pinged on that, and so I thought that all of the states had like trip ticket reporting requirements for commercial, so that, if you don't have a federal permit, you still are required to report everything that you landed commercially, and you were just saying, if you don't have the federal permit, then you're not required to report through the federal system. Can you help with what you're saying?

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, you know, everybody that I have is, obviously, commercial, but let's say somebody wants to run offshore, and go target, you know, an ecosystem species, and come back and sell it, a rock bass, and they don't have a snapper grouper permit. They don't have an SG 2, and, as far as Georgia is concerned, we don't even have a trip limit.

We just give a copy of our federal logbook to Georgia, because that just keeps them from making a duplicate, you know, logbook that we have to do twice, and so we just have a working man's agreement that we just give them a copy of our federal logbook, and I think most other states have trip tickets that they fill out, but that's kind of what I see as a gray area, is could somebody go target rock bass, or something, and come back and say that's all I was targeting, and I was not fishing for anything that you need a permit for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so you were talking about the permit. I was pinged on the reporting component. I thought, whether you had a federal permit or not, you've got to report everything harvested commercially. It's landed in that state. Okay. Then can you --

MR. CARMICHAEL: So, to me, the question that I'm hearing is do you need a snapper grouper permit to be able to land a species that is listed as an ecosystem component in the Snapper Grouper FMP, or can -- If it's listed as an ecosystem component, all bets are off, and anybody that wants to can go land as many of them as they want to, and that seems to be the question, and I hope Jeff has the answer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, and, also, I would just add on to that, and could we not, as a body, say, for this council, for our region, for the Snapper Grouper FMP, designating these things as ecosystem component, we want them to have this particular permit to go with it, and we know that they're going to get reported either way, but that we want this particular permit with it, and so, to me, it's two questions. Can you answer both of those?

MR. GRIMES: I will give it a shot. As to the first question, and, really, we were talking -- Amy and I were talking about this in the context of the permit. If you go to the regulations, our regulations require a commercial permit for a person aboard a vessel to be eligible for an exemption from the bag limits for snapper grouper in or from the South Atlantic EEZ or to sell golden tilefish,

and, anyway, the language is all worded around South Atlantic snapper grouper, to harvest South Atlantic snapper grouper.

Then, if you go to the definitions in the regulations, which are in Section 622.2, we define South Atlantic snapper grouper as one or more of the species or parts thereof listed in Table 2 of the appendix. Then, when you go to Table 2 of the appendix, it includes everything, and that includes ecosystem component species, and so, reading the regulations that way, yes, that would apply, but my understanding is that was not the intent, and, when we did the rulemaking to establish those as ecosystem component species, we specifically said there were no regulations on them.

I don't believe it has been interpreted that way, or at least the current regs have been interpreted to apply to ecosystem component species, but there is clearly a disconnect with the language. My guess is that we just sort of overlooked that in the definition section, perhaps, but all of that boils down to the fact that the regulations say what they say, but I don't believe we have a record to support applying those regulatory requirements to ecosystem component species, because that was not what the council intended when it implemented those ecosystem --

MS. MCCAWLEY: But I guess I would say what it stated, how it's stated, is how we want it to be now, and so can we not, by this discussion, be establishing the record, or re-establishing the record, and, plus, we're talking about different species to go into that complex, and so I guess I'm saying what it currently says is what we are intending here. I guess it's kind of circular, but, yes, and I'm going to go to Kerry first, to this point, and then back to you, because I feel like we still need the second part. Kerry says she can wait. Go ahead, Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Okay, and so that's right. That was the second question you had asked, right, and, going forward, could the council require the permit, and so, generally, yes. Going forward now, the council could make a decision, and make it more consistent -- You know, make the regulations text consistent across the board, with your will or whatever, right, and require a permit for it, though, having said that, you see the comments from the IPT in here.

I continue to advise that a limited access permit requirement is not consistent with the notion of a species not being in need of conservation and management, and that limiting access to the fishery is one of the most restrictive management measures at the council's disposal, and I don't think we can rationally argue that it doesn't constitute conservation and management, and, you know, I heard Kerry's statement that this is about limiting effort. Limiting effort is not a -- You know, that's conservation and management. That's constraining a fishery in one of the most substantive ways we can. Thank you. That's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I'm going to go to John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I guess I'm just confused, because, I mean, just say the language that's in the CFR is what the council wants, and I don't know what the council's intent was whenever they created that language, and so I guess I have a bit of a problem trying to recall whatever the council's intent may have been, God knows how many years ago, and probably before any of us were sitting at this table, and say that that contradicts what the CFR says.

I know we sometimes run into this, but it seems, to me, regardless of whatever happened, if the CFR says what the council wants it to do, and people understand that, isn't the CFR a rule? Like

why would the council have to potentially do something to change things that's already saying what they want in the CFR? I'm just very befuddled by this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Shep, and then I'm going to go back to the other hands.

MR. GRIMES: Well, because the text that's -- It's really the definition, I guess, is in error, and was not adjusted. I'm reading to you from the final Comprehensive ACL final rule. This rule designates ecosystem -- Six species as EC species, based on an evaluation of the Magnuson Act National Standard Guidelines criteria.

It mentions the species, and this designation of these species retains them in the Snapper Grouper FMP, but they are not required to have an ACL. These EC species are also not subject to any other management actions within the Comprehensive ACL Amendment and are not subject to other federal management measures, such as recreational bag limits or size limits. Whether those types of management measures are already in place, this final rule removes those applicable federal regulations. I think that, you know, the permit just fell through the cracks with that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Or did it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right. Or did it? I mean, I would say these regs are already in place, but, yes, and I'm going to go back to hands. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I would just like to point out that this is the second-most recent incident of the -- Of whether or not the regs reflect what the council wanted at the time, and, last time, we were told it didn't matter what the council's intent was, and we have to go back and change the regs, and so why -- You know, for me, we're in this situation again. It reflects what we want now, and I feel like that's sort of two-sided information.

The second thing I would like to say is someone brought up a very good point to me that we have gear. If you remove the permit, could someone essentially go gillnet for spadefish? How would we stop something like that?

The third thing I want to say is I want to remind everyone about the very long and productive discussions we had about the snapper grouper innovation plan, and one of the things we all agreed to, as a body, was that we were sometimes going to sort of step out of the box, and maybe sometimes that meant going against advice when we felt strongly about it. We are in this box of how we need to manage these species because of, you know, Magnuson and SFA.

I'm willing to roll the dice. I feel so strongly. If we get sued, we get sued, and maybe this ends up being the catalyst for some sort of federal-level look at what we're required to do that isn't appropriate for all species, and, if we're the test case for that, let's be the test case for that, but I feel so strongly that, because of the way these species exist, we cannot add more commercial effort to these species, and that's what would happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I'm going to go back to my list of hands. Tom, you had been waiting.

MR. ROLLER: I've had a lot of thoughts in the last ten minutes of this discussion, as things have changed dramatically, yet a couple of things come to mind. Thank you, John. I remain befuddled by some of this discussion. I think that was the word that really captures it, but I'm with Kerry here on a couple of things.

First of all, I'm willing to be a test case for these species too, right? I think that we can -- We need to push the boundaries on some of these things. I feel very, very strongly about this amendment, and two specific things is I know we're going to be looking at recreational in one of the further actions, but we cannot increase effort on these species. We have enough bycatch issues on co-occurrent species. If we do tend to take a lot of these species and make them ecosystem component species, we will create new fisheries for them, commercial and recreational.

Certainly, Charlie, you may not experience that in Georgia, but we will experience it in North Carolina. In North Carolina, while we do have a moratorium on our commercial fishing license, more than -- I want to say about 2,000 are active, and 6,000 are on the market, and this has been a discussion we've had at the state level countless times, and there's a lot of people that possess those licenses for reasons other than actively landing fish.

This would be a new avenue for people to create new fisheries, whether they're doing it for a living or to supplement their gas money, right, and so I remain extremely concerned, and, if we can't move forward with recreational limits, or maintaining the fact that you need an SG 1 or an SG 2 to possess these species, I can in no way support this amendment, because I think that -- I mean, even looking at this, and having this discussion, I think we're making our management of this complex even more complex now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Good discussion. I want to try to reset a little bit here, and so I'm looking at the National Standards, right, and councils may choose to identify stocks with their FMPs as ecosystem component species, and then it goes on to talk about, consistent with National Standard 9 and other applicable MSA sections, management measures can be adopted to, for example, collect data on ecosystem component species, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality, protect the associated role of the EC species in the ecosystem, or address other ecosystem-associated issues.

With that said, I mean, I think we have, obviously, the framework there, why we were looking at this action from a data collection standpoint. We also have some potential options for how we could minimize bycatch, or directed targeting of these species, in the event that people want to go out and target ecosystem component species that are also in the same complex or associated with snapper grouper that we manage.

What I will add, and I think this is where the environment has changed a little bit, is we do need to keep in mind the current administration's priorities on deregulation, right, and how we -- I think the last point which was made, this is where I think it's going to be really important that we weigh the benefits and cost of making changes to management. As Tom said, is this going to create a more complex system? Is this going to simplify management? What are we doing in terms of the changes to management, and, at the end of the day, when we vote this amendment up down the road, do those changes ultimately achieve our purpose and need, which was laid out and discussed earlier today.

We're not there yet, but I think we do have, at least with the National Standards, some guidance on how we can approach these actions, and I just recommend we also keep in mind the deregulatory priorities of the administration.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me try to wrap up what we're hearing here, and so a couple of things. We already said that we wanted to include existing and potential new ecosystem component species. With whatever we're doing in this particular action, we would grab the new ones and the old ones, and so the other thing it sounds like we're trying to do here is just modify existing regulations to add the new ecosystem component species to the permit requirements, is how I would say that. I hope that's enough direction to staff in the wording, and some of those yellow highlights above, or do you need us to make additional, you know, modifications on this action?

MR. HADLEY: No, and I don't think there needs to be additional modifications at this time. You know, as you mentioned, the guidance to include existing and potentially new EC species in this action, that helps a lot for the IPT, and how we'll write up the analysis. It sounds like, based on the committee's discussion, we will just keep this, as far as Alternative 2. I think that's been the crux of the discussion here. We'll keep it as-is for now. It sounds like the committee feels fairly strongly on maintaining the current commercial permit requirements on the commercial side, and so, you know, that's the guidance that I'm receiving overall from the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Madam Chair, I think Tom talked about how it was getting kind of complicated, and the good intentions may be getting to the point where the cure is worse than the sickness, and I'm not sure that what we're doing is, in the end, going to help us significantly, compared to what we -- Anyway, I think we should really -- We can lay it all out, and see where we're at, but we need to keep in mind that we may be backing up while we're trying to go forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. We've got one more action in the document. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Charlie, thank you for that. You've made that comment before, right, and I know I've brought that up, and I think maybe it was at our December meeting, but I also prefaced the fact that I feel that this amendment is -- While maybe well intended, is a solution in search of a problem, because, you know, I know there are concerns about some of these small ACLs associated with this. They're not a problem. They haven't been a problem. Maybe, if they do become a problem, we have to revisit some of those, but, at this current time, I don't see the urge and need to do this, when we have so many other pressing matters on our plate, and so thank you for that, Charlie.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I feel like Tom just made the argument as to why do we need to manage these species then? If they're not a problem, what are we worried about then, right? I mean, I feel like it's counter to what we're trying to do here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for clarifying. Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you for bringing that point up, Andy. The reason we need to manage them is because the species is a complex, right, and --

MR. STRELCHECK: What are we doing to manage them? Other than a permit requirement, what are we doing to manage them?

MR. ROLLER: Limiting effort.

MR. STRELCHECK: Are we?

MR. ROLLER: Well, we would be expanding effort if we didn't, commercially and recreationally, and, commercially, we are lowering effort, or keeping it down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Well, in some aspects, I think this council has taken some ecosystem approaches to fisheries management where they have limited the amount of snapper grouper species that you can harvest with a trawl gear. They eliminated other gears that potentially could be used to harvest certain species. They limit where traps can be placed, and so there's all kinds of stuff that this council has done in order to protect the habitat, and those gears -- It's a requirement of the permit when you can't use those gears in certain areas, and so I think those are some of the things that this council has done to manage the co-occurring species, and so having them in there as a complex is a benefit, because it does restrict what gears can be placed in certain areas. and we know these habitats are sensitive to certain types of gear type.

MS. MCCAWLEY: One more point, and then I'm going to take a break.

MR. ROLLER: I would like a break too, but thank you for that, Chip, and you articulated what I possibly couldn't, but, when I said it wasn't a problem, I said what we have currently isn't a problem, because we are not facing issues with ACLs being met or whatnot. That's what I meant when I didn't say a problem, but yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to take a fifteen-minute break, and we'll come back. There's one more action in this document, but let's take a break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're going to get started again, and so there were two more actions in the document that, based on the permit discussion, I'm thinking that we're really just wanting to have the permit and not add additional regulations to the ecosystem component. We're saying the permit requirement is what we're after here, because it comes with reporting, all the things that we discussed earlier.

I'm going to turn it back to John Hadley, and he's going to talk a little bit about those two actions as a grouping, because one of them was an ecosystem commercial trip limit, and one of them is a recreational bag limit, but I think we're saying, no, the permit is what is most important, the permit requirement, which we found out already exists in the regs for the other ecosystem component

species, and that I think is what we're saying is what we're after here, but I'm going to pass it over to John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so these last two actions can sort of be combined into one general topic in whether or not the committee wants to consider any sort of retention limit when it comes to ecosystem component species, and so there are a couple actions in here.

Draft Action 4 looks at an aggregate commercial trip limit, and so this would look at the commercial sector, and then I'm going to scroll down to Action 5, and that is a similar measure for the recreational sector, and so Action 4 covers a commercial trip limit, and Action five would cover an aggregate recreational bag limit, and this would apply specifically for ecosystem component species.

To kind of move things along a little bit, I'm going to turn it back over to the committee for discussion on whether or not this is the sort of -- These two actions are two actions that you want to entertain, and so looking at do you want -- You know, I guess the question for the committee is do you want to include retention limit actions in this amendment?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry. I think we're just intending the permit, but I'm going to pass it to you.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and that is -- That would be my intent, is to remove this action from the document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Back to John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: Okay, and so unless -- Not hearing anything different, I'll capture that in direction to staff in the committee report, and so, essentially, Draft Action -- What is in Draft Action 4 and Draft Action 5 would not be included in Amendment 61, and so there would be no retention-limit-related actions in this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Based on that discussion, what you heard from Andy, the discussion that we had, we're saying that the permit requirement is adequate for the ecosystem component, because of the reporting, because of all the things, because of the effort, because of bycatch, that we're thinking about bycatch, and so we want this permit requirement for both commercial and for-hire, but we're saying no aggregate limit for ecosystem component. Are you thinking something different, Tom?

MR. ROLLER: **Yes, and I think I want to make a motion to table this amendment.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Is that a motion?

MR. ROLLER: It is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so a motion to table is not debatable, but I believe that you also need to table to a time certain. I don't think our Roberts Rules person is here, but so -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just a question to Tom, and are you wanting to table for a date certain, or are you wanting to just postpone work on the amendment? Those are two different -- Or discontinue work.

MR. ROLLER: **Discontinue work.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so that is debatable, and so let's modify this motion to discontinue work on this amendment.

MR. ROLLER: **Just to clarify, I am making a motion to discontinue work on Amendment 61.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there a second? Seconded by Charlie. Under discussion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I don't -- I'm not going to support this motion, partially because I think, whatever direction we take in this amendment, if we stick to our guns and sort of craft something that works for our species, and it works its way -- If it gets -- What's the word? Disapproved. Sorry.

If it gets disapproved, then we will learn something about what we need to do to manage the way we want. Maybe it shines a light on what we need to, you know, the way Magnuson is not adequate to manage species like the snapper grouper species, and I just think that there's a lot of interesting things that can happen out of crafting this amendment to be the way the council wants to manage reef fish species that makes sense, and see where the chips fall, personally.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I saw Trish, and then Tom.

MS. MURPHEY: This is to Tom. Can you explain your rationale, please?

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was what I planned to do. Kerry, I think -- I agree with you. I think that we need to be testing the boundaries. I think that we need to be looking for new things that work. I am just not so sure that this is the place for it, and I'm not so sure that the solutions that we present here are what I'm looking for, and I look at this also holistically through our workload.

I look at an amendment that looks to be more regulatory than deregulatory. We're looking at adding a permit. We're looking at new complex layers of management. I'm also looking at the fact that we created a couple new amendments this meeting. I am thinking about our workload, and the fact that I have fishermen really upset about one of our most important species, which is Spanish mackerel, and the need to do something there, and so I'm just questioning whether or not we need to be working on this amendment, and spending this time and resources on it at this time, and that is the basis for my rationale.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish. Okay. All right, and so your question was what is Tom's rationale. Okay. I don't support this motion either. I guess I would also say, back to Tom, if you're wanting to have more conversation about commercial or recreational retention limits for the overall ecosystem component species in snapper grouper, then we can go back to that discussion, if this motion fails, because it seems like part of what you're doing is thinking about what you want to do

with ecosystem component, but you heard that there's some concern about how and what we do with ecosystem component species, and so I feel like, if this motion fails, we go back to that discussion. Go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, and then that's fair, and that's fine. I still retain all my consternation about what ecosystem component species management can look like, and, quite frankly, it raises too many questions for me. Again, I go back to all of our work here, and the fact that I do believe this amendment, given the reality of the aggregate, or the species that we manage here -- I mean, we have looked through that complex many times. We have come to the conclusion to retain these species many times, and I don't think we've provided enough rationale to remove any of these species, in my opinion, and, while I do support what you're saying, I still have a lot of questions about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I disagree. I feel like we've provided plenty of rationale. I feel like this was the council's number-one response to the Trump executive order. I see this as deregulatory, removing these species, or pushing them over into ecosystem component, and I disagree that the council has had these discussions at length. I think it's been a number of years since we designated the last ecosystem component species.

I think they're just hard discussions. I think it's hard discussions thinking about how these species are being managed, but we've had a lot of discussions about they're not really getting management now.

Just by being in this complex, you get this permit requirement, but you're, in my mind, decreasing the work of this body of the NMFS regional staff by taking some of these species and moving them to the -- We're not worried about these species right now, other than their role as bycatch, and, as long as they have a permit, or whatever we would put on them, and we're moving them to the side, and so we're not tracking those complex ACLs on some of these species.

I just -- I've been on this council since we have removed some of these species, and I don't feel like we have this discussion enough. I feel like the purpose of ecosystem component is also kind of bycatch, like we've talked about in other amendments, and not necessarily for snapper grouper, and so I like the idea of pushing them into ecosystem component, and then, in my mind, they're on like a watch list, and we're watching to see what's going to happen to them, but they're also kind of on a watch list, but almost like, hey, we're not worried about that right now, but we'll take a look every time that we get that report, and we'll see if we need to do anything else. Otherwise they're in the we worked on it, and we pushed them into another category.

I think that this amendment is important. I think it's a good idea. I think it's us being innovative. I think it's going back and looking at decisions that were made in the 1970s about what species went in here, and we're trying to kind of modernize this and think about this complex differently.

The fact that we had to put ACLs on everything that were in the FMP, I think it's a really new, fresh argument to look -- Go back and look at these species and say are they really getting true management, federal management, right now, and, if not, let's put them in the watch list category, in my mind, and so that's kind of how I see this.

I also see this as being responsive to the Trump executive order, and being responsive to what we're hearing from National Marine Fisheries Service about workload concerns and the ability for throughput of information, even interim assessments and everything else, and I feel like this is being responsive and respectful of them. This is what we have been asked to do, and so I think the amendment is important. Over here, I have Carolyn, Charlie, Jimmy, and then C.J.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and so I'm in a similar park with you, Jessica, on that. The other thing is, having been on the SSC when we were setting those ABCs and ACLs for a lot of those species, especially the ones that are recreationally caught more dominantly than the commercial, the PSEs are terrible.

I mean, we went through and dealt with whether it's the third-highest, obviously, which that methodology has been called into question as to whether that's the best way to handle them, and OFL was always undetermined, because we don't have enough information, and the catch streams weren't good, and so we're really kind of, I think in some ways, fooling ourselves, in thinking that there's management there, just because we've put numbers in there, but I don't think that they're adequate, based on what information we don't have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Next, I have Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I think it's probably a misnomer to say they're not managed, because they are, or semi-managed, if they go into ecosystem, and maybe that's -- It might be part of the problem with the text, and the regulations, because I don't think the regulations call for anything to be semi-managed, but that's basically what we've got, you know, in ecosystems, and I agree with Carolyn.

We need to figure out a way to do this, but I also agree with Tom. We don't need it so complicated that it makes it worse than what it is right now, and that's a lot of the reason I seconded the motion, because I wanted to have this conversation on how we were going to go forward, and, if we can do it in a -- I'm scared to say a simplified method, but I'm going to use that, but less complex than what's been going on, then, yes, I think we can move the bar ahead.

We can keep these things where we can watch them, and, if we need to move them up into -- You know, let's say spadefish all of a sudden became a hot topic. I've sold them once, and I couldn't sell them twice. The people didn't want them again, but, yes, and I think we just need to be really clear, and, if we end up in a kind of a modified category where it's semi-managed, and we all understand that, then great, and that's why I wanted to have this conversation. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree. It's a good discussion, and I think that we're plowing new ground here about the ecosystem component, and how we're going to look at that complex, and what goes with those species that are in that complex, and so it's a challenging discussion. I appreciate this motion, and us kind of going back to the basics of why we started in the first place, and so I appreciate the discussion. I've got more hands. I've got Jimmy, C.J., and then Amy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I agree with everything that was just stated, and, especially what you said, I agree with, and we already have an ecosystem component in place, and we have species in there, and so I view this as we are bringing this -- Updating it, and modernizing it to today's world, and adding these species in that need to come in, and so it's already there in place.

We already have required permits in place for it, or maybe not, and I'm not sure about that yet, what's already in there, but to be determined, but we're just -- We're bringing -- We already have the framework for this in place, so to speak. It's there, and we already have species in it. If you look at those species, rightly so. You know, those are the species that should be in there, and so we just need to do the same thing, and add to it, and modernize it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. C.J.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to highlight that we're navigating similar things over in the Gulf. This is not an isolated issue in the South Atlantic. We're considering removing species from our Reef Fish FMP. We don't have fifty-five species in our Reef Fish FMP, but we are -- We're considering that as well, and, yes, these are challenging discussions.

I get it, and I understand everyone's points there, but I think the decision around the -- The discussion that we've been having around the table is kind of similar to what you all are having, and just the quality of the data that we have, whether, you know, there's actually any available data to manage these fisheries in the way that we typically do, and so we're going to be having those discussions, but I just wanted to kind of highlight that this is not specific just to the South Atlantic. This is something that the Gulf Council has also agreed to put on our workplan relative to the Trump executive order as well, and so I just wanted to highlight that, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I too am supportive of this amendment continuing, and, to kind of pile onto a little bit about what Carolyn suggested, and as well as you, with your watch list, you're right. There's not a lot of data on some of these species, but they are super important in the ecosystem, and we need to remember that we do have great sources of fishery-independent abundance, with the trap and the index videos that we have, that we can really apply to not only watching the landings watch list, but also what's happening within the fishery-independent side of the house.

I'm really -- I still want to harp on this Action 3 a little bit more, because, if we do in fact need to shore it up, I would suggest that we move forward with it, and I know we keep talking about the word "effort", but, to reframe that, it's not really added effort. It's the negative impacts that an outside entity coming in to target a certain species, that we aren't currently managing, to then impact all the species we are managing, and I really do worry about that.

Taking it a step further, I worry that, if there's not a permit requirement here, then we're going to be losing a massive amount of our data collection, because, if you don't have a federal permit, then you don't have discard requirements, as far as a logbook, and you don't have the ability to be a part of an observer program, whether that be for-hire or commercial, and so I just don't want to see a loss of data coming to the table as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: One thing I think that would be helpful for us is to understand that do we feel that the current regulations, and the things that are done under the FMP for ecosystem management

species as they are, are not sufficient? If we're protecting those five species, and all we're doing is identifying similar species and putting them into the ecosystem list, you're not removing any protections.

If you take them out of the FMU and put them out and say, you know, we don't care about them, then, obviously, your concerns go up, because, at that point, they're not regulated, and so my question is are we not sufficiently covering the ecosystem species as we currently have them?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right. That's a good point. All right, and so we have a motion on the table. Anybody else that wants to comment on the motion before we take a vote? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: What I wanted to say was I wanted to have this discussion, because I didn't want -- Well, I still retain my argument that we have a big workload, right, and so this is a concern of mine, compared to the other things, but, when we start talking about the way of being innovative as to how we approach ecosystem component species, then I become supportive of it, and sometimes I think it's really important for us as a council to kind of have this hard discussion, which I put here, right, and that was my intention, and I wanted to see where the conversation goes. I will withdraw my motion, given the conversation, if that's okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Roberts Rules might say that the motion has been seconded.

MR. ROLLER: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It belongs to the committee now, and so I appreciate it. I think that you'll just have to vote against it.

MR. ROLLER: That's fine, and I will gladly do, because I still have strong feelings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anybody else that wants to comment before we take a vote? **Let's do -- Let's put some hands up on this one, and so, if you are in favor of the motion, which would be in favor of discontinuing work on Amendment 61, please raise your hand.** Okay. I saw one in favor. **Those against the motion, which means that we would continue work on Amendment 61, and so, if you're against the motion, please raise your hand.** Okay. I've got ten in favor. You can put your hands down. Or ten opposed. Sorry. Thank you. Ten opposed. **I don't know if Gary is online or not, and so we're going to go with this vote, and so the motion fails.**

Then we're back to working on Amendment 61, and so I'm going to go back to Amy. You said that you wanted to go back to the permit requirement, and so let's go back up to that action, and talk about that, and then we'll go back to the two remaining actions, one of which -- I'm looking at Tom, and one of which was the trip limit for ecosystem component, and one of them was a bag limit for ecosystem component, and so we'll bring those discussions back, but, Amy, you said you wanted to go back to the permit requirement.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair and it's just to have a little bit more discussion to determine what it is that this body wants to do. Do we feel that what is currently being articulated in the CFR is enough? Great. If we feel like it's not, and we want to really shore it up, then Action

3 needs to stay, but, regardless, the intent of Action 3 is very much I'm in favor of, as far as ensuring that we have these moving forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and, to me, Action 3 is just taking the new species and doing what is essentially the same thing that we have for the other ecosystem component species, which is requiring those federal permits. There's been some debate as to what the council meant when they established all that, but it is essentially just adding -- Carolyn talked about it, and you talked about it, adding these new species that we would determine to the permit requirement. Okay. I see heads nodding yes. Okay. People seem to get that.

Okay, and so I think we're good to leave this action. We've edited it. We've updated it. John is going to take the word "unlimited" out of there. Okay. Do you want me to start? So, once again, in thinking about being innovative, and kind of embarking on what are we doing in snapper grouper for these ecosystem component species, and we heard them called the watch list, and so the previous action was the permit requirement. These next two actions, one is for a commercial overall trip limit on ecosystem component species, and the other one is the recreational limit, and so we'll start discussion on the commercial trip limit. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: My rationale for why I don't think we need it is in that -- The universe is the same universe that already exists. If we keep the permit requirement, there isn't any indication that there will be any effort shift, that there will be, you know, a different approach to this fishery with the same universe of commercial people we have now, and so we don't have this regulation now for these species, and so, in my mind, I think that you're not creating sort of demand that you would be if you brought in the universe, and so that's my rationale for commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so you're saying we don't need this. What you're also saying is we don't need Action 4, and that's part of what you're saying. Is that right? You're saying we don't need Action 4 in the document, because Action 4 establishes an aggregate commercial trip limit. Okay, got it. Tom, did you have your hand up?

MR. ROLLER: So, Kerry, I think you put that well, and I'm certainly in agreeance with that, while I would argue, and I'll carry this to the recreational side, is it, obviously, comes down to the individual species that we decide to include in ecosystem component, though, given the rationale of how they exist currently, I don't see a need for the commercial trip limit. but I feel differently about recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that clarification. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I agree with Kerry. I don't think we need it, and, even if we did need it, 1,500 pounds of EC species is way too high, but I don't think we need it at all, and, if she wanted to make a motion to delete Draft Action 4, I would support it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We put it as direction to staff down there at the bottom, do not include Draft Action 4 in Amendment 61, and are you good with that? Okay. All right. Any more discussion on this action? All right. Now over to -- I'm sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and just looking to John here, in terms of the analyses, and did we put together anything that looked at -- Like, if every species we're looking at is designated as

ecosystem component, like what's the maximum harvest on snapper grouper trips currently, and is this even constraining, based on the current universe of effort, because I feel like that would be another rationale, right, and it's like we potentially are incentivizing more targeting of ecosystem component species if we put a trip limit on it, and I'm guessing that most of these are not constraining to any trip, right?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and that's a good point, and so the IPT hasn't gotten to that point, as far as sort of combined analysis for all the species. What has been provided is on a trip level, but looking at single -- Each species by themselves, but, yes, and, I mean, as you stated, I would venture to say, given the relatively low landings per trip -- Looking at the various figures that were included, if you added them all together, it probably -- At least these subalternatives that are presented likely would not be restrictive. Landings would probably likely be below what's there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we're good to move to Draft Action 5.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so this action looks at establishing the aggregate recreational limit for ecosystem component species in this, and so this would be all the ecosystem component species together, what would be the maximum number of those species, or the maximum number that could be kept per person as an aggregate recreational bag limit.

Currently, there is no recreational, aggregate recreational bag limit for EC species, and Alternative 2 would establish that limit, and the subalternatives that are presented are sort of a starting point. They're not -- They're meant to encourage discussion, but the range is from twenty to forty fish, as you can see, in Subalternatives 2a through 2c.

As mentioned, you know, there is some preliminary analysis. We looked at it for spadefish and bar jack, as well as misty grouper, and you can see there are additional figures provided to you for the other porgies complex, and the distribution for the trips that have been observed harvesting those species. Again, one fish per person tends to be pretty common for most of these species, and then, moving over to the grunts complex, the same thing.

You do have a few trips that do harvest more, but, generally speaking, the harvest per person, or per angler, tends to be around one or two fish on the species level, and so, with that, I'll turn it over to the committee for discussion on Draft Action 5 and whether or not that should be considered in this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. It sounds like we want to consider it. Tom, do you have some thoughts here?

MR. ROLLER: I do. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's important that we keep this in here. I think that the recreational fishery is very different than the commercial fishery, but, when we look at the species, when we look at this, this is going to come down to what species we include in ecosystem component species.

If we just say continue with the current limit and throw bar jack in, it's probably not that important, but, if we do decide, as a committee, that we want to do tomtates, or grunts, or whatnot, or sand tilefish, right, which I think that we have to consider some sort of bag limit, because we don't want to encourage sort of an unregulated fishery that can be targeted, right, and so I think, if we're going

to -- Since we don't know what species we're going to include, I think it's important that we retain this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, in thinking about that, can you look at those three subalternatives, and are those the right numbers?

MR. ROLLER: I would love to hear some more people's thoughts on this. I do think that's a good starting point. I wonder if something like ten is too low. I do like starting with twenty, but I would like to hear from other people.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Other thoughts? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, Tom, I appreciate your comments, and I do tend to agree with you. I think that some sort of aggregate bag limit would be helpful, and I also think including a few of these species - If they are EC species, there's a lot of misidentification amongst the porgies. Longspine porgy are already an EC species, and I see them all the time, and people call them knobbed, and so I think having some of those aggregate bag limits with some of these species that co-occur, and are misidentified by the recreational sector, is a really good idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I realize that it will depend on how many species we designate as ecosystem component, and I don't view this as really different than the status quo, other than you're putting an aggregate bag limit in that people aren't going to be able to achieve, right, and so it's a cap, you know, more of a hypothetical cap, that people aren't going to necessarily reach.

I think the other thing I would consider is, if you see a need, for example, Tom, to have an aggregate bag limit -- It seemed like your rationale would apply to either ecosystem component or just the snapper grouper FMU species as a whole, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I guess -- Yes, and I guess that's the question that I would present, is can this be included in part of a current aggregate, or do we have two separate aggregates, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I don't know the answer, without staff doing the analysis, what that might look like, because I'm trying to do math on some of the species in there. Would this be more restrictive, but, if it's the ecosystem component, it's probably -- Like Andy said, it's just kind of like a cap, and it's probably status quo. It's bigger than what you need, but, if you put it on the entire complex, that's different. I think that would be restrictive. Do you see what I'm saying? Like I would have to see the analysis on it. I'm trying to go through the different species in my head.

MR. ROLLER: Are you saying that you want to see that analysis or --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm okay just focusing on the ecosystem component, and kind of what we're doing with the different species here in this document, and I'm good sticking with that. To me, I

felt like I feel like that's maybe a different discussion, that comes out in a different amendment, or that's just how I feel. I would keep this narrow in this document.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and keep it narrow like keep it current, as we have it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. I would include this action in here and include the alternatives as being for the ecosystem component.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. I can support that rationale. I just think it's important overall that we have some sort of -- That we just don't remove some sort of cap on these species, right, and I think that that's where we're going, and I appreciate the use of the word "cap", and I think, somewhere in our modern and rapidly-changing fisheries, it's important that we consider these things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John Hadley is taking notes, but, yes, to include something like the word "cap" in the description. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I almost hate to even mention it, because it happens a lot. We end up with recreational bag limits and/or boat limits, and so, again, I hate to mention it, but -- I'm more than happy to just leave it alone, as it is, but I just thought I would throw it out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate it, but, based on what we're going to get into with the headboat vessel limit, I would just leave it like it is for now, until after that discussion, and decide if you want to reconsider after that. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Could the idea of a cap on ecosystem component species also be something that we use as a template looking forward for other potential actions way down the line when we're talking about being innovative?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

MR. HADLEY: Not trying to open up a can of worms here, but I just want to make sure I have this correct, because -- The reason being, when this comes back to you, I mean, there may be some additional analysis, and I want to make sure that's done correctly, in the context of how the committee is thinking about this.

What we have there is twenty to forty fish, and that's what would be analyzed, and then this would be a separate ecosystem component species limit, and that's -- I just want to make sure, and that sounds like what the committee said, but, essentially, it would be here's your list of ecosystem component species, and then here's how many -- Here's the cap on the number of those species, or individual fish, you could keep, and I just want to make sure that's captured correctly. Again, the reason being I want to make -- It helps with the analysis portion, and what we bring back to you, but it sounds like, unless there's any objections to what I just said, and just want to make sure it's captured accurately.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think we're good. That's what I'm kind of hearing around the table, and heads are nodding yes. Okay.

MR. HADLEY: Great. Thank you, and so two more items, really quickly. There's a draft motion here to approve all actions as revised for inclusion in the amendment, and so the Draft Action 1, 2, 3, and 5, and we'll reflect that in the committee report, and then, whether or not you want to have it now or later, but the discussion on timing, if you want to see a public hearing document in September, or you would be okay with waiting until December, and, there again, keeping that March 2027 final vote on the books.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you, and so, first, is someone willing to make this motion to approve all the actions as revised for inclusion in the Amendment 61? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: **Madam Chair, I make the motion that we approve all actions as revised for inclusion in Amendment 61.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Trish. Any additional discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.** Do we want to provide any guidance on the timing now, or do we want to wait until we get to Full Council and look at the workplan? Okay. I see heads nodding yes that they want to wait until we look at the workplan. Then we'll discuss the timing.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. Next up, we're going to dive into headboat vessel limits.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Before we jump into the decision document for this one, I put together a background slide deck for you guys. When we started looking at this, it became a little more complicated, and so I want to make sure that everyone understands how these will operate before we hop into the decision document and then really start digging into your purpose and need.

If you've looked at this slide deck, you've seen Herlinda and the PowerPoint presentation people that help represent these headboat vessel limits, but more important than those hypotheticals are the feedback that you've been hearing from headboat operators, and so you've heard, at several council meetings, feedback from headboat operators, but I want to remind you again on some feedback specifically that you got during the North Carolina Lines meetings in Morehead.

We had a participant note that headboats are really a truly separate component of the recreational sector, and they really stress that separate headboat vessel limits are needed. I know that tilefish aren't a species that are right now a focus of this amendment, but we did have someone in Manteo say that headboats really only target tilefish if the bag and vessel limit are high enough, and so, otherwise it's not really worth it. I thought that feedback kind of was along the same veins of what this amendment is trying to achieve.

I wasn't able to attend the North Carolina Lines meeting, and so, if you're wanting to dig more into that feedback, I would urge you to look at that report in the Full Council briefing book, or chat with your North Carolina council members, and so, without further ado, there we go.

When we started thinking about the logistics for this amendment, in my mind, initially, you know, I was saying we should just be able to write language that would create a headboat vessel limit for gag, black grouper, and scamp yellowmouth, right, but it quickly got more complicated than that,

and so we had to kind of take a step back and say there's a lot of stuff that we need to consider before we start crafting the language for a headboat or a per six-passenger limit.

One of those things was the current recreational limits in place, and so what's already, you know, required, or what's already codified for these species, and one big one, that I think today is going to warrant a little more discussion, is how do we define a headboat, and so Myra presented a little bit of information to you in March about kind of our jumping-off point on where to define what a headboat is with regard to a vessel limit, because we don't have sector separation, and then how current regulations are written. That will be important when we think about the wording for your actions. Then, last, but certainly not least, amendments that are soon to be implemented, but are not currently implemented.

The way I'm going to kind of go through this is lumping species together, and so I'm going to start with gag and black grouper, and so, in going down that list of things that we need to consider, starting with amendments that are not yet in place, and so, for this one, or for the purposes of Reg Amendment 38, we are going to assume that Regulatory Amendment 36 is implemented. I believe that this is still up-to-date, but it's currently in the proposed rule phase. I know my slide for Amendment 55 is now out of date, but, as far as the timeline for amendments being put in place, we will assume that Regulatory Amendment 36 will be implemented by the time work on this amendment is done.

Then so how we're thinking about lumping these species, and so gag and black grouper will be treated as a single species, because the retention limits match, and then the action verbiage. This is a little tricky, because there's already a vessel limit in place for these species, and so the action in this amendment that will pertain to them will use the language "revise" instead of "establish", and so, in my head initially, I was thinking it would be established. There's not a headboat vessel limit, but it's a little tricky, because there is a for-hire vessel limit, and so I'll dig into that a little more in some coming slides.

Let's take a look at what's currently in place for gag and black grouper, and so there is a bag limit of one fish per person per day for gag and black grouper, and then there's -- Technically, if we're assuming that Regulatory Amendment 36 is implemented, there is a private recreational vessel limit of two fish, either gag or black grouper, in any combination, per vessel per day, and then there's a for-hire vessel limit of two fish, either gag or black grouper, in any combination, per vessel per day, and, here, for-hire refers to both charter and headboat vessels, but remember the most restrictive limit is what applies.

I have to visually see this to really be able to wrap my head around it, and so I used Herlinda from PowerPoint to help demonstrate this, and so, if you have one person that is going out on their private recreational vessel, they can retain that bag limit of one fish, either gag or black grouper, per day. If you have two people that go fishing, right now, that two people per vessel, the bag limit and the vessel limit is essentially the same in this scenario, and so you have two people in the vessel, and they can both retain their bag limit of one fish, and they're not exceeding that vessel limit of two fish per vessel.

If you incorporate three people on the vessel, then Herlinda is displeased, because the vessel limit limits you to two fish per vessel, either gag or black grouper, and so that's how this currently operates for the private recreational folks.

If you have a headboat, and so we're going to see this scenario carried through the entire presentation, and so say now Herlinda has her headboat operation, and she has twenty-four people onboard. She can only retain that vessel limit of two fish per vessel. If she has a charter operation, and she has five people, again limited to the two-fish vessel limit, and so that vessel limit carries across both the charter and headboat component of the recreational sector.

What is the intention of Regulatory Amendment 38? From the discussion that you guys have had, it doesn't seem like you want to change the vessel limit for the charter or the private rec component of the recreational sector, but, in thinking about what defines a headboat, and how to implement a vessel limit, this is kind of what we've put together as a starting point for this amendment.

Here, we would define a headboat as a vessel that has a valid U.S. Coast Guard issued Certificate of Inspection, or COI, and you can see that on Herlinda's vessel, and then, again, using that same example of twenty-four people, and so, if you had one fish per six passengers, then you would be able to retain four fish, and so that four groups of six.

If she had twenty-five people, the limit would still be four fish. If you were in that next group of six, then you could retain one more fish, and so that's how that per-six vessel limit would operate. The other thing you could consider is a two fish per six, which would just double that per-six limit, and so, essentially, what you're looking at here is your alternatives for this action, is how this would operate.

The other thing that we kind of were talking about, based on Snapper Grouper AP feedback, and this feedback I believe was discussed during the development of Reg Amendment 36, is putting a cap on the max number of fish per vessel, and so the AP's recommendation actually was a twelve fish maximum per vessel, and so, essentially, once you got to twelve fish, it wouldn't matter how many people were on the vessel, and so you would be counting per six passengers until you got to twelve fish, and then, after twelve fish, it really wouldn't matter. That would be the cap.

These tables here show you, you know, the per-six group of people, on the very left, and then each of the columns is a one-per-six-passenger vessel limit, and then a two-per-six-passenger vessel limit, and so anything that is grayed out would be over that fish maximum, you know, vessel limit for each of those scenarios, and so that's something else that the council can consider, or the committee could consider.

Moving into scamp yellowmouth, so, again, thinking about all of those things that need to be considered while we're developing these actions, and so Amendment 55 is the most recent amendment that dealt with management measures for scamp yellowmouth, and this information is a little dated, as we now have an implementation date of July 7th for that amendment, and so it doesn't seem like there's going to be any problems, assuming that Amendment 55 would be implemented, if you would like to keep scamp yellowmouth in this amendment.

Amendment 55 lumped these together as a single species, and so that's how we would treat them in Reg 38, and then, because there's not a vessel limit in place for these species, and Amendment 55 is not establishing a vessel limit, the action language here would need to be "establish", versus "revise", and so the same thing. Thinking about what's currently in place for scamp and yellowmouth, and, again, this is assuming that Amendment 55 is implemented, that would be a

one-fish-per-person-per-day scamp -- For either scamp or yellowmouth grouper, and so you're not identifying between the two species. It's just one fish. If you catch a scamp, that's your fish. If you catch a yellowmouth, then you've met your bag limit.

There is no vessel limit proposed in Amendment 55, and so, going through that same scenario, it's going to be a little bit different. If you have one person, they can retain one fish. Two people, they can keep two fish. Three people, they can each keep their bag limit.

Thinking about a headboat, if you have twenty-four people onboard, then -- I couldn't fit twenty-four grouper, but you could retain -- Everyone on that headboat could retain a scamp or yellowmouth, and then same thing with charter. If you have five people onboard, those five people could retain their bag limit.

In thinking about how this would operate under Regulatory Amendment 38, this is something I think the council would need to discuss, as far as their intention for this headboat vessel limit, and so, obviously, there would be no change for charter or private rec, but, if you decided to put in a per-six-passenger vessel limit, then, before, when those twenty-four people could each retain their bag limit of scamp yellowmouth, now you would be limited to either four or eight fish per vessel, respectively.

In my mind, that is less fish per vessel than what would be available if just the bag limit remained in place, and so, in thinking about this, it's kind of crucial, I guess, to note that, if there's not a vessel limit already in place, that a per-six vessel limit would be more restrictive than the bag limit in place.

The analysis that you guys looked at in March showed you the comparison between a one-fish vessel limit for scamp yellowmouth and the per-six passenger limit, and so I think it's important to think about that moving forward, and, if you, in the future, are considering a vessel limit for a species moving forward, then consider thinking about that per-six limit for headboats, and so my question is maybe the limit shouldn't exist, but that is a committee decision, and so I wanted to leave that in you all's court. That's all I have on this background presentation. Hopefully that made sense, but I want to pause and see if anybody has any questions before I jump to the decision document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Just an observation. I've gotten some comments back when we initially talked about the limit per-six. There are rec boats that are regularly taking eight, ten, twelve people fishing, and so I just want to make the comment that, if we're going to go to a one per six, that -- I know charter-for-hire is limited to six because of Coast Guard rules, but, for private rec boats that have more than six people, they should also benefit from whatever additional fish we're giving to the headboats. I think that would be consistent and fair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm trying to think of how to word that. Okay. Other questions? I have something on scamp and yellowmouth, but I would rather bring it up as we go through the decision document.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so a little background. Again, in March is when you guys initiated this. There was some discussion in March about including gag, black grouper, scamp, snowy grouper, and yellowmouth. Snowy grouper, you guys decided not to include during Full Council in March, and so that's why we are only bringing you the species that you're seeing today.

There's a little bit there about your advisory panel feedback, and then I do want to pause here on the headboat definition. This is something that we've kind of gotten some feedback. The plan team has gotten some feedback on how to properly define a headboat, and so, on the backend, you know, we're looking at ways to really differentiate what would be a headboat, you know, with regards to implementing a per-six passenger vessel limit, and so the CFR defines the headboat as one that holds a valid COI issued by the Coast Guard.

We have that language there. However, I think this might be -- What we've kind of learned is that this might be different than the definition of a headboat for the headboat survey, and so I wanted to kind of pause here and have some discussion on maybe -- Direction to staff on how to continue forward with what would define a headboat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thoughts? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and Allie, and I chatted yesterday, and sorry, Allie, that we didn't connect this morning, and so this issue was, obviously, brought forward by headboat owners, captains. You know, she has the definition through kind of the regulations. The headboat survey, that you're all familiar with, is, obviously, kind of a narrower group of vessels that participate in that, and so it doesn't encompass necessarily all vessels that potentially are in this definition. My understanding is that there's a minimum passenger capacity of at least fifteen for the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

The other point is what Robert just raised, right, which is you have essentially some overload charter boats greater than six passengers, but that aren't necessarily operating as headboats, right, paying for passenger, and so, based on the data that we have in our permit system, there's forty-six additional vessels that fall outside of the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, but that are above six passengers, right, and so I think the question is what is our intent? You know, who do we want to be eligible to benefit from these vessel limits, right, and alleviate some of these restrictions, and how do we define that?

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

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thanks, Andy, and I think we can kind of simplify this by just making that two-fish bag limit available per six passengers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, are your thoughts? Can you say whatever you were just saying?

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't have an argument well formulated to speak to everyone, but I would not be in support of that right now, and I'll try to articulate why.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. What I think, and I can't tell if this is what you were saying, Andy, but what Robert was saying, in my mind, is kind of going back to the decisions that were made in the amendment, and just establishing a different type of vessel limit, whereas I think

what you're saying, Andy, is, no, let's go ahead and define a headboat and/or a for-hire boat that might have -- Like a regular charter boat that might have more than six passengers, and figure out how to define that, and then apply that here, and is that what you're saying?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I think we're saying similar things, and so I think it's -- From what I'm hearing, it's broader in scope than just potentially including headboats, right, and, setting aside the different definitions of headboats, then are we essentially referring to for-hire boats that carry more than six passengers that we would want to establish vessel limits for, and, if that's the case, then we would want to make sure that the definition of the amendment and the regulations reflect that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Jimmy, then Robert.

MR. HULL: Yes, and so the regulations in place pretty much describe it, if you look at it backwards, and so, anything above six passengers, the vessel has to have a certificate of inspection as a multi-passenger vessel, a tonnage inspection, and so a charter boat is a six-passenger vessel. They don't have to have any type of inspection. Any boat can be a six-pack charter boat, and so, for me, it's like, once you go above the six passengers, you become a headboat.

I know, back in my youth, we used to have people always coming wanting to charter the boat, and say, well, I have an extra guy, or I have another guy, and, legally, you can't do it, unless you are inspected, and so you would have to say no, I can't do that, and so I think that it's already there in the language. It says six passengers all over the place, and that would describe a headboat, or a multi-passenger boat. It would be above six passengers, and that would be my view of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Robert, then Kerry.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I should have been more clear. I'm not talking about Coast-Guard-inspected vessels, and I understand there's some, you know, between charter boats and headboats. That's not the group I'm talking about. I'm talking about the private guy that's got a forty-seven Freeman, that wants to take ten people fishing, and I'm trying to think of why it's fair to tell him that he can only keep two fish, but we're going to give extra consideration for other boats that carry more than six passengers, and so I think the consistency there is important, and, at least for us down South, this is not an issue.

The gag and black grouper issue is not one -- We've gone along with this, and conceded with this, and I think it's a preemptive conservation approach. I personally don't think that -- I think a black grouper and a gag, or two blacks, is plenty for six people, but, if you've got twelve people on the boat, even if it's a private recreational trip, I think they should enjoy the same benefits of that scaled bag limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: For me, it's very different, because the headboat, a headboat, properly defined, has the reporting requirement, mandatory reporting, and, for me, my line, and I don't know how we word it, but my definition is vessels that are part of the headboat mandatory reporting program, and so, for me, I would I would not be supportive of going beyond those vessels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So let me ask another question, and I don't know if it's to you or Andy, but you all are saying -- Andy, I think you're saying not every headboat is part of that program, and so, if we just applied it to that universe, it's even smaller than boats that carry more -- For-hire boats that carry more than six passengers, because not every headboat is in that universe.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think it's a little bit of the semantics of the definition, right, and you can have larger-capacity boats that aren't necessarily operating on a pay-passenger basis, right, that then are truly defined as headboats, but there are certainly boats that are permitted, that are larger than six-pack capacity, but do not fall in our Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I just wanted to go back to what Kerry was saying, and I think the mandatory reporting one is separate, and, quite frankly, I think there's ways to get to that, but I don't understand what the what the harm is, and it's fairly few vessels on the rec side, and I think we're just setting ourselves up for a challenge in why we're treating them different, but, you know, an extra two black grouper, or gags, for these boats that have over six passengers on a rec trip, seems like a *de minimis* concern, in terms of creating overfishing, or I'm not sure exactly what the concern is there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy, and then Tom, and then Amy.

MS. HELMEY: Well, my vessel -- My vessel carried -- It had an inspection for up to ten people, and, anything over six, we carried four, and so I don't know where that would put -- I wasn't a headboat, because I didn't charge per person, but I was a charter boat, and so I guess we have to clarify that, but I did report.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm also going to bring up another thing that's swirling around in my brain. If it's per -- If we go the route of doing this per six passengers, like with Judy's boat, those four people, do they get two more fish? Is that the intent, or do you have to have at least twelve people to get the second bag limit, and so that's my -- The thing that's been swirling around in my head that I feel like needs to be fixed, or figured out. Okay. I have Tom, and then Amy.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and so, Jessica, I appreciate you bringing that up. We discussed that a little bit at the Law Enforcement AP in January, and I think that's an important point. I was always under the impression that, in order to qualify for that extra limit, you would have to have that extra six people. Like, if you had eleven people, you're stuck at one. If you have thirteen -- You know what I mean? You're stuck at one boat limit, but, if you're at twelve, you get your two. If you're at thirteen, you get two. If you're at eighteen, you get your three, but I do think it's very important for us to determine that.

I do want to go back to a couple of things. I mean, we're going down this conversation about, you know, recreational boats that are, you know, potentially carrying more people, and having them qualify, and I don't think that was ever the intention of this amendment, in particular. I think it was to look at the component of the for-hire sector that was considered a headboat, and we have had this discussion of how to find a headboat in the past, and that's something that we need to be having as well, right? We've had this discussion at other times.

I do worry, if we start opening up to rec -- It's a little bit of a can of worms. I think we'll have to have that conversation about dolphin, and I'm not sure people want to have that about dolphin, right, and so, back to it, I guess that I want to end this with a question, to circle back a little bit for Andy. If we have these vessels that are certified, you know, and they have a COI to take more than six people, why are some of them not part of the headboat reporting program?

MR. STRELCHECK: That is a great question for John Walter to answer.

DR. WALTER: I think we had this question before, and I think I need to ask Rob Cheshire about why those might not be part of the survey, and so I'll get back to people. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, John, while you're asking Rob, I guess the question would be, if they are not in the Southeast Headboat Survey, are they then reporting to SEFHIER, would be the follow-up question to that.

DR. COLLIER: The other question is, when these vessels are removed, or not considered for the headboat survey, are they then included in the sampling pool for MRIP?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, the points of, you know, over six, and then up to twelve, you know, if you did it per six, I could live with that. I'm just trying to keep consistency and simplicity here. I mean, you can remove all the designations of boats, and you can take it all away. Every six passengers get two fish, and it doesn't matter if you're a headboat, a charter boat or a rec boat, and that seems to be the fair thing, from my perspective.

MS. IBERLE: So I think, to move forward, and, again, this is the first time we're bringing you a set of actions, and so we're kind of at the starting gate for this one, and so I think we need -- The committee should consider two things, whether or not you want this to encompass all vessels with anyone over six passengers or you are truly wanting to keep the per-six-passenger vessel limit at a headboat -- Like specific only to headboats.

If that is the way that you guys would like to go, then I think what we can do as staff is, in between now and the next meeting, really dig into the great questions that you guys have asked, and get with, you know, Andy's people, and our people, and bring to you, in September, maybe a better definition of a headboat, other than just the COI, and kind of bring you some more information, if that's the route that you want to go, but I think we need to start more at how do you want to move forward with this, and does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let me try to facilitate that discussion. What she's saying is do we just mean this as not about headboats, and that it applies to any vessel, any recreational vessel, with more than six passengers, and so -- Okay, and I see some people nodding their heads no, that that's not their intention, but can you put some of that on the record?

The thing that comes to my mind is I can't remember what the analyses look like when we were looking at the gag and the black document, and like I can't remember what the analysis looked

like, and how much of a difference it made, et cetera, and so it's hard for me to see that, but, knowing that we're trying to do some rebuilding on gag, it just -- Then I have these questions about, if it's seven people, do they get another fish, versus does it have to be truly divisible by six, and like twelve, eighteen, like Tom is saying, and so trying to have some conversation about this. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Well, there's a there's a lot to talk about. I've been waiting for Trish to talk about her mountain cousins, but which -- But, in all seriousness, the big part of this discussion was why we were looking at this, is that we felt that headboats provide unique access to the fishery, particularly for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds who may not be able to own a boat, who can, you know, go and access these hard-to-get-to fisheries. While I appreciate the comments of, you know, large private rec boats that may be wanting to harvest a bit more, I don't think that necessarily meshed with the rationale we provided when we started this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I was just looking -- I know, in North Carolina, I think our definition really is greater than six is headboat, and six or less is charter, and greater than six is headboat, but I think there's different licenses that we have available for either group, but I'll be honest that, in working out on our red snapper EFP, that's how I broke out headboats from charter boats, was that number, and so I don't know, and just throwing that out there that, in North Carolina, we classify a headboat as greater than six.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to go to Charlie, but then we also have Rob Cheshire on the webinar, and he has his hand raised, and so, after we go to Charlie, we'll go to him.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and considering, you know, our definition from headboat, from what I understood was pretty stable, and, you know, headboats had their reporting, and they had their sector, per se, and I'm thinking of, you know, down the road, possible things that may happen, and have happened in the Gulf.

They have gone to sector allocations for headboats, charter boats, whatever, and I'm thinking -- I don't know that we will, but, should we ever get to that point, we would want to go ahead, probably, and make sure that we keep these sectors clean, with clean definitions for them, so, as we proceed down the road on how we're going to allocate between sectors and stakeholders, that we've got some clean ways to do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let's go to Rob, and then we'll go to Robert. Rob, thank you for joining us. Did you understand all the questions that we had for you?

MR. CHESHIRE: I believe so, and so the definition for headboats in the Atlantic is a little bit different than the Gulf, and so, in the Atlantic, it is vessels with more than six passengers that also charge by the head and have a federal permit, and so there are some vessels that, you know, carry more than six passengers that we don't cover, but I believe it's the minority of trips.

One comment I had is that probably the easiest definition would just be, instead of a vessel definition using Coast Guard regulation, just to use the number of passengers on any given trip, and so, that way, the six-pack vessels would, you know, be limited to six, and other for-hire vessels,

if you're just using the for-hire sector, would just -- You know, calculate based on the number of anglers on a trip. I believe that was it, and I'm not sure if there was something I missed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy, was that all of your questions? I feel like you have more. Go ahead.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and hi, Rob. It's Amy Dukes from South Carolina DNR, and so I'm familiar with the boats that are legally licensed as headboats in South Carolina, but are not a part of the Southeast Headboat Survey platform, and so those folks are, of course, included in our reporting, but I've never really fully understood the mechanism behind how you decide are you a headboat that reports to the Southeast Headboat Survey or are you not, and how those boats are potentially interchanged through time, because we have seen where some have been Southeast Headboat Survey boats in the past, but that have shifted off, and then I've seen it the other way, where they've shifted back on.

I'm just trying to understand the rationale about that, and then, of course, Chip brings up a really good point. If they're not reporting to the headboat survey, perhaps they are reporting to SEFHIER, but then there's the disconnect between the SEFHIER data and the MRIP data being used in most of our assessments, and analysis, and so if you could just go into a little bit more about the rationale of the definition for why these boats are either in or not in the headboat survey.

MR. CHESHIRE: So, unlike the other surveys, we have port agents that hit most of the -- Well, hopefully all of the docks where any larger vessel like a headboat would be operating out of, and so usually we find out about new headboats, or headboats that move, from our port agents, usually before the move even happens, or before a vessel even gets here, or to their new operating place, but so it's a little -- It, you know, requires port agents on the docks to do that, but any vessel that's not in the headboat program should be in the MRIP and SEFHIER universe, if I'm not mistaken.

I'm not too involved with that. I don't know if Michelle Masi is online, and she might be able to answer more, if it goes into one or the other, but my understanding is it goes into both sampling universes if it's not in the headboat program, and so, you know, the advantage of the headboat program is it has been around forever, and it has really good compliance, and, you know, we've had electronic reporting since 2013, and so, you know, if you're thinking about sectors with, you know, good reporting as a basis for deciding on this, then, you know, the headboat program certainly is a little above average compared to SEFHIER, and definitely compared to the MRIP coverage.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy, is it more questions for Rob? Okay. Go ahead.

MS. DUKES: Thanks for that, Rob. I appreciate that. I would hate to -- I would hate to then limit those non-Southeast Headboat Survey headboats from an action like this, because it has been determined by some mechanism that they paid by the head, or they didn't pay by the head mechanism to whether or not they're in that program or not, and so it's more of a comment than it is a question, I guess, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any other folks have questions for Rob? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Rob, if we did this, and used the wording that the vessel had to report to the Southeast Headboat Survey, could those vessels that you have been discussing voluntarily say they

want to be held responsible for reporting, or would they not be allowed to go to you guys and say that?

MR. CHESHIRE: I think that's probably up for debate. Right now, you know, the definition that we have, and that they decided on a while back, was that it has to be a federally-permitted vessel, which I think you would want to retain, and that sort of influx of new vessels I guess could be handled, but we also would then have to spread out our port agent responsibilities a little more, and so it's a discussion we could start.

That's definitely for somebody above my pay grade to decide, but I'm saying it's possible that they -- You know, we have the electronic reporting in place, and, yes, it would definitely be -- Unfortunately, our group has been affected by the staffing losses, and so we're really in a bind right now with the work we have, and so that's definitely something to consider before we add vessels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy, another question for Rob?

MS. DUKES: Yes, Madam Chair. Rob, Andy gave us a stat a little while ago that there are forty-six additional boats that fall outside, and is that both in the South Atlantic and the Gulf, or is that just on the South Atlantic east coast?

MR. STRELCHECK: That's just from the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MR. CHESHIRE: I apologize, and I don't know much about those vessels, or why they're not in our program.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions for Rob?

MS. IBERLE: What I've got in here right now, just based off of that discussion, is just some language in this decision document to direct staff to draft language to identify headboat vessels for the purpose of a per-six-vessel limit for review at your September meeting, and so that would -- We would just take this back, consult, dig more into some of the kind of specifics that we've just brought up, and try to redefine that headboat maybe a little bit better at your next meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we're there yet to even embark on this document, because I don't think we're in agreement, and I've got some more folks in the queue, and so let me -- Let me go to those folks in the queue, and then we'll try to encapsulate this discussion. Robert, then C.J.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I mean, I'm still a little bit lost that we're continuing -- There's a lot of complication just in trying to sort out the categories, reporting and all of that, and the only objection at the table seems to be that we don't want to give wealthy fishermen more access to fish. Like that's lost on me.

Headboats are an important part of this. They do give access to other people, but not everybody that fishes on a private rec boat is wealthy. People who have those boats take a lot of their

employees and other people out, and they get access, and so this whole thing could be simplified if you just did this per-six person, or per-eight, however we want to do it, and that applies through all vessels, and it's whether it's a headboat or charter-for-hire that has more than six, and I have not heard anybody have concern that opening this type of access would create any pressure, or issues, for this fish stock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I couldn't remember that -- Whether it would or wouldn't. Okay, and so I have more people in the queue. I have C.J., and then I have Dewey.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a real quick clarification, and I had heard, earlier, about the Gulf having headboat separate allocations, and we don't have anything like that in the Gulf for any of our fisheries, and so I just wanted to clarify that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I don't -- To Robert's point there, I mean, I thought the making of this amendment, when it started out, was for a headboat amendment, and the stuff that we've been delving into, and so has anything -- Or has Robert requested anything to look at an analysis of what additional catch per six recreational anglers, or -- I'm not sure of the definition or whatever, but, I mean, for us, we can't decide here on that. There's got to be an analysis done, or something like that, I would think, to bring back to the table how much more additional fish that that would - - That would entail, and maybe somebody could help me out here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Well, I'm not going to help you out, Dewey, but I'm going to say a few things. I mean, Robert, your point is well taken, and I agree with you. When I went to my last comment, I was just going back to the intent of this amendment as we started it, and raising the concern I have is the can of worms that would open up like with dolphin, which I'm not so sure would be very popular if we were to consider, you know, multitudes of six across all other species, right, and I just want to raise that for conversation points. Now, I think that, if we want to consider that, we just need the analysis of it, and I think that that potentially could be a fair point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, for me, it has nothing to do with -- I want to go on -- I did not say anything about the socioeconomic status of the people that are on different boats. For me, the only reason I was comfortable in looking at this change to how we do things is because the headboat fishery has, and you heard Rob say, the best reporting record, or maybe not, and I don't -- He didn't compare it to the commercial guys, and so I don't know, but they have in a very good reporting record.

We have a very good idea of what's happening, and, also, for me, the consideration is that, at the end of the day, they are businesses, and so we were trying to ensure -- We were trying to help them as businesses. Whether or not they should be in the recreational category, that's a longer topic, for longer debate, and we've certainly had it before. If I had my druthers, they wouldn't be, because I don't think we should treat them as such.

They are businesses that we're trying -- We understand how they've been impacted by what's happening, and so we're trying to find a way for them to have a viable business model, and I feel comfortable doing that, because they have impeccable reporting. Anything outside of that, I certainly absolutely would not support, for the main reason that we're talking about. Like a gag grouper, that is we're rebuilding, is very susceptible to overfishing, and that level -- Any more increased effort would make me very nervous.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right, and so I have a number of hands, and then I'm going to try to figure out what we're doing with this document. Are we broadening it, or are we sticking with headboats only in this document, and so I have Amy, Robert, Andy, Tom.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and then, just from a memory standpoint, we went through the decision tools that were created and provided to us for both Amendment 36 and Amendment 55, and so, when we were looking at the bag limits, either possession or vessel, what we have on the books right now was determined through those decision tools, and, if we go and evaluate a broader scope of people that we're going to then look at a larger vessel limit in the private sector, versus just the small component of the headboat, I think that analysis is going to show us that we wouldn't be able to perhaps have that magnitude, but, as Dewey said, it would require some data analysis.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I don't want my comments to be mistaken as fully supportive of getting this access for the headboats. We all agree on that. It's just that, you know, the slides that started to come up, I started thinking about this. I'm like, okay, well, as you look at it, it just doesn't -- To me, it doesn't make sense.

Now the reporting thing is -- I'm on the same page with you. I think we should get to mandatory reporting across everything. It's part of what the EFPs were doing, and that's how we're going to solve this issue long term. We've got to get there, but, you know, there's another category now between headboats and six-packs. There's another group of people, and so what are we doing with them? Just because they're not reporting, do they not -- Should their businesses not benefit from these extra two fish?

I don't think so, and so I think, as you look at that, and you put it in context, it simplifies the rules, and it simplifies enforcement. It simplifies a lot of things that I think are worth thinking about. Even if we were to move ahead with headboats now, I think this is something that we need to circle back and revisit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so, pulling together this discussion, I know Allie has mentioned about bringing back a new definition, and I could see this as another action for the amendment, which is you consider allowing all recreational vessels greater than six passengers to qualify for the increased vessel limits, and you could have -- Limit it to all for-hire greater than six passengers, or you could even limit it further to only vessels participating in the Southeast Headboat Survey.

I think, if we do that, and go down that path, we're broadening the purpose and need, and we'll have to talk about that, but I feel like that at least addresses some of the questions about how are we defining it, and who qualifies, and then we could look at some of the analyses based on the other comments about the impacts of broadening it, versus keeping it narrow in scope.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, and, Robert, I think you summed up something here when you said that this is something we should consider looking to in the future, because what I brought up, when we started this amendment, is, particularly with the species we chose, right, and this is because we have entered uncharted waters with all these vessel limits, which are a new thing, right, for at least the species that we're considering here, and that's why we had to adjust how we do things, and define these things, but I do think that this is something that we're going to be -- Depending on how we define it here, and what we do in our purpose and need, this is going to be a bigger conversation that we have looking forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I'm going to kind of follow up with what Kerry was saying. When we started this, or for me anyway, this, to me, was also to help the headboat industry. To me, the headboat industry provides another opportunity for access for people like my mountain cousins. There, and I got it in.

You know, it provides access for those people that, you know, they don't live on the coast, and don't have the opportunity to go fishing every day off the coast. They allow, you know, access to folks that can't afford a charter boat, or, you know, own a private boat, or don't even know how to drive a rental boat. It's providing -- I think the big thing for me, and why I kind of hold the headboat industry close to my heart, is it just -- It allows access for the rest of those people that like fish, but don't live here, or can afford to go fishing every day, or can afford to have, you know, their own private boat, and, again, don't know how to -- You know, if they rented a boat, we don't want them getting hurt either, because they don't know how to run a boat to go.

It's really about -- It's just access for those folks that can't -- It's access for those folks that don't have regular access to, you know, those fisheries, those offshore fisheries, and they can -- Yes, they can go to, you know, a pier, and, you know, a lot of them do, but, you know, thinking about my mountain cousins, and they get a chance to run out there, and, you know, they're used to catching brim, and, you know, largemouth bass and stuff, but they're going to get to catch, you know, something bigger, a gag or a scamp or whatever, but, you know, it's --

It's both a social and an economic piece of this total fishery that I think is important, and this is why I support trying to do something, be it six -- You know, based off of six people, three people, ten people, whatever, but I just -- If we lose a headboat -- If headboats have to go out of business or whatever, because they can't afford to go anymore, that's going to be a big loss to a lot of citizens in the South Atlantic region, and so that's my thoughts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so a reminder that -- You probably saw the email that they're about to test the fire alarm here, and so I don't think that we're going to be able to wrap this discussion up before the start testing the fire alarm, and so my suggestion would be to go ahead

and break early for lunch, and then, when we come back -- That will give people time to think about this a little bit more, and think about what the next steps are here. You've heard a lot of different discussion, and we need to figure out what we're doing with this amendment, and so, Madam Chair, what time should we come back from lunch?

MS. MURPHEY: Let's just come back at 1:30.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so back at 1:30.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MURPHEY: All right. I hope everybody enjoyed their lunch, and so we're going to go ahead and return back to the Snapper Grouper Committee meeting and the headboat vessel limit discussion, and so take it over, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. When we left off, we were still trying to figure out what's in the amendment, and what's out of the amendment, and so we were having a discussion about is this amendment just focused on headboats, and we'll get to defining a headboat in a minute, but I'm trying to kind of take the temperature of the committee, to figure out is this all recreational vessels more than six passengers, or is it particular types of headboats, or is it any for-hire boat with more than six passengers, and so I would like to see some folks kind of weigh-in on what we're covering here.

I would just remind you that, the species that have vessel limits, they have vessel limits, which is something that we don't always use, but we use it when species are likely not doing very well, and then we put a vessel limit on there, in addition to the other regulations, and so we wouldn't have the vessel limit if these species were doing better, I guess is what I would say, and we would be seeking to likely remove it at some point as the fishery rebuilds. Kerry, and then Charlie, and then Tom.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and that's a good point, Jessica. You know, I'm torn between sort of -- I think, a long time ago, earlier in this discussion, Andy came up with the sort of range of three things, and I'm torn between seeing the analysis on that, but also feeling pretty confident that what we're going to experience is that -- You know, the gag season is a short season already,

It is determined -- Andy has to make projections to figure out when the season is going to close. If you expand effort, and this will expand effort if beyond the point -- Less than 1 percent of the recreational fishery that the headboat folks make up, and this goes far beyond that small portion of the fishery.

The effort understanding, the catch understanding, is a lot more uncertain. I think what the analysis is going to show, and I think we're all sort of wise enough to understand, is the analysis is, at the very least, going to show a somewhat shorter gag season, and I think it has the potential to show a much larger -- A much shorter gag season, and so, if it's important for everyone to see that analysis on paper, I'm not going to fight it, but I still wouldn't won't support this overall, once we get past that part, and I think maybe we just need to see the numbers to make our point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so you're suggesting that we would bring in the numbers on all recreational vessels before making a decision, and is that what you're saying?

MS. MARHEFKA: No, and I'm not saying -- I'm saying I can understand why other people would want that, and I don't think it's necessary, because I've been doing this a long time, and understand what's going on, and I think that we know what the numbers are going to show, and particularly because we recently looked at gag and black grouper in those amendments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have a list of folks. I have Charlie, Tom, Robert, Dewey.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I think we basically started out with the headboats that were in the survey, because we knew really closely what they were doing, and they were reporting really well, probably as good as anybody, and I'm cautious about opening up the bag of worms that we could get into otherwise.

Like Kerry says, you know, what's it going to do to things like gag grouper and stuff, but I would like to know what this other forty-eight headboats are. You know, it would really help me make an educated -- A really better decision if I knew what they were, or what they were doing, why they weren't in the survey, and I really, really would like to know that, but I'm inclined to just stay with the narrow view of the headboats in the survey.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Jessica, I want to thank you for your comment to really kind of boil it down, and it's we have these vessel limits because these species aren't doing well, and I think all of us here would like to move to a place where this -- Where they're doing better, and we won't have to have vessel limits anymore, right, and I came to this amendment because we have headboats which we have established and, as we all know, are very important to our coastal economies.

It's very important access, and they had a business issue that we needed to address, and I'm comfortable moving forward with this, and also at the same point that it's a small community. They have good reporting, right? Like Charlie said, and like Kerry said, I also really want to know about those forty-eight boats, and like, whatever that number is, I would really like to see that, though, at this point, I am more uncomfortable moving forward with the fact that, if this is all for rec vessels -- You know, we made those catch levels, and we did all the analysis assuming that this vessel would apply to all recreational boats, and so I'm concerned about coming at that from the backend and, you know, changing something here.

I would point out though, as our fisheries change, and things like vessel limits, you know, unfortunately, may become more common, this is something we were going to have to keep in mind looking forward, and I think that we do need to continue talking about that in different capacities.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So, you know, Kerry, I went back and looked at some stuff, and, you know, this also kind of highlights that the challenges are -- You know, we're dealing with them across the

entire South Atlantic, but they're not exactly the same where I come from and where you come from, and so we're trying to find a solution that works for everybody.

You know, at one point, part of this was driven because people were confusing blacks with gags, which was something that I adamantly said I don't -- That is not an issue for us in south Florida, and the Keys, and that is not happening, that is causing an issue here, and so we kind of, you know, went down the path, and I went back and looked at some of the headboat stuff, and I do agree with you that the one real big factor that pushed this was there's not likely to be a big impact, because, if you go back and look at the headboat surveys, they're not going to start converting a lot of these landings, but it's important to have the opportunity for the people who are going fishing.

I think this kind of needs to separate into two things. I do think we should come back to what Charlie just said, which is keep this narrow, and let's get the headboats across the line. Let's solve that problem for them, and there's something here that we need to continue to talk about, and I would like to figure out a way where we can create a solution to try and minimize effort in areas where this is really a problem, but not also, you know, take too much here from some of the folks in in south Florida, or further down in the Keys that --

You know, the black grouper fishery down there is pretty strong. It was really good this year, and a lot of folks were hesitant, but accepting of going to two fish, and they'll be fine with that, but I think, if they hear that there's other boats that are getting more access, why wouldn't -- Shouldn't they be allowed to it, and I understand it's a complex issue, but I would like to figure out how to circle back to that part of it, and, you know, again, coming back, bringing this to home about the headboats, I think we've got the data, and I think we all agree on that point, and let's see if we can move that along and get something done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I have Dewey.

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it sounds like we're wanting to move forward with headboats, but then we've got a couple different kinds of headboats, and so I would love to see staff come back with kind of what is -- What is the difference? What's going on with these forty-eight additional headboats, and see -- Is that because of how a headboat is defined, et cetera?

Then another thing that it seems like we're going to get analyzed is this per-six vessel limit, and we would look at that at the next meeting, and are we good with this per-six, and so I see some heads questioning that component, and so, if you have some comments on this per-six, can you comment on that? Tom, do you have your hand up? Tom, and then Amy.

MR. ROLLER: My comment is, while I'm interested in it, I also don't want it to bog this down, and so I'm curious to what sort of workload and whatnot that would be, because, like we said, it's important for us to move this forward, and let's move this forward, but let's not -- That was a lot of my concern about having that discussion. It was that I just don't want it to be this new can of worms that we open up that makes this a lot slower to be put into place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and just to remind this body that we did get some great headboat information provided to us on a per-angler and per-vessel basis at our March meeting, that I thought Chip put together for us, and is that correct? Am I remembering correctly?

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, really quickly, just I guess we've kind of gone over what you did in March, and we're pretty early on in the process of this. In March, you looked at that analysis that Chip put together, and then initiated this amendment. As far as, you know, what we need for this meeting, we've done a lot of it. We've discussed, you know, kind of the intent of the amendment as a whole. We will review your purpose and need statements, and your draft actions and alternatives, and make any modifications, if necessary, and that's all we were looking for today.

This is our current tentative timing for this amendment, and so we're hoping to kind of make sure that these actions and alternatives look good going forward, and then bring you guys a preliminary analysis in September. In December, hopefully get you a public hearing document, and you can select preferred alternatives, and possibly approve for public hearings at that meeting.

Then conducting public hearings tentatively in early 2027, and then, in March, reviewing those public hearing comments, and then, in June, reviewing the final draft and considering for final approval, and so that's what we have for right now.

For your purpose and need, this is -- Again, this is an initial draft, and so this was our first kind of stab at putting together the purpose and need for this. We've had a lot of discussion on the intent of this amendment as a whole, but, right now, it reads the purpose of this framework amendment is to revise the for-hire vessel limit for gag and black grouper and establish a vessel limit for scamp/yellowmouth grouper that would allow vessels with a federal South Atlantic charter/headboat open access permit and a valid U.S. Coast Guard-issued Certificate of Inspection to retain a per-passenger limit of gag, black grouper, and scamp/yellowmouth grouper.

Then the need would be -- The need for this framework amendment is to allow for greater efficiency for federally-permitted headboats, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects,

In reading over this purpose and need statement, I think it might behoove us to put in per-six-passenger in here, and specify that, and then the other thing I'll note is that I highlighted scamp and yellowmouth, just because, again, going back to those background slides, if you put in a per-six vessel limit for headboats without currently having a vessel limit in place, that would be more restrictive than the current bag limit.

If you remember back to Amendment 55, you actually considered a vessel limit in that amendment, and, ultimately, reduced the bag limit from three fish to one fish. I looked over your draft rationale for that, and the rationale was that the reduction in bag limit constrained harvest to the reduced levels needed from the assessment without a closure, and you felt that that reduction in harvest was sufficient without having to go to a vessel limit, and so I just wanted to provide that before I set you loose.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I'm going to try to restate some of what she said. Basically, we don't need to do a vessel limit for headboats, for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, because we didn't establish a vessel limit when we went through those species, and so I would say we remove

scamp and yellowmouth from the purpose, the need, and the action in the document, because it doesn't have a vessel limit. Then that what that leaves us with is just dealing with the for-hire vessel limit for gag and black, and is that right? Okay. I just wanted to make sure that I understood. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: I'm thinking ahead, and scary, but, should we need a scamp/yellowmouth vessel limit in the future, do we want to leave it in there and have an option of no limit for now, and then, when we need to put one in there, then we can change that easier, and just a thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm raising my hand to call myself, and so clearly I need some more caffeine after lunch. My short answer is probably no, because I'm thinking, with kind of the framework that we set up for gag and black, then you could just use that same approach, because we already would have defined it, and we already would have figured out how it was going to work, and so, to me, gag and black are going to set the framework that you could use for any other species as needed in the future.

Okay. I'm looking around see if other people -- Other people are nodding their heads. Okay. All right. Anything else on the purpose or the need statement? Any changes that are suggested for either one of those? We're removing -- Other than that, do we need to make any changes? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: One other possible question. A headboat goes out and has less than six people. If they don't make the first six people, then they -- What happens?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie says it's in the actions and wait for it. She said wait for it. All right. Okay. All right, and I feel like we're good here. Once again, this is the first time we're looking at it, and we can make changes later in the meeting, or even at future meetings, but I'm going to pass it back to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and so is kind of going to be the nuts-and-bolts of how this for-hire vessel - - Sorry. Headboat vessel limit would work, and so, again, just I want to point out the action language. The action language will revise the for-hire vessel limit for gag and black grouper. Again, the language is like that because of the vessel limit that is currently in place, and so there is a for-hire vessel limit, and so then we are revising it to specify this per-six limit for headboats only, and so, when we have a more definitive definition of headboat, the action -- The alternative language will most likely change to incorporate that.

Alternative 1 is your status quo, and there's that overarching three-fish grouper tilefish aggregate bag limit. There's the daily bag limit of one fish, and so, again, this was like the Herlinda, Klein, Dennis scenario, and then there's the for-hire vessel limit of two fish, any combination of gag and black grouper, per trip, and then captain and crew may not retain. Again, we're assuming that Regulatory Amendment 36 will be in place once this is put into place.

Alternative 2 would revise that for-hire vessel limit to one gag or black grouper combined per six passengers for vessels with the South Atlantic charter/headboat open access permit and a valid U.S. Coast Guard-issued Certificate of Inspection. Again, that was our first stab at defining the headboat, and so that sentence right there says you have to be a headboat, and this is what defines that.

Then it says the maximum number of gag or black grouper combined that can be retained is twelve fish. Again, I have that highlighted because that was that AP recommendation, and we built it in here, and, again, looking for guidance on that sentence, and so that's that cap, right, and we could have that be twelve fish, ten fish, whatever the committee prefers, or we could take it out completely.

Then the next sentence is just kind of like the exclusionary sentence, and so any vessel that does not hold a valid U.S. Coast Guard-issued COI, and the other thing I think it might be good to include in this sentence would be mentioned of the permit again, and so, if you don't have the permit, and you don't have the COI, then your vessel limit would be two gag or black grouper combined per vessel per day, and so, again, thinking back to the slides, we're not aiming to change the vessel limit for private rec or charter, anyone that isn't defined as a headboat within this alternative language, and so that last sentence is just saying status quo for everyone else.

The difference between what should say Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 is it's either one fish per six people or two fish per six people, and so that's, right now, the difference between your two alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was where my question is, and so I guess -- Maybe we need Alternative 2 because it's part of the range, but it just seems, since the current rule is two per vessel, why would we even consider Alternative 2, because that's dropping it down, and so then, if that vessel has six fish, I mean six people, then they can only have one, whereas, if they weren't on that vessel, that vessel could have two, and like that's the part that's confusing me.

MS. IBERLE: The way I think of it is Alternative 2 is a more restrictive per-six limit, and so, when you're looking at this table here, the left column is the number of people in groups of six. The next column over to the right is a limit of one fish per six people, and then two fish per six people, and so, if you're looking at, if you have six people in the boat, under the one per six, you're only allowed to have that one fish. Under the two fish per six, then you're allowed to have two fish, and so it's essentially just how many fish are you giving each group of six, one fish or two fish, and does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It does, but am I wrong that the vessel limit right now applies -- It's two, and so then why are you saying -- Why are we now -- The first alternative is making it more restrictive than two fish per vessel, and you're now saying, if you have six or less people, there's an option in here where we're even more restrictive than that, and saying, just kidding, headboats, and we thought we were fixing this for you, but we're going to choose this option where now you have a smaller vessel limit, and so that's why I was saying I feel like that Alternative 2 is a no-go.

MS. IBERLE: I guess, and this is just me thinking on the fly, you could say the status quo vessel limit of two fish up to six people, and then, at twelve -- Yes, at twelve people, then you could increase by one fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So maybe Alternative 2 goes away, and then you have Alternative 3, and then you have another alternative that's how you're going to increase it as the number of passengers increase, and is that -- Because you're saying -- The example you just gave was one additional fish for the next six passengers, instead of two additional fish for the next six passengers, and is that what you said?

MS. IBERLE: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, but it seems like we should have an option where it climbs up to per six at a time, but Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Should we play around with the cap?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MURPHEY: The twelve, and I was wondering if that's what we ought to do, is play around with the cap on the vessels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and maybe there's subalternatives or something here, but, yes, I -- I just feel like Alternative 2 should go away, because it's technically more restrictive than the overall vessel limit. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I agree. I agree with that. I think maybe playing with the caps, the vessel caps, might be a better way to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I'm pretty sure we've seen, in the past, an analysis of headboats and, for instance, how many gags they've averaged over periods of time, when they didn't have this vessel limit, and what were they catching when they had fifty passengers onboard, and, as I remember, it was a pretty small number. It wasn't any gigantic number, but I like your idea of, okay, on a on a six-pack boat, it's two, and so now why wouldn't -- Logically thinking, if you go on a multi-passenger, we're going to multiply that two by six, and the numbers just kind of line up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It goes up by two, and not by two plus one plus one plus one. It's like two plus two plus two.

MR. HULL: Yes, and it's easier.

MS. IBERLE: I think that's all I've got, and so, in the discussion section, I just highlighted -- Just noting, again, that the gag fishery is currently under a rebuilding plan. I noted some closures, some recent closures, and the documents in your binder have been updated to reflect those closures as well.

Then Table 1, again, kind of shows that breakdown of -- Again, obviously, we're kind of going to alter this for you, but it shows the breakdown of how many fish you would have under that Alternative 3 for each group of six, and then, you know, the max per vessel fish cap, and then the what would be most restrictive for private and charter, since that's not being modified.

Then I just highlighted some of that analysis that was presented in March, and then pulled that figure for you guys, and so this was Figure 5 in that analysis that looked at the estimated total number of gag and black grouper kept under those three management scenarios, and then that full

analysis is linked in that figure title, and that -- So we've already kind of reviewed and modified this.

The one thing I will say is so your motion in March to initiate this amendment specifically listed species. Typically, this early on, we wouldn't look for a motion to remove an action, but, since we specifically included scamp/yellowmouth in that motion, I thought it might be preferable for the committee to make a motion to remove this action, but I'll leave that to you guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think that that's good. Amy, would you like to make that motion?

MS. DUKES: Yes, Madam Chair. **I move to remove Action 2 and mark as considered but rejected.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second? Seconded by Charlie. I feel like we've already discussed this. Any additional comments on this? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.** Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can we go back to Action 1, because I maybe was a little lost, in terms of where we landed. At the bottom, we have the note of are we looking at the six people, and then one additional fish per six?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we said two things. We said subalternatives to adjust the vessel cap, and so Alternative 2 would go away.

MR. STRELCHECK: Right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Because that's more restrictive than what we have, and so we said we would look at alternatives, but speak up if this isn't what you were thinking. We said we would look at alternatives that would step up to like two fish for the six people, plus one plus one plus one plus one, up to the cap of twelve, but we would consider other caps, and remember the AP suggested the cap, and then another alternative that would start at two per six and then step it up two by two by two by two, that way up to the cap, and so that's how we were getting the different alternatives, and the range, but, if you have other thoughts, please speak up.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for clarifying, and so I guess my perspective is we're overly complicating this by stepping up one by one by one, versus two by two and doubling it, right, and so I'm not really supportive of even spending time analyzing that. Then I think, you know, we do have some information with regard to headboat trips in the last three to five years, the number of gag and black grouper that were caught on those trips that could gauge, obviously, where that cap would be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let me reiterate that, and then I'll go to Amy, and so it sounds like we're getting rid of the stepping it up by one by one by one, and we're going to step it up two by two by two, and then alternatives for the cap. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, Andy, I appreciate you saying that you got some information out there. I think, also, from understanding the data perspective and this vessel cap, does the permit database allow for knowing the capacity on these permitted headboats as well as

what the -- I guess then actually looking into physical data, and the number of anglers that are typically on the boat, and so I think those two pieces of information might be helpful when we're talking about the vessel caps.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, just in response to that, Amy, yes, we have a lot of statistics from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey with passenger capacity, per-trip catch information, and we certainly can provide that.

Then, while I have the microphone, before we maybe get too far down the road, in terms of kind of what to come back with for analyses for this amendment in September, my recommendation is to kind of keep it simplistic, and it sounds like you want some summary statistics and data on the permits with regard to these non-headboat survey vessels, as well as we can, obviously, provide some data, like Amy was just suggesting, with regard to number of anglers per trip that are landing these species, et cetera, and is that good?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and thumbs-up up here. Okay. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: There was a report, and I can't remember when -- I worked with Rob Cheshire to put together that headboat report, and it had a lot of information on vessel capacity. It didn't necessarily focus in on just gag and black grouper trips, but we do have that report that describes capacity by vessel, and that's very difficult to get at, because some vessels -- It was just a challenge in order to get that estimate on capacity, and it doesn't mean that's how many people they actually take out on the trip, and trying to narrow that down, but we can resend that paper to you all and see if you want additional information beyond that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, please. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Just to be sure, kind of following Andy, so we're going to have an option, and we're going to start at two, and then we're going to -- Every six people, we'll have a subalternative, or an alternative, that can go up two fish, two fish, two fish for every six, and then we'll have another alternative, once we start at two, that goes up one fish, one fish, one fish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, and we got rid of the one by one by one, and we're sticking with two by two by two. The alternatives are different vessel caps, and so see the highlight that has the twelve on there? That's going to be the alternatives, and it's different caps instead, and so it only steps up by two.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, then we could still have Alternative 2, and start with two fish for the first six people, and then, for every six, we could go up one fish. We could still do that, and it would not be less than it already is, and that would be a viable alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree that it's a viable alternative, but we also just had a conversation, but, if you don't agree, then maybe this is you speaking up, that maybe that was too complex, because you only got the two fish vessel limit for the first six people, and then it's more complicated, because then you're only stepping it up one fish at a time, and Andy was making an explanation that it's probably easier to just step up two by two by two.

MR. PHILLIPS: I don't think we're going to get to the one fish for every six, much less the two, and so it may be a moot point, but, you know, going out to public hearing, and I don't know, but I'm not going to -- I'm not going to have a heartburn over it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I feel like we're going to see this at least one more time before it's going to go out to the public. All right. I think we're good with the headboat document. I'm looking around, to make sure everybody is good here. All right, and so then next up is the evaluation of the sunseting of the spawning special management zones, which is Reg Amendment 39, and I'm going to turn it back to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Sounds good, and you guys are stuck with me for this thing and one more thing. All right, and so a refresher on your SSMZ regulatory amendment. Like the headboat vessel limit, this is the first time you guys are seeing actions and alternatives for this. Snapper Grouper Amendment 36 established five spawning special management zones, and so that was South Cape Lookout, Georgetown Hole, Area 51, Area 53, and Warsaw Hole.

In that amendment, there was a sunset provision for all of the SSMZs, with the exception of Area 51 and Area 53, which were the artificial reefs. In addition, Amendment 36 included a system management plan for these spawning special management zones. I did want to note, in the appendix of your decision document, is a draft update on the tasks for the system management plan. I would advise reviewing that, and that's there for you. It is a draft document, but that reviews the work that's being done in the system management plan.

Then we also have the system management plan workgroup. This workgroup has met twice now, and I believe we have another meeting scheduled, or two more meetings scheduled, to evaluate the SSMZs. As we have it right now, the regulatory amendment will consider alternatives for the sunset provisions for South Cape Lookout, Georgetown Hole, and Warsaw Hole.

I am going to review your purpose and need at the end of this, because there are some additional considerations that staff has discussed that, if you want to explore those options, then that would change your purpose and need, and so I'm going to hold off on that. and we can look at your purpose and need after that discussion.

The other thing I did want to note is there was a really great seminar series, and so there was some research conducted by the Nature Conservancy SC DNR, and LGL Ecological Research Associates within these SSMZs. I summarized that in the discussion for each one of the actions, but they looked at spawning activity within the SSMZs. That seminar series is linked here, and highly recommend visiting that.

At your last meeting, like I mentioned, you initiated this amendment, and then, for this meeting, what we're looking to do today is just review your draft actions and alternatives, make any modifications necessary, review the amendment timeline, and then review that draft purpose indeed. Again, I mentioned there's like some additional considerations that staff has discussed, and I'll go over those at the end as well. If there's not any questions, I can hop right into actions and alternatives, if that's good with you.

All right, and so all of these actions are going to look the same for each one of the SSMZs, and so Action 1 would modify the sunset provision for the South Cape Lookout spawning special

management zone. Alternative 1 would keep the status quo, and so that sunset provision would expire on August 2nd of 2027, and then Alternative 2 and 3 extend that sunset provision either by ten years or twenty years, respectively, and then Alternative 4 removes the sunset provision from the SSMZ, and, in removing the sunset provision, you would retain -- The South Cape Lookout SSMZ would be essentially a permanent fixture, and so the bounds and the management measures that are currently in place for that SSMZ would be permanent until they were modified.

Table 1 shows you the bounds, and Table 2 has some attributes of this SSMZ. I did not put the management measures in here, but I will note that, currently, the management measures for all of the SSMZs are no harvesting of fishing for or harvesting snapper grouper species within the SSMZs year-round. You're allowed to possess snapper grouper species while transit transiting with gear stowed, and then no anchoring, use of anchor and chain, or grapple and chain, and so that's the management stipulations on those SSMZs.

Figure 1 shows you where specifically the South Cape Lookout SSMZ is located, and then, like I mentioned, this is kind of a summary of that research done and presented through that seminar series, and so the focal species for South Cape lookout were red grouper and greater amberjack. It is noted that the South Cape Lookout SSMZ has fewer bottom with high relief within the SSMZ compared to the other two, and so Georgetown Hole and Warsaw Hole.

As far as indirect evidence of spawning activity, there was high densities of vermilion snapper observed, and there were interspersed sandy areas that were considered potential red grouper spawning habitat. As far as direct evidence, in the form of gonad samples, in the two different samplings, there was one female and one male red grouper sampled in spawning condition, and then there was some other species, and so gag, silk snapper, scamp, and blackfin snapper, where females were sampled in spawning condition.

Then, in May of 2025, there were vermilion snapper and albacore jack -- Sorry. Vermilion snapper, albacore jack, blackfin snapper, and scamp sampled in spawning condition, and then some other species of note that were observed in this SSMZ were advanced-age red grouper, scamp, red porgy, gray triggerfish, graysby, and rock hind, and then it was also noted, through that study, that they saw immature snowy grouper. I guess I'll pause here to chat about South Cape Lookout, and then we can move on to the other SSMZs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Comments? Charlie, then Andy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thanks. I'm trying to remember, but I -- The work that was done inside of the SMZ, I don't think there was any work done outside of the SMZ to compare, you know, what they saw outside versus what they saw inside, and there wasn't, was there, or did I just miss it?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I'll be happy to talk to that. No, and they just focused on inside the spawning SMZs, and what they were trying to do was confirm whether or not spawning was occurring in these areas, and so, if you look at the samples there, you are seeing some spawning fish in those areas, and not necessarily looking for the best, but just to confirm that it is functioning as a spawning area.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay. Well, I guess then there may be more spawning in that area than outside of the area, and there probably is, and we don't know that, but so I'm trying to be a little bit of a devil's advocate, I guess, and what are we getting by keeping these areas closed if there is spawning outside of the area, even if it's maybe a little bit less, but it's close, and what so what are we getting? Are we -- Do we have a place where we can run experiments that aren't -- That people don't interfere with, because it's closed for fishing, and, you know, what are we really getting if we don't know that there's a difference between what's inside and what's outside the box?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Hands are going up. Let me try, and then I've got a queue going, but, Carolyn, I don't know if it was to Charlie's specific point, but so I think back to some of the aggregations that we have in state waters that are for mutton, and us documenting them going in and out of different areas, and between different closed areas and other things, and so the fish --

I'm looking at C.J., because he knows this research better than I do, but the fish kind of spilling outside of some of these areas in the Tortugas was indicative, I believe, that the spawning was increasing inside this closed spawning area, and so them kind of spilling outside that area is actually part of the benefit that you're getting, but I'm looking at C.J. Do you want to speak to what's happening at Riley's and all that with mutton?

DR. SWEETMAN: Yes, and there's a combination of things with mutton I think that could lead to why we're seeing some of the positive things that we're seeing, but certainly Riley's Hump was a historical spawning aggregation site, for mutton in particular, and it was kind of fished out, and then, when that closure went in place, we've seen it gradually increase, and then mutton snapper abundance all throughout, and not just Riley's, but the entire Dry Tortugas region kind of started to spill over. I think, since that closure was put in place -- I mean, it doesn't necessarily mean it's a smoking gun, but it's a -- You know, it's a good indicator that these things seem to be working, and having a positive effect on that stock in particular.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Carolyn, was it to that point?

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I think one of the things that, as I was looking at the numbers that were provided, knowing what the full sample size was, because it's one of these things that -- Even though you're talking like one female and one male red grouper in sampled spawning condition, but, if those were the only two, you know, that at least has a little bit, as opposed to two out of twenty that were spawning, because you have that idea of they're really not as much of an aggregate for spawning, and I think that would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip, do you have that?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so that's in that companion document, and I believe it's an appendix to this one, if you want to look at not only in the most recent sampling, but we also tied back to the sampling that occurred back in 2016 and 2017, and so there's quite a bit of information that is provided on number of fish that they sampled for gonads and number of fish that were -- Or number of fish that they sampled overall, and then some of the length of those fish, right, because the spawning season varies among species, and so length might be indicative of potentially spawning size, or spawning age fish, if they're going to move or not, and just trying to get all the information that might be available to you, but, if you have a chance to look at that document, and give me additional feedback, I'll try to get that information incorporated.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy, you had your hand up?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, first, I like that we're doing these for each individual SMZ, and so my comment really relates the range of alternatives. We, obviously, have the sunset expires, and we have the sunset continues without -- Or no sunset at all, and then ten and twenty years. I would recommend eliminating the twenty-year alternative and actually replacing it with a shorter time period of like a five-year alternative.

The reason I say that is that this is regulatory neutral, in my view, to continue these, but it could be viewed also as a deregulatory opportunity, and I think it would be good for us to discuss, obviously, if we're going to continue these, what's that timeframe to continue them, and having a short, kind of medium, and indefinite timeframe, to me, provides a more reasonable range for consideration, and so that's my proposal.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you? Other comments? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I -- Just outside of the specialized research that was happening in each of these areas, the SERFS data, the trap index and the video index, have sampling sites both in and adjacent to these areas, and that is also continuing to collect valuable information in these areas, and so it's in addition to those specialized projects, and I just wanted to bring that to the attention.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I agree we need to look at each area in isolation, but I also think it's important to have an overall conversation about the council's approach to these spawning SMZs, and make sure we're all on the same page about why we have them. I was not on the council during the spawning SMZ part, but I was -- Well, two things.

One, you know, I was working with staff, and was running the -- Sort of developing the deepwater marine protected areas, and so I have some knowledge of the importance of areas like this, and, also, I think Mark was involved in the first couple years of research in these spawning SMZs, and I just want to remind everyone that these snapper grouper species that we're trying to protect are long-lived, slow-growing species that are highly susceptible to overfishing.

Some of them aggregate to spawn, and some of them are protogynous. They're unique fish, and we're in a time where there are certain places -- Effort is expanding, and not being constrained, and the idea of having these small areas -- We're not asking for a lot. Believe me, and I would ask for a lot more.

Having these small areas, that are untouched, and it blows my mind that we would even question that. I mean, the worst-case scenario is nothing happens, and I personally know the commercial fishermen have come aboard, and along, to liking these areas, and feeling like they do work. They're not limiting -- There's plenty of other areas to fish.

We know the fish are spawning there, and, as far as the five years, that is -- I get what Andy is saying, but it's problematic for me, because, again, these are long-lived species. These species

need a lot of time for the measures that we're implementing, any kind of management measures we're implementing, to actually show they're working, and so, you know, I'll do whatever it takes to get them through, but I think that we need to make sure on the same page. and understand why we're looking at spawning SMZs, and then we can go through each one and be like did this one -- Is this one doing it, but, as far as I'm concerned, I would like to think hopefully -- We've talked about these through thirty years of this council, and I would like to think that, hopefully, we're on the same page about the importance of leaving some of these species alone.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. I've got Dewey, then Charlie.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I listened a presentation, six months ago I believe it was, or it might have been a year now, about the spawning SMZs, and I thought there was some positive benefits in it. At the same time, I also that people that were out there sampling saw other vessels fishing in the area, and that's part of it. I mean, you're not going to be able to enforce everything like that, but I saw the potential for it, and I liked what I heard, and I would be in favor of keeping the spawning SMZs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, again, I was being a little bit of a devil's advocate, and I tend to do that at times. I do remember, if I'm not badly mistaken, as these things were getting things were getting close to the sunset date, there was some things to be -- Again, my memory is not real good sometimes, but there seemed to be more effort to make sure that there was some scientific work done, as a lack of a better term, to show what was going on.

I think having a sunset date coming up helped push, you know, people into investing in that work, and so I would be inclined to -- When it gets toward -- If we decide to pick a preferred, I would be inclined to lean to five years, or ten at the most, and my rationale would be to try to make sure people stay involved in putting that scientific effort, you know, into seeing what's going on out there. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That brought up another point. Allie, do you think that you could talk to some of the folks that did the research before and try to get a commitment from them that they are seeking to continue this in certain areas, you know, considering funding and other issues? I mean, can you see if -- Maybe we have that information now. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So we do have a workgroup that talks about -- So, when this was originally put together, the proposal to do this research, we formed a workgroup in order to help develop the proposal and all that. I will say that some of the funding sources that were used to do this work are no longer available, and so the Cooperative Research Program is no longer there.

There was a commitment by TNC that helped fund it, and so that would be up to their donors, and that can't be guaranteed, and then some of the funding came from the council itself, and I don't know if we would have the funding in the future to be able to do that sampling, and so I don't know if they're -- I mean, people are always willing to do work. I just don't know if we would be able to find the funding to do the work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I wasn't necessarily suggesting that it was our funding, but I was just wondering if, before we get to the final step of this document, if maybe some of those folks could have discussions about, if they see us put a sunset in there, would they make a commitment to try to help sample those areas again, I guess, and I don't think it needs to be answered before the next meeting. Kerry, and then Tom, and then Amy.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, back to the five-year, and I would just like to point out that, probably shortly after this goes in place, we have to start addressing it again, and that's bananas. Nothing is going to change in five years for these species. It is not -- I mean, I get the impression that five years gets, but, practically, it means nothing. We might as well not -- I don't -- Just we won't get something in place in time every five years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, to that point?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and not saying we're suggesting we're going to select this as a preferred, and I agree with a lot of the rationale you've already offered, and maybe we even move it to Considered but Rejected at some point, or even build the record now as to why we wouldn't want to consider that, right, but I think it's important that, when these regulations are now being reviewed, right, they are being looked at with scrutiny, and we want to make sure we have a solid record and rationale, given that this could be reviewed as regulatory, right, and so that's all I'm suggesting. I agree these are long-lived species.

The other comment I'll make is, you know, if we're going to consider twenty years, I don't think any of us probably around this table, and most of the staff, will be around to even remember what we did, and how we went about doing this, right, and so, the shorter the time period, the more likely you'll have people that will participate in the process.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I've got hands going up. I have Tom, and then Amy.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, and so, you know, Charlie, going back to your comment, I really appreciate you bringing that up, because that was the majority of the conversations I've had regarding this. While certainly I support it, and like the rationale and stuff provided around the table, and it's important that we have some of these small spaces, right, but the idea is a sunset is important, because we're holding the feet to the fire of ourselves, of the fishing and conservation community, to figure out a way in which to study these so we can justify their continuation.

Then I go back to Kerry's point of, if we stick with something like five years, I think, as soon as we pass this, we're going to have to start working on it again, and so that's why I view something like ten years as more practical, and, you know, those funding streams might not exist now, but I'm fairly confident, the closer we got to the end of that sunset, the more likely people are going to start again.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel it's probably really important that we try to build the rationale on the record to not support at a five-year option. I'm with a lot of the comments that have already been stated about managing a workload, the amount of time and energy and length of a process it takes us to be doing these amendments right now, and I understand that we need to

continue to do research in these areas, and funding is always going to be an issue, but we can justify it right now.

The goals and objectives of this project have been absolutely validated. There are signs, and validated data, of spawning in these areas, and it was described to us here. There's indirect evidence, and there's direct evidence, and there's continuing efforts going on with the SERFS index, and I really feel like ten years, at a minimum, from a workload capacity, is great, but I would think that, with this uncertainty of funding, and direction of the agency, and how partners can participate, twenty years just seemed a little bit more of an opportunity for us to do more research, and dive more into these areas, with a little bit more certainty to then perhaps come back and say, okay, hey, they really are, or they really aren't working, but I'm more of on the twenty-year sort of side of the house. I might be able to get my head wrapped around ten, but five just doesn't seem like it's worth our time and energy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I was actually going to suggest removing the twenty-year alternative, but it sounded like there was some support for it. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I was just going to add -- I know we're talking about spawning fish, but, with my habitat hat on, it also -- These places are probably also a way to have like, for lack of a better term, sentinel sites for how our habitat -- You know, are there changes in habitat, be it climate change or whatever, and I'm kind of thinking that might be an added indirect benefit, and especially another reason maybe to have long-term, and so a thought of more longer-term timelines, but I was just also just thinking from a habitat perspective.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and another perspective along those lines is, when you're applying for grants, and trying to get everything going, that's probably a three-year process itself, in order for you all to get a final report, just on a program that's going out there and sampling, and so it does really get tight, but, as other folks have said, if you have that deadline, that is most likely how this project got funded, is because there was urgency. There's a lot of urgency that's out there, and so, I mean, I prefer that these things are -- My personal opinion is they're there long-term, but, you know, it does create urgency if you have a sunset provision there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just a real quick note, and Dave can stand up and yell if I'm wrong, but we have similar funders for my day job, and I can tell you right now that, this year specifically, you know, the Walton Family Foundation, one of their top things is marine protected areas, and so I think they're -- Those kind of funders are starting to come back around to look at place-based management, and so this might be a great time to strike while the iron is hot, because they go in and out of fashion.

The ideas they have go in and out of fashion, and so I think I think we can do something, and so, you know -- I also wonder if ten years is not regulatory neutral, because we had ten years, and now we're keeping ten years, and so I wonder, Andy, if you're thinking if that could be considered regulatory neutral.

MR. STRELCHECK: It doesn't really matter what I think though, because I'm not the deciding official. I think the key is, and what I'm trying to emphasize here, is, you know, I think there's certainly arguments, and record, the council can build up terms of this being regulatory neutral. You're going to have to, obviously, evaluate each one of these, and determine whether to continue them or not, but eliminating, obviously, the requirements would, obviously, be deregulatory, right, and so that's the obvious one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to try to wrap up this discussion. I feel like we've had a good, overarching discussion about why we're doing this, and kind of where we think we're headed, and so I also think that, whatever the terms are, five, ten, twenty, or remove the sunset, is the same alternatives that we're going to have as we move through the rest of the document. It seemed like people were okay with adding an alternative for five years, and what about the twenty years? Are we keeping that as an alternative for all of these, or are we removing it? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think, overall, it's a pretty good range. I was just looking back through the document that Chip talked about, and you're looking at about six years between South Carolina DNR data from 2017 and the LGL survey in 2023 to 2025, and there's differences there. I mean, you can look at species differentiation, and the numbers change some, and so I think, you know, five years isn't necessarily bad. I think the question just becomes what you're wanting to see, like how long you honestly think is a good enough window to look at over -- Do you need three replications over a time window or just a couple?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so it sounds like we're thinking five, ten, and twenty, and so I'm thinking that we would need to do that in every single one of these particular actions, for all areas, but, Tom, did you have something to that?

MR. ROLLER: I was just going to voice support for keeping all of the options here. I think it's a wide range.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Perfect. Thank you. All right. With that, it sounds like we'll do five, ten, and twenty for all of these particular areas, and I'm going to pass it back to Allie so she can go to the other actions, and the other areas, to look at those studies.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and so, again, your action, or alternative, lineup was the same for each of the SSMZs, and so I went ahead and made the note to add that additional alternative for Georgetown Hole. Again. Table 3 is going to be your bounds, and Table 4 is some attributes of this SSMZ.

Figure 2 is going to be your location, and so, to review that study, and so the focal species for Devil's Hole and Georgetown Hole were scamp and gag. Some indirect evidence, they noted some scamp in spawning coloration, and that seminar series has a really great picture of scamp in that spawning coloration, and then blackbelly gag were present, and so, again, color indications that may indirectly show evidence of spawning.

Some direct evidence, and so, in April of 2023, seven female scamper sampled, and 100 percent were in spawning condition, and then, in April of 2024, fifteen female scamper sampled, and 93 percent were in spawning condition, and then eight female gag were sampled, and 88 percent were

in spawning condition. Then some other species of note observed in this SSMZ were warsaw grouper, speckled hind, and blackfin snapper.

I can just move straight to Warsaw Hole, and so, again, I will add in that additional alternative for you guys, and so, reviewing the evidence, or the research, on Warsaw Hole, which again is down in south Florida, and so the focal species for this, obviously, is Warsaw grouper, but also greater amberjack, and so some indirect evidence is there were large aggregations of greater amberjack that were believed to be related to spawning activity.

Then, for direct evidence, there were two female Warsaw grouper that were sampled, but they were regressing from having recently spawned, and there's more details on that, and the intricacies of what they were looking at, in that gonad study in that seminar series. Then one female red snapper that was sampled in spawning condition.

The second time it was sampled, there were two female Warsaw grouper sampled in spawning condition, and six female greater amberjacks that were in spawning condition. Then, again, other species of note in this SSMZ were some advanced-age, and so ten-plus-years, red snapper, speckled hind, and black grouper. Before we move on to the additional considerations, any questions on any of those SSMZs?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Just a silly question, and how do you know the snapper was greater than ten years old? Did you age it? It said observed, but it didn't say observed how.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other questions? All right. Back to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and so this was why we waited to look at the purpose and need, because, when we were setting up this amendment, one of the things that staff discussed was whether or not the council would like to -- Or I guess, at this point, the committee would like to modify the bounds and/or the management measures applied to any of these SSMZs.

With that, you could also incorporate Areas 51 and 53, and so this is outside of that sunset provision, and so making them bigger, making them smaller, modifying those management measures, which are listed there below, and the one thing we did note, since we are dealing with a timeline for the sunset provision, is that, if there is a desire to modify the SSMZ bounds or management measures, staff would recommend trying to find a different vehicle for this.

Again, the timing of this action, and the expiration of the current sunset provision on the SSMZs that do you have that sunset provision, the additional analysis that would be needed to analyze changing the bounds, or the management measures, may kind of stall this more than we would like, and so modifying the bounds, or the management measures, could also be completed in a separate framework amendment, and so it's framework-able, but that would -- We would advise you to do it in a separate framework vehicle, and so, with that, I'll pause here, so if the council wants to think about that now, or discuss it later, and we just wanted to note it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn, and then Amy.

DR. BELCHER: I guess the one question I would have is what grounds do we have for changing the size of an area, whether bigger or smaller, and Charlie kind of pointed out that we don't know anything much about outside of the bounds, and so I don't know that this is something that I would be wanting to consider at this point in time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, to add on to Carolyn's points, I think, if the discussion is not necessarily relevant right now, with the absence of data, perhaps that could be something that the workgroup discusses, about how they could perhaps extend their research bounds, both in and outside of the areas, but, with the time sensitivity of this amendment going through, the fact that, if we can figure out a way to make it either regulatory neutral, adding and changing management measures, and modifying those bounds, would definitely make it regulatory, and I do not want to do that, and slow this amendment down, knowing we have such a tight timeline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I what heard so far was we don't want to have actions in there to modify the bounds, or the management measures. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree completely, and I actually have more of like a procedural question, and please don't -- This is not aimed at anyone, but, when I saw this, I had some frustration, because we already had a purpose and need, and there was nothing in the purpose and need about what the council -- You know, about doing any of these things, and the council had a very clear purpose and need.

This council, this body, has never discussed expanding these areas, or moving them, or anything like that, and so I -- It was frustrating to me to see something come from outside of our normal chain of how things are developed. It's fine, but what can happen is there -- You know, if it's something that upsets people, and they read that in there, and it's not even something we have even considered, and then we're the ones on the hook, going we were never going to make them bigger, and we never talked about making them bigger.

I think the reason it's very clear that we can say that is because, again, the council talked about the purpose and need, and it's not in the purpose and need. The council had one thing we said we wanted to do in this, and so, in the future, I would just be on the lookout for that. I think that the suggestions of like what the scope of something is really has to come from -- You know, through the AP, through the council, blah, blah, blah, and that's all I have to say.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so that will take us to reviewing tentative timing and the purpose and need, and so we're bringing this to you now, and hopefully we will bring you a public hearing draft in September, where you can select preferreds and approve for public hearings, and we can hold public hearings in between September and December, and then bring you a draft final document in December for your approval.

That will bring us to the purpose and need, and so, right now, we have the purpose of this framework amendment is to retain, remove, or modify the sunset provisions for the following spawning special management zones, and then we have them listed there. Again, those are only the ones with the sunset provision.

The need for this framework amendment is to continue to prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield, reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality of economically and ecologically-important snapper grouper species, including speckled hind and Warsaw grouper, to the extent practicable, and achieve conservation goals, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, negative social and economic effects to snapper grouper fishermen and fishing communities within the aforementioned spawning special management zones.

This need was kind of taken from Amendment 36, where we originally established these, and we did not include anything about revising the bounds, or the management measures, within this draft purpose and need, but I'll turn it over to you guys to look for any edits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Allie. I'm giving folks a minute to review. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Mine is not so much to the purpose and need, but it was a question I was going to ask of Andy. Because of the timing of this, and with what has happened with some of the amendments, is there any way that we -- I mean, I'm thinking about the fact these sunset in August, and we have things that are still in the queue from back when I was chair, and is there some way that we know that this is going to get through the national office in time for the sunsets?

MR. STRELCHECK: There's no way I can predict whether it will get through by August or not. I mean, it's a tight timeline, but certainly it's doable, and, if we can get the amendment quickly after the December meeting, obviously, that will help us move it more quickly through the process and Headquarters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Anything else that people see, in reading the purpose and need statement? Anything that needs to be modified? I don't see any hands. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll just mention this, and I'm not ready to wordsmith, and so, because we say, in the purpose -- We're talking about removing, and it seems like it's then contrary with the need that we're going to achieve a lot of these, you know, things in the need, and so I'm struggling with that a little bit. Then, to me, because these are areas that are protecting spawning fish, it seems like we should put more emphasis on that, right, but maybe we could come back to this at Full Council with some ideas.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Allie feels like that she's got the direction that you're after, and can come back with something, possibly even at Full Council.

MR. STRELCHECK: Real quick, Allie, I'm not suggesting we take out "remove", but I think we have to think about it in light of the need, right, because I think remove is certainly an option on the table for the purpose here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That brings us to the end of this discussion on this particular amendment. Let's take a five-minute break, and we'll figure out if we can dive into yellowtail and mutton today.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to dive down into Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55. This is the mutton and yellowtail document. Just a reminder that this is a joint amendment with the Gulf Council, because we have a shared jurisdictional ABC between the Gulf and the South Atlantic for both mutton and yellowtail, and so, with that, I'm going to pass it over to Allie.

We're going to try to get as far as we can through this document in the next forty-five minutes, and just reminding people that we have a hard stop. We are ahead of schedule, and I don't want to jinx it, but it's okay if we stop in the middle of this document, and we'll pick that pick it back up in the morning.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, to be cognizant of time, I'm not going to spend a lot of time on background. I will just note this amendment is in response to the two most recent assessments for mutton, which is SEDAR 79 for mutton snapper and SEDAR 96 for yellowtail snapper, and both of those stocks are -- Both of those assessments indicated that both stocks were not overfished and not experiencing overfishing.

I'm going to kind of jump to your last meeting, and so, in March, we were waiting to be able to kind of crunch numbers for you guys, and so we just looked at actions and alternatives, and then we talked a little bit about sector allocations, and so those are the two South Atlantic-specific actions in this document

We kind of brainstormed a set of alternatives for those two actions, and we'll probably dig more into that tomorrow, but we also reviewed the data attributions for Monroe County, and I'll review that quickly, and we kind of, from what I understand, came to a consensus on how to deal with the data in Monroe County, as far as attributing it to the Gulf or the South Atlantic, because that area gets a little sticky.

For this meeting, the goals for today and tomorrow would be to review each action, including those catch levels that we now have, review the Gulf feedback, and so the Gulf met last week, and this decision document was revised, and I included some of their feedback, and updated that, and so we'll go over that, and then review a preliminary analysis, and that is included in the sector allocation, and so everything is tiered, and you'll see that analysis when we go over sector allocations.

For tentative timing we are seeing these actions and alternatives with catch levels now. In August, the Gulf will receive a public hearing draft, and hopefully select -- Well, they have selected preferreds for the jurisdictional allocation, which we will review, and hopefully they'll select the remaining preferreds for the sector allocations they've indicated, and they'll just follow the South Atlantic's guidance with respect to those actions.

In September, you guys will review a public hearing draft, and hopefully select preferreds, and proof of public hearing, and tentatively thinking about public hearings in the fall of 2026. In October, the Gulf Council will review public hearing comments, and consider for final approval, and then, tentatively, in December of 2026, we will bring it to you guys for final approval.

For the sake of time, I've already reviewed the ABC for both mutton and yellowtail, but all the information from those assessments is included in this section of the decision document, and so

I'm going to jump to your purpose and need. I won't read this out, since you guys have already discussed this, and approved it in December of 2025, but I will pause, to see if there are any modifications. I will say the Gulf viewed this purpose and need and did not have any modifications last week.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just pausing here for a second, in case folks have any comments on this, but you have seen it before. All right. I don't see any hands. Back to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I will quickly kind of summarize that discussion that we have had over a couple meetings of now on what to do with Monroe County, and so a reminder of why are we talking about Monroe County, and so each of the assessments for these species now include Florida State Reef Fish landings in those assessments, and so MRIP and SRFS differ in how the landings in southwest Florida, or Area D in Figure 3, are attributed, and so the IPT brought it to the council to discuss kind of how we want to deal with that moving forward.

You have how each survey kind of handles that area in this section here, and I'm not going to read over that verbatim, but, in March of 2026, after a lot of discussion back and forth, we decided that, for headboats, we would split the landings in Area D between the regions using SERFS, the headboat survey, and not what I'm thinking of as SRFS, the Southeast Reef Fish Survey. I have mixed those two up before.

With shore landings, we would use MRIP-FES and attribute all landings to the South Atlantic. The private recreational, we would split landings in Area D based on a ratio of catch between Areas D and E using Florida SRFS, and not the headboat survey, and then, for charter, we would split landings in Area D based on a ratio of catch between Areas D and E using the Florida SRFS, and the ratios are shown there, and, again, I probably should have gone to this figure first, and so Area D is that Monroe County, and so a lot of that decision was between Area D and Area E. Any additional questions on this before I move on?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. That will take us to your proposed actions and alternatives, and so your first two actions deal with the jurisdictional allocation between the regions for both species, starting with mutton, and so Action 1 will modify the southeastern U.S. mutton OFL, and so these are the stock OFL and the stock ABC, and then the jurisdictional apportionment and regional annual catch limits.

This table kind of lays out your actions right now, and so the Alternative 1 is a true no action. You're retaining the 18 percent/82 percent jurisdictional allocation between the Gulf and South Atlantic, and retaining your current ABC, which I believe actually is based off of MRFSS, or -- No, and, for mutton, I think it is CHTS, and so a catch level that is not based on best available science after that most recent assessment.

Alternative 2 would take those current percentages, and so it would take the 18 percent and the 82 percent and apply that jurisdictional split on the updated stock ABC from SEDAR 79. Alternative 3 would modify the jurisdictional apportionment based off of previous formulas that have been used, and so we've been calling this the Bowtie Formula, but with two date ranges, and so you have two subalternatives here, Alternative 3a, which is based on that what we call the Bowtie

Formula from 2004 to 2023 and 2021 to 2023, and then Alternative 3b is from 2014 to 2023 and 2021 to 2023.

You can see those result in a very similar percentage breakdown, and so you have 16 percent to the Gulf and 84 percent to the South Atlantic for Alternative 3a, and then 15 percent to the Gulf and 85 percent to the South Atlantic for Alternative 3b.

Table 5 shows you the coordinating catch levels for all of your alternatives. There's a lot of numbers going on here, and so I will note that these two columns here are values for the stock as a whole, and then this is going to be the Gulf ABC and ACL, and then the highlighted green is the numbers that you guys will be focusing on, because this is the South Atlantic ABC and ACL.

We also had some discussion, in I believe both December and March, that the South Atlantic does not currently have a buffer in between the South Atlantic ABC and ACL. We had a discussion on this, and you guys had provided some rationale on not including a buffer, and so we don't have an additional action to set the ACL. This action will set the ACL equal to your ABC, and then the same with the Gulf.

Then the Gulf, in June, discussed these alternatives. One committee member noted that they preferred using the most recent ten years for the basis of the jurisdictional allocation formula and at this time series best accounted for both recent data collection methods and recent range expansion. The Gulf made a motion to recommend that the Gulf select Alternative 3b in Action 1 as the preferred alternative for this action, and, Jessica, you were the liaison, and so I'll turn it over to you for any additional discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The Gulf had some discussion on this, but I would say that the Gulf really kind of defers to Florida for kind of what to do with mutton and yellowtail, and so, yes, they talked about the time series, and they talked a little bit about the buffer, but felt like it's a fairly healthy stock, and that they didn't necessarily need a buffer, and sometimes the Gulf Council puts some buffers in there, and uses ACTs, but I'm looking to C.J. as well, and I don't know that they had any concerns or anything.

What we're doing here is also using the Bowtie Method that has come from the South Atlantic Council, and so Ryan Rindone, the Gulf Council staff, was just kind of reminding them that the Bowtie Method is the method that the South Atlantic uses to kind of set this, but, C.J., I'll pass it over to you to add anything else here.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and there's a few discussion points relative to this topic, and we were consistent for both yellowtail and mutton here, choosing the options that were selected, and we chose that most recent ten years. The other option was twenty years. Specifically, it was highlighted that this covers, you know, all of the entire State Reef Fish Survey timeframe that that's been around for, as well as, like Allie said, it covers some range expansion issues that we've been seeing, people catching both mutton and yellowtail in areas further north in the Gulf, as you all are experiencing here as well, and I think that was that's about it that I wanted to talk about there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I would just add -- So just remember the Gulf picks the way that these joint documents work, the Gulf picks a preferred, and then the South Atlantic picks a

preferred, and so we are hoping that we can line up the preferreds, preferred alternatives, on these overarching actions, since the Gulf has already selected one.

If we can't line them up, you know, then the document is ping-ponging back and forth, and it takes more time to do it that way, but I'm happy to answer any additional questions, and I feel like the range is good. C.J., more points on this?

DR. SWEETMAN: Yes, and one more point that I forgot to add, and so, the Gulf Council, our ABC control rule, we had an 11 percent buffer in there, and that was already in place, and, because the stock is healthy, we decided to remove that. That's not specific to yellowtail, but because the -- Sorry, and we're on mutton right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm excited that you're excited about mutton and yellowtail. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just a couple more points, and so one stock, obviously, being split on two coasts. We are not wanting, obviously, closures, right, and so trying to, obviously, avoid the closures is going to be important, and so the jurisdictional apportionment I think reflects that, and the analyses to support that, and then, with regard to the State Reef Fish Survey, just to kind of put a finer point on that, and, you know, Jessica and C.J., you know the timing better than I do, but I believe it started in 2016 in the Gulf, roundabout, and 2020 in the South Atlantic. The farther back in time you go, you're essentially relying on calibrated estimates, and the more recent ten-year time period at least captures more of the SRFS survey, when it was up truly operational, as well as this kind of stock shift that we're seeing more recently along both coasts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. All true. Thank you for that, and so I would be looking for a motion to select a preferred here, especially thinking about the Gulf preferred, and so would someone be willing to make a motion to recommend the South Atlantic preferred? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm happy to do that. I just want to say, real quickly, as this is such a southern fishery, and there's a bunch of us that don't have knowledge, I will be relying on -- Like if there's a moment that you or Robert or C.J. are like -- You know, you're going to recognize an issue that I think some of us won't, and so I'm trusting you will bring that up. **With that said, I make a motion to recommend that we choose Alternative 3b in Action 1 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Kerry, and seconded by Carolyn. Any additional discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. That will bring us to Action 2, and so, essentially, this is going to be the same action. It's going to look a little bit different, because of what C.J. alluded to earlier, that buffer, but this is going to modify your stock OFL, stock ABC, and the jurisdictional apportionment between the Gulf and South Atlantic for yellowtail snapper.

Again, Alternative 1 is the true no action, retaining the current percentages on that ABC, and that is based on MRFSS, and so not best available science. Alternative 2 would apply the current percentages to the updated stock ABC. You will notice that each one of these alternatives has two subalternatives. These are Gulf-specific subalternatives, and so, like C.J. mentioned, the Gulf does currently have an 11 percent buffer in between the Gulf ACL and the Gulf ABC.

The way we had envisioned selecting preferreds was, if the South Atlantic had an alternative, like a main alternative, that they preferred, then they would kind of follow the Gulf's direction in which subalternatives, since that doesn't really pertain to our region.

Also, moving on with the alternatives, Alternatives 3 and 4 are going to be the same alternatives as with mutton, and so you have that twenty and ten-year Bowtie formulas, and then those result in the same percentages, and so, Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, you're using different year ranges and getting to the same percentages.

There was some discussion at the Gulf about possibly removing one of these alternatives. The Gulf GC was saying that we needed to retain them. Ultimately, the Gulf decided not to make a motion to retain them -- Sorry. To not remove them, and so there was no motion made to that effect.

Again, Table 6, and so, if you're looking for the South Atlantic values, you're going to look for those green cells. The way I set this up is you have a column for your stock OFL, and a column for your stock ABC, and then a column for your South Atlantic values, and then the subalternatives are going to go laterally in this table, and so, again, if you're curious as to what those values are for the Gulf, they are here, and so that's how this table is set up.

Then, as far as the Gulf discussion, again, kind of the same discussion for mutton. The Gulf Council expressed that they did not want to retain that 11 percent buffer, and then they made a motion to select Alternative B for Action 1 as their preferred alternative, and so I'll hand it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. C.J., do you want to add anything here on yellowtail?

DR. SWEETMAN: All I'll say is that there was some more discussion about probably this one in particular, more so than mutton. This fishery is definitely, you know, climbing further north, and I think both respective councils, relative to where the current recommended catch limits are for this fishery, are kind of slowly getting their way towards that limit, right, but I think we're in a position there where actually the South Atlantic Council is closer to that, and so, at the end of the day, trying to be, you know, good compadres across in the other council over there, understanding that you all might need a little bit more of this here, and so that was kind of the discussion moving forward, and that's why kind of that alternative was ultimately selected, and that's why we gave ourselves -- To get rid of that 11 percent buffer, to give the Gulf a little bit more there, and so it kind of helped us out a little bit, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, just to add to what C.J. was stating, I would also say that, in the past, we've had some closures here on the South Atlantic side for commercial. Back in the day, lots of heated debates about yellowtail, plus we did a number of workshops, meeting with folks in the Keys about yellowtail snapper, and it seemed like some people had gotten rid of their Gulf permits, and were only fishing their South Atlantic permits, and so maybe there were more people fishing commercially on the South Atlantic side than on the Gulf, and so that that was also kind of a factor here, in addition to the fish moving north and being caught more frequently outside of the Keys by recreational anglers as well.

I would say all of that was taken into account when the Gulf selected a preferred, and so I would be looking for someone to make a motion to select a preferred, a South Atlantic preferred, for yellowtail snapper. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, before I make my motion, I will echo the concerns that this is not really a South Carolina fishery. However, I move to select alternative -- I'm sorry. **I recommend that the South Atlantic Council select Alternative 4 in Action 2 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: 4b?

MS. IBERLE: The way that we envisioned selecting them would be the Gulf Preferred Alternative 4, and then b indicates whether or not the Gulf is retaining that buffer, and so you would just be kind of agreeing to what the Gulf is wanting to do as far as the buffer in between their ACL and ABC, and so the letter is kind of a non-issue for you guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so then just the 4. Okay. Motion by Amy. Do we have a second? Seconded by Charlie. Any further discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.**

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so that will take us into the two South Atlantic-specific actions. Before going into these, I will note that the Gulf didn't review these actions, and stated that they would be supportive of whatever preferred the South Atlantic picked, since this doesn't, again, really pertain to them.

I will note that, if you remember back in December, we looked at -- We attempted to use the allocation decision tool to populate some more alternatives for the allocation actions. We ended up kind of just setting a long list, and so my goal for today would be to maybe whittle this down, look at some of your percentages, look at how some of these methods are working, and maybe kind of hone-down that suite to help with analysis and putting the document together.

Right now, we've got a pretty lengthy list for both mutton and yellowtail, and so, starting with mutton -- The other thing I will note, and this is an error that I introduced into this document, is, right now, Alternative 1 is a true no action, and that is not typically how we write allocation alternatives, and so what you will see at the next meeting is all of them will shift up, and so Alternative 2 will become your Alternative 1.

We don't typically do like a true, true no action, and that was an error I introduced, and so my apologies for any confusion, and so Alternative 2, at the next meeting, will be your Alternative 1, which is just to apply those current allocation percentages to your updated South Atlantic ACLs, and you'll take that ACL from Action 1 and apply the current percentages that you have right now.

Alternative 3 would update the allocation percentages based on the current allocation formula, and we took those years from your jurisdictional allocation alternatives and just duplicated them for the sector allocation, and so Alternative 3 and 4 use those same -- Use the same Bowtie Formula as we looked at in the jurisdictional apportionment, and so you can see the resulting percentage there.

Then the other thing we talked about was the share-the-pain-share-the-gain that was developed, or the split reduction method, as we more appropriately termed it, that was developed way back in Amendment 53. I will say -- That was developed back when we were looking at it for a gag grouper, and we looked at a three-year and a five-year. Those were the two alternatives when that was first used for that species.

I will say that, when we looked at it for gag, we had a decreasing catch stream, and so it really did operate more as a share-the-pain-share-the-gain, whereas here it's operating more as a like share-the-difference, or share-the-increase, and so it's operating a little bit differently, and then the percentages were definitely different from kind of where the fishery has been at for both the three-year and the five-year options. It was -- Those percentages are higher on the recreational side.

Table 7 was the original table that I had in here. However, these numbers were based off of the jurisdictional allocation Alternative 2, which was status quo for the jurisdictional allocations. I duplicated this table to show you what those catch levels would be based on the Gulf preferred, and now your preferred, and so these are those catch levels that are reflective of that.

The other thing I wanted to touch on with mutton snapper, and we talked a little bit about this in March, but we have a full appendix that talks about how this was determined, is the weight conversion. Back in Amendment 41, we used the commercial -- We converted the commercial ACL into numbers of fish using the average commercial weight to get that recreational ACL in numbers of fish, and so we decided to use that method again, but update it, and so all of the details of that analysis are in Appendix 2, and I linked to it there, so you can jump to it really quickly.

Recreational ACL values and numbers of fish are reflective of the recommended weight conversion of 8.49 pounds whole weight, and the average weight of fish increased after the size limit was increased in 2018, and so the numbers in those tables are currently converted, for the recreational sector, to numbers of fish using that method outlined in Appendix 2.

Then one more note that Alternatives 3 and 4, again, follow that method developed for gag grouper, but, instead of a decreasing catch stream, the method would distribute the increase in year-one, proportional to each sector's landings, and then set the -- Sorry. Split the poundage increase each year thereafter, and so it would operate a little bit different than it did with gag.

I mentioned the preliminary analysis, and so, for the commercial sector, Figure 4 shows -- The solid lines are catch for 2020 through 2024, and the dashed lines are all of your allocation alternatives, and so -- Again that red dashed line, which is the closest one to these catch levels, that the true, true no alternative, and that will be removed anyway the next time you see this, and so you can kind of ignore this red line, but then you can see the gap in where the fishery has been operating versus your allocation alternatives.

Then, looking at the recreational sector, again, you can ignore the red line, and that will go away, and then you can see the gap between where the fishery has been operating for the recreational sector and your allocation alternatives, and so, again, looking for the committee to just discuss the range of alternatives, and it's up to you to consider removing. I will note we have six alternatives right now, and so I will let the committee discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do you mind going back up to the multicolored -- Thank you. A couple of things. I think we might be able to remove Alternative 3, for the same reason that we had the discussion with the other alternatives, because Alternative 4 is using maybe the more recent time series than Alternative 3 is, and so I think maybe we can remove 3. I think the others are okay. Just making sure, and it says it up there, on the pink one, the Alternative 2, that this is a viable alternative, and okay, but, the other one above it, Alternative 1, is non-viable? Okay, and so it's just a coincidence that they came out to be the same percentage, and is that --

MS. IBERLE: So the non-viable is essentially like status quo, what's going on right now. It's non-viable because it's based off of catch levels that were before the new assessment. Alternative 2 just takes those percentages and applies them to the updated catch level, and, again, that was on me, and so I apologize for any confusion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so Alternative 2 would -- Even though it's now the Alternative 1, it's not no action, because it is a viable -- Do you see what I'm saying? You said you were going to delete it, because I would lean towards choosing Alternative 2, because that's keeping the percentage the same, but thoughts? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: **My recommendation is keep Alternatives 2, 3 and 4, and the reason I would recommend Alternative 3 to keep is that is essentially taking the status quo allocation formula, but updating it based on the new landings information, and I think that's very reasonable to consider, and then, to me, Alternatives 5 and 6, in my view, are just overly complicating matters, and I don't really feel like it's necessary to consider a more complicated approach for allocation, given we have a very healthy stock, and so I would recommend that those be moved to Considered but Rejected.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Was that a motion?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, it was.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good. Okay. Just checking to make sure. All right. We're going to get that on the screen there. All right, and so we have a motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Carolyn. All right, and so we're taking those two what was kind of like the share-the-pain-share-the-gain alternatives out, and no longer considering them, and they would be moved to Considered but Rejected. Is there any more discussion on removing those two alternatives? **Any objection?** All right. Okay. What preferred do we want to pick here? I'm just going to ask again, and we could pick Alternative 2, right?

MS. IBERLE: (Ms. Iberle's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's why I was asking, because, if it becomes Alternative 1, that's usually the no action alternative, and sometimes we can -- So that's why I'm wondering if we can go with it or not.

MS. BROUWER: I think where we're getting confused, maybe, is Alternative -- It's the catch levels that would result from those percentages. The percentages are the same, but, under Alternative 1, you're applying that to the old catch levels, whereas Alternative 2 takes the same exact percentages and applies them to the new catch levels.

I think you would have to keep both of them, but what I can do is refer back to our shadow shark document, and remember we have like a little protocol that we were using for these very same type of actions, and just see how that was structured.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Madam Chair, I was just going to see if you're ready for me to make a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. Go ahead.

MS. DUKES: **I move that we select Alternative 2 under Action 3 as the preferred alternative, as it is remaining consistent with the allocation percentages between commercial and recreational.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Amy. Do we have a second? Seconded by Kerry. Okay, and so I just want everybody to see which one that was, and that's basically maintaining the percentage, but with the new catch levels, and you saw the analysis of where everybody was going to be relative to these different alternatives in the colored charts that we saw. A saw a hand. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. To your point earlier though, then that's going to be the no action alternative, correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're having a debate about that, and so they're going to try to figure that out between now and Full Council, and figure out if we need to fix it, and that's what we're debating up here, and so I think it's okay for now, and then we'll figure it out for Full Council. Okay. More discussion on that needed? Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I would just ask Amy, and whoever seconded it, if they could just maybe provide a little bit more rationale on choosing Alternative 2 versus the other alternatives, for the record.

MS. DUKES: Certainly, and I think the conversations around the table, especially with our innovation plan, is that allocations are not something that we're really wanting to discuss right now, and this is a stock that is doing really well, and this is going to give everybody more fish, and so just keeping the current allocation split as it is now was the rationale behind me making that motion, sir.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would also add we tried to use that tool on this, and it was a hot disaster, and so we did try. We tried, and we thought it would be easy for yellowtail, but I don't know if you guys remember, but we had 10,000 questions, and it was a hot disaster. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I look forward to seeing "hot disaster" written in the amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You're welcome. Right after 6-7 from yesterday.

MR. STRELCHECK: I will add, you know, I think another part of the rationale could be that certainly both of the stocks are doing very well, based on the analyses, and this still allows for

plenty of room for both sectors to increase harvest relative to what they're harvesting now, versus the catch limits that would be specified by this allocation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Any additional discussion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Motion carries.**

MS. IBERLE: All right, and that brings us to Action 4, which we're going to have to have that same discussion on Alternative 1, and so staff will clear that up between now and Full Council, and I apologize for the any confusion, but the set of alternatives is going to look pretty much the same for yellowtail.

You have your current allocations, and Alternative 2 would apply those current allocations to your updated South Atlantic ACL. Alternatives 3 and 4 would update those Bowtie methods, and then Alternatives 5 and 6 would employ the split reduction and not split reduction method, and, again, I will note that Table 8 was based on that status quo jurisdictional allocation, and then I have added in, and we will repost Table 8a, and it shows you those catch levels with the Gulf, and now your preferred alternative, so you can see those sector ACL breakdowns there.

The preliminary analysis is going to be very similar to mutton, and so, again, the solid lines are your 2020-2021 through 2023-2024 fishing years, and the dashed lines are your sector allocation alternatives, and then this is going to be recreational, and so a little bit closer gap on recreational. Again, the solid lines are the fishery, and how it's been operating, and then dashed lines are your alternatives. Again, just reviewing here your range of alternatives, and then if you would like to select a preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and then are you also wanting us to remove some of the alternatives, like we did for mutton? Okay. Based on that -- Can you scroll down just a little bit? Okay. Thank you. Andy, would you like to remove Alternatives 5 and 6 here?

MR. STRELCHECK: **Yes, I would.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We'll call that a motion. It's seconded by Trish. All right. We have a motion and a second, and so does everybody know what we're doing here? We're removing the same two alternatives that we removed for mutton, and we're removing them for yellowtail. Any additional discussion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll just add that, in addition to the rationale I provided for mutton, if you look at these alternatives, I mean, we're talking a one-hundredth percent difference in terms of the allocation change across multiple years, and, to me, a much simpler way of, obviously, setting allocations then Alternatives 5 and 6.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.** All right. Would we like to select a preferred, and we've got the same issue, where we will figure out, between now and Full Council, about the whole Alternative 1 and Alternative 2.

All right. What are we thinking for a preferred here? We just have essentially three particular alternatives remaining now. If we're using the same rationale as before, you would be picking

Alternative 2. Okay. I see people nodding, but I would need a motion to that effect, if that is what you're seeking to do. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. **I move to select Alternative 2 under Action 4 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. A motion. Do we have a second? Seconded by Charlie. I think that the rationale would be similar to before, and the last one was mutton, and this one is yellowtail, and so yellowtail was the one where we actually tried to run it through our tool, and that we just had a thousand questions, and it just did not -- It didn't work, although we had good intentions with that allocation tool.

I think that the rationale is the same for yellowtail that it was for mutton, and we saw the graphics. Yellowtail is doing well, and you saw where the projections would be relative to the different alternatives. Anything else that people want to add or discuss relative to this motion? All right. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion carries.**

All right. We have completed the mutton and yellowtail document. We do have a couple of things we need to come back to in Full Council relative to those no action alternatives, but more to come on that. I am going to pass it over to our chair to help us get ready for public comment.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 10, 2026.)

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JUNE 11, 2026

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the World Gold Renaissance in St. Augustine, Florida, on Thursday, June 11, 2026, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MURPHEY: All right. Next up, we're going to move into the Reopening of Nearshore Seasonal Closed Areas to On-Demand Black Sea Bass Pot Gear and Trip Limit Modifications, which is Reg Amendment 40, and I'm passing it over to Myra. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Okay, and so this is Attachment 9a in your briefing book, and so it should be pretty quick. This is an amendment that you gave us direction to get started at the last meeting, and it has to do with considering reopening the nearshore closed areas for black sea bass that are equipped with on-demand gear.

The decision document includes a little bit of background, and linked to the CFR, where all the regulations are explained, and so, basically, back I -- I forget where it was, and 2013 I think it was, the entire EEZ was closed from November through April. Then, in 2016, what is currently in place became effective, which, you know, has more of a spatial and temporal component, and so, in

November and April, the black sea bass pot closure applies to this area here, and so it's from about Daytona to North Carolina, to Cape Hatteras, but it's further inshore, right, and so, in the middle, between December and March, the closure applies a little bit further south, down to just below the Cape, Cape Canaveral, out to a little further offshore, and so that's what's currently in place.

At the last meeting, we did hear some public comment supporting opening of these areas. You heard yesterday as well that there's a lot of support to utilizing this particular gear, because it does effectively reduce the risk of entanglement for marine mammals, and the one thing that you had asked input from your Snapper Grouper AP was whether there needed to be any modification to the trip limit, and this is because Regulatory Amendment 37, which is currently under rulemaking, is going to lower the black sea bass catch limit by quite a lot and put in a spawning season closure for both sectors, a two-month closure, and so there was the potential of having to reduce that trip limit for pots.

We did take that to the advisory panel, and you heard, yesterday from Haley, what their recommendations were, and so I'll go over those as well. We have a very preliminary purpose and need, which I will bring up towards the end. I figured, since we still need to sort out what actions are going to be included first, we'll look at the purpose and need a little later.

I can go over the information that we presented to the advisory panel, but, you know, that depends if you want to go over it or not. It has to do with the trip limit, and so we did present, you know, just very summarized information, landings of pots versus hook-and-line, and it's really not a whole lot, and so I'll just quickly show the figures.

This one just shows you the distribution of those landings back to 1978 through 2020. The orange is the pots, and the hook-and-line is in blue, so you can see the predominance of that gear, and then we showed them -- This one is kind of hard to see. This is pounds landed per trip going back to 2005 through 2024, and the thing to note here is the difference in scale, and so, when you're looking at the very beginning of the time series, we're looking at up to 120 trips.

When we get down here, the top of the scale is just ten, right, and so there's been a substantial decrease in the figure. We have Florida and South Carolina aggregated in orange, and North Carolina in blue, and you can also see a lot of confidential information, especially in the last few years of the time series.

Then, finally, we showed the AP this figure, which is kind of -- You can see the seasonality of the fishery early on. Again, this is from 2005 through 2024, and then things start to get kind of obscured, because there were some closures, kind of right here in the middle, and what else happened? There was a fishing year change, and then, also, that pot closure for the entire EEZ was put in place, and so it kind of obscures any pattern of seasonality. Again, towards the end here, you're seeing a lot of confidential information.

I won't go over all these bullets, but, basically, the Snapper Grouper AP did not think that a reduction to the trip limit would be necessary, because it would reduce profitability, and Haley went over the rest of the comments from the advisory panel regarding that.

At this point, I guess I'll just keep going with the draft actions and alternatives, and so, for Alternative 1, the no action would be what I just showed of the current closure of November and April, what's shown there, and then December through March.

Right here, Alternative 2 is what we would be looking at, and so removing the seasonal prohibition of harvest and possession of black sea bass in nearshore areas for black sea bass pots equipped with on-demand retrieval systems, and then we split the subalternatives for each of the time area closures, so that you would have the flexibility, but, if you wanted to remove all of them, of course, you would just choose both subalternatives as preferred, and we don't have other alternatives to analyze, unless you have ideas of other options that you would like to consider, and so I'll pause here, and then we can dispense with the trip limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thank you. I talked to some of our folks up in DMF about this, and I talked to Chris Batsavage, who is also our Mid-Atlantic Council rep, and we wanted to suggest maybe another alternative would be a pot season, like maybe December and January. You could leave, you know, the trip limits alone, and I know we'll talk about it later, but maybe adding a season, because I know, from past public comment, and just discussions overall, you know, there's the headboats, and, you know, they're concerned about loss of those fish to the potters, because that's where they fish, and I think also some of the charter boats.

There's a -- You know, this has been from discussions through time, and I thought, we thought, that, maybe if we did that winter time, that's the best time for black sea bass, and at least the headboats anyway are not fishing at that time, because of those closures, and it would also maybe -- You know, one of the other things that I've been concerned about is that we're dropping our ACL, and we don't want to get it fished out, but, at the same time, it's giving those fishermen an opportunity to use their gear at a good time of the year, but limiting effort, and so hopefully that helps with the ACL, and it also helps with conflict with the other for-hire vessels.

Another thing, and I don't know if Sonny can weigh-in or something, and something else that Chris had talked about was just, because you don't know where those gears are, I think the trawl fishery is concerned, or at least the Mid-Atlantic, and they're concerned of trawling them up, and then I don't know if that's even a concern that a headboat would fish over top of them by accident, because they don't know the gear is there, and so just some thoughts to throw out for other alternatives.

MS. BROUWER: Just a clarifying question, and so, Trish, are you talking about -- So this pot season would retain the area closures that are in place, and pots would be only allowed December through January, or --

MS. MCCAWLEY: How would you do it? So in other words, pot season is only open December through January, and is that what you mean?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Thank you for that clarification. Okay. All right, and so we have more hands going up. Kerry, is it to that, because we had other hands. Okay. All right. Amy, and then Kerry.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'm trying to wrap my head around what Trish just said, and perhaps maybe what I was going to say kind of plays into it. I understand the rationale behind the language with Alternatives 2a and 2b, but, with that pending closure for black sea bass with Regulatory Amendment 37, I'm wondering if maybe taking some of those dates out might lead to less confusion. I don't know, and it was just one of those things where it took me a few minutes to wrap my head around why are we saying March 31 in Subalternative 2, when we're already going to be closed, and that was just sort of on the same vein, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra is capturing that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I just want to make sure that we're on the same page, because I'm still confused, Trish, about yours. All pots, January through -- Well, no, because the closed area, and so -- Okay, and so does that mean that traditional pots can't fish in the other months that they traditionally fished in outside of the closure? Are you saying the only time black sea bass pots can be used is December and January? Then I have a follow-up.

MS. MURPHEY: No, and I guess what I'm trying to say is those ropeless gears could fish in those closed areas December through January. The other pots, the rope pots, fish whenever they fish. Does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and she's typing it.

MS. MURPHEY: Basically, I guess I'm treating the ropeless gear pots separate from the rope gear pots.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was a helpful explanation, and so you're saying a season for ropeless gear pots, and then a season for roped gear pots, I guess. All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that, I would not support that. I think that, you know, the ropeless gear is an investment. I'm not sure that it's worth making that investment for just two months. I think, really, at the end of the day, you know, we want to encourage the use of this gear. As far as gear conflicts, I've paid a lot of attention to it, certainly, as I've been liaison in the Mid-Atlantic, and learning about it, and being very supportive of this on-demand gear, and I don't believe we have the same -- We don't have a trawl fishery that operates over these like they do there.

I wish Haley was here, or maybe someone who knows better, and I don't see it being a big sort of physical conflict with a hook-and-line headboat fishery. Now, for the fish is a different story, but, gear interactions, if I'm picturing it right, is not an issue. I just think that I've -- The comment I want to make is that, if you go back and look at the historical data, it's pretty clear that the pot component of this fishery has always been the most dominant gear for this fish. It's the traditional black sea bass fishery.

My husband used to participate in it, and he did not get a trap endorsement, and so, in my mind, we're just preserving the traditional fishery and encouraging a modern, well-thought-out gear, but we need to make it economically make sense for them to use it.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I understand that. I think what's playing on my mind is also the fact that we're dropping that ACL, and that's kind of -- That was really the impetus of trying to find that compromise to allow those guys to work, but to allow -- You know, also to balance that ACL with the rope gear guys and, you know, the hook-and-line, and so that was -- That was my way of trying to come up with a compromise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that, if you just -- I would just counter that with go back and look at Figure 1. The ACL hasn't been balanced in the past, and so we're trying to create a new dynamic. The ACL has been traditionally taken by the pot guys, the majority of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey, is it to that, because I have other hands?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and so, in Amendment 37, if that's the one that's correct, Amendment 37, and is that the one that we have somewhere on the table, that reduces --

MS. BROUWER: (Ms. Brouwer's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay. Thank you, Myra, for -- I thought I was crazy at first, but now I know I'm not. That reduces the ACL to how much?

MS. BROUWER: I believe it's forty-eight-thousand-and-change, and I'm looking to Mike Schmidtke to corroborate that, but it's -- So it's setting up an ACT, right, remember, and so the ACL will stay, and the ACT is what the fishery is allowed to harvest, and it's going down to like 48,000, and that's for pots and hook-and-line.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I understand that, and so my question is are we saying, going forward, that the pots will have a thousand-pound trip limit?

MS. BROUWER: Well, right, and so that's what we went and asked the AP, is should the council be considering a reduction on that trip limit, and what they said was it would not be profitable, and they also said that the ropeless gear is not cheap, and so there's going to be some folks that aren't going to be able to afford equipping their pots with on-demand gear, and so they still need that trip limit to stay at that level, is what I heard.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, and one last thing, and so I thought we were talking -- I thought we weren't talking -- Like how many vessels are we talking about that's actually doing it right now? I mean, isn't it like less than five that we have landings for in North Carolina, or maybe just two, or something like that, and so I would be very hesitant to support a closure. I would just be hesitant to support some type of closure there, but I also wonder about the trip limit at that level.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie, then back to Trish.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. To Kerry and Dewey's arguments, yes, I mean, we're looking at very, very limited amount of trips, and a very, very limited amount of boats, and I've got permits, and I don't fish them, because they're not profitable now, because of the cheap fish coming in from the Mid-Atlantic, and so I don't see dropping the trip limit down. It's nominally

profitable where it is, and, with the cost of the gear, and the very, very few -- I think it's bad when there's less fishermen in black sea bass than there are in wreckfish. That's bad, and I don't see them, you know, having a major impact on what headboats --

I would think that the headboat guys would say, look, we're going to fish this area, and the pot fishermen say, all right, we're going to fish north of you, south of you, offshore of you, whatever, and I think that can be worked out between the stakeholders, without us having to do a regulation, and, if it can't be, then we come back and look at it, and hopefully we'll have a better assessment, and have some more fish to play with, and can change the whole ballgame around, but, right now, I would support just opening everything up to on-demand gear, and leave the trip limit alone, and go from there. I think that's going to be the simplest and cleanest way, and let stakeholders kind of work out what they need to work out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Well, I was just going to add my compromise idea of a season. It would -- I had, you know, no trip -- It would keep the same trip limit. That was my thought. I don't see a point, and they would already be constrained by, you know, that short season that I was proposing, December and January, but it was also keep the same trip limit. I wouldn't lower the trip limit, because I know it is an expense. Anyway, it was just a compromise, and so trying to find a compromise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One question, and so, the commercial fishing year, does it start January 1? So a December closure would be at the end of the year? Okay, and so it's been a good discussion. I have concerns, because we, obviously, haven't been having traps fished during this time period. We have a low catch target. I just pulled up the landings for 2025 and 2026, and I'm trying to validate those with staff, but, last year, we report 67,500 pounds, and so the catch limit, or catch target, if it was in place, would have been met, and we would have closed the fishery, and trap harvest, obviously, being in the early part of the year would have, you know, expedited when the catch target would have been caught, if it was in effect.

We also have 76,000 pounds already reported for 2026, right, and so you can see that we could have a major derby on our hands, if in fact this occurs, and so, with that said, I mean, we're trying to obviously open up these areas to black sea bass pots. I think it's a good thing, given all the work that's been done on on-demand gear, and I'm supportive of that.

The challenge, obviously, is we just have a very low catch target, and we're waiting on a new assessment, and the results of that, I guess, will help us inform the path that this amendment is on, but remind me, and what's the timing of this amendment? Will we have the assessment before we take final action on this?

MS. BROUWER: No, and I don't -- We were thinking, if this stays just with this one action, and we could analyze it quickly, we could have it for the council to consider approval for final action in December, and that's going to be way before the assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any more thoughts here on other alternatives, because you heard this is going to be a fairly rapid timeframe, and so, if there's other alternatives, we need to jam them in now, so that they can be analyzed, and so other thoughts? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Well, for me, with the concern of the ACT that we've been dealt, and the commercial annual catch limit being shared between the hook-and-line commercial fishermen and the pot fishermen with the pot fishery, which is going to catch it, and you want to protect the access for the hook-and-line commercial guys, maybe you split that up, to where the pot fishery has its own annual catch limit, and, when they go in there and catch it, then they have to stop, and then it stays open for the hook-and-line part.

The recreational has their own, you know, and that's on their side, and so -- But at least it would open it up, and give them a chance to get in there, and keep using this gear, and develop it, and potentially make a profit, and when the time -- It's better than what they have now, and so, I mean, for me, I would accept it, and so you just divide it up between the hook-and-line component or the -- Just like you do on golden tilefish. You've got the longline, and you've got the hook-and-line.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's exactly what I was saying, and do you mean like golden tile.

MR. HULL: Because that's what used to happen there. The longline would catch the entire thing, and the hook-and-line guys had nothing, and so you would do that, so that everybody has a shot at it, and it's accomplishing what we want to do. That's just a thought, the first thought comes to my head, and, whether it's right or wrong, I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me ask Myra a question, and so, if we did that, my first question is could it be done in this amendment, to split the ACT between these different components, and then, if it's done in this amendment, could it still go on that same timing track to go final at the December meeting?

MS. BROUWER: Probably not December. I mean, you know, anytime we deal with an allocation, it gets a little more complicated, and I'm not -- I don't know that we could do that split in a reg amendment, but I'm not remembering. I'm thinking we would need a plan amendment to do that.

MS. MARHEFKA: For this, I'm not super -- The timing doesn't feel like as urgent, you know, as much as I think this is a good deal. If we approve it in December, you're already going to miss the winter season of 2026-2027 anyway. If there's a better -- I would rather find a better way to do it, and have it slow down.

I think the concept of analyzing these two, you know, based on some kind of historical data, I assume is how we do it, is very interesting to me, and then I just want to ask the other fishermen here, because, for me personally, and I don't want to -- I don't assume that is speaking for everyone, you know, but we're not hardly catching any black sea bass. It makes up almost none of our trip, or our paycheck, and so I'm not as bothered about, you know, if the quota gets caught up, but I recognize that that's one person, and so I'm curious. I expected to hear more concern about that from the AP, and we didn't, but we just might not have the right people in the room, and so that is something I'm very interested in hearing about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, when we get our final assessment, aren't we again going to look at how we're going to split the pie up? Wouldn't normally we set trip limits and all when we get our new assessment? I think that would be the time really to do it, because then we would have all the proper information and data to make good decisions from, and so I'm still inclined to just go with this as it is. I don't think there's going to be that much interaction, because the trip limits are going to be very limited, and then, when we get our assessment, then we can set up, you know, things from a much more informed point of view.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just want to say, you know, I liked Jimmy's idea, and I'm also with Kerry. If we need to slow it down to do it right, I think that's good, too. I just know, North Carolina, they are not -- I mean, they're seeing so many black sea bass, and, again, trying to -- Again, where I was coming from was that compromise, and so, you know, where the sea bass are, let them get caught, but, at the same time, just be aware of the ACT, but I think, you know, Jimmy, I think, throws out a good option as well, and so that may be just another option, or alternative, to add.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so what I'm hearing then is you would want to wait until Amendment 56 gets resumed, and, in there, potentially look at splitting the commercial ACT, or ACL, whatever we end up with, into a chunk for the pots and a chunk for the hook-and-line. We already have that amendment kind of just waiting there for it to be reawoken.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Charlie.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, to be honest, I don't think we actually could even do it in here, or it would be crazy, because we right now are living with a different number than we're about to be living with, and so we can't even know what the -- Well, we know what the new number is going to be, but I don't think we can put the new number in here. It's not approved yet, and so I don't -- I think, if we're going to -- If we're going to gear sector separate, I don't believe it's a viable option for this amendment, and so then it's deciding what we want to do with this action. Do we wait, wait, or do we see what -- Put it in place and then adjust in 56, if necessary?

MS. MCCAWLEY: When you say wait, wait, you're talking about also putting in the ropeless -- Waiting to put the ropeless gear in in 56, or you're saying do this ropeless right now, and then do the split on the ACT in 56? Help.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and I think those are the two options we need to discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, then, what would be the rough timeline, because, if we wait and do some of this stuff in 56, is it going to potentially -- We'll take on-demand gear out not only -- For next year too, because, I mean, we're already going to lose this year, even if we do it now, but, if we wait for 56, then we're highly likely going to miss the following winter, and so another reason why I would like to go ahead and do this now, and I think it's -- I think it may be more perceived to be

a problem than actual problem, and then, if there is, it's only going to be for maybe a month or so, and then, if the fishermen and stakeholders can't work it out, then we can work it out in 56 for them. That, to me, seems like a reasonable path forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, then Kerry.

MR. HULL: I agree. I think we should move forward with this now, and open it up, and not let the timeline of the process stop us from doing what we want to do, and we can get this done now, so that they can start next year using this gear in that closed area. That's what I would like to see happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. To try to close that loop, it sounds like, the split on the ACT, we're saying do that in 56. Right now, we're saying don't consider that in this document, and just focus only on the ropeless gear, and is that right? I see heads nodding yes.

MS. BROUWER: So I guess -- I'm just wondering, and do we want to add an alternative that Trish suggested for this discrete pot season, in addition to Alternative 2? Would you like to see that come back in September, with some preliminary analyses, or no?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like some folks are saying no, and so some people I see nodding no, and other people I see nodding yes, and so what do we want to do? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess -- I know it sounds like one concern is to say a two-month season is a derby, but there's not that many people in this fishery, and so I'm not sure how big a derby it would be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, to that point, I agree. I mean, I do get very concerned about creating derby fisheries, and I try to be sensitive about it, but this is one case in which I feel, even for this season -- I mean, to gear up with the on-demand gear, if you previously weren't using it, that would take a minute, and it would be a big investment, you know, before this was -- You would want to wait until this was approved, and, right now, there's only, like we said, four people, or less than four people, that have the gear and are interested in doing it, and so, in this case, I'm not concerned about there being a derby fishery immediately.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: That's good information, Kerry. Thanks for that. You know, I guess I'm just interested in analyzing this simply from the standpoint of it's similar to Subalternative 2b, right, with the two-month closure, regardless.

The other thing I will mention, because the fishing year does start January 1, I think we should reconfigure these to say annually from, you know, January 1 through, you know, the date, and then close, you know, December 1 to December 31.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra is making some notes on that, and so it sounds like what Andy is suggesting is kind of a subalternative under Alternative 2 to get analyzed. Are we okay with that? Okay, I see hands nodding yes, or heads nodding yes.

Okay, and so just making sure, and we've had some discussion on this already, and we -- It seems like we don't want to do this modification to the commercial trip limit in this vehicle. We want to -- I'm just looking around, and can we have a little bit more discussion on a trip limit for the pots? Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, and, like has been noted, prices for these fish are generally not good, because of the -- There's so many fish coming in from the Mid-Atlantic. I've got trucks that come down and offer me fish, you know, and I generally get flounder for, you know, various people, but, black sea bass, as a rule of thumb, is really inexpensive compared to most things, and anything less than a thousand pounds is just really not going to be profitable for these guys. I don't care if you're using on-demand gear or not. It's just not profitable for less than a thousand pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I agree with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then you're -- The way I'm interpreting that is, based on that information, you would remove this action from the document, and is that right? Okay. Heads nodding yes. Trish, did you have something?

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to agree.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Sorry, and you added an alternative. I just -- I thought there was something in the wording. It was about Trish's idea of the season. It was where it says that rope pots would be allowed outside this season, yes, and which the season kind of just refers to inside the closed area, and so it just is a little confusing to me. They would be allowed outside the closed area. You know, they're allowed outside the closed area, you know, most of the year, except for the closures, the spawning closure, and so I guess I guess the words are okay of "outside the season". "Outside the closed area", I think that's better. That describes it better. That was it. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Thank you for fixing that. I think now we're going to go down to the purpose and need.

MS. BROUWER: All right, and so this was the original, very much draft purpose and need, and so we would cross out any reference to a reduction of the trip limit, but I'll leave it up here, and let you guys take a look at it, and see how we can tweak it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. It seems like folks are nodding that they're okay with this, and so do we feel like this reflects our intent? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do we want to add anything about -- Like we all know why on-demand retrieval systems are worthy of opening this closed area, but there's nothing specific about sort of

like why there was a closed area, and why using on-demand gear allows you to be in it, and do we need to, sort of say like reopen seasonal closed areas due to -- I don't know.

Maybe we don't need to, but I think that, if someone was to read this a long time from now, they would then have to go, wait, why was that area closed, and why are they letting them in there, and do we name the whales? Do we talk about -- Or just talk about on-demand gear's lack of interaction with endangered, threatened, and protected species? I don't know. I'm not going to wordsmith it here, but I just wonder if it needs to be specific as to why we're allowing it in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we just pasted that "lower the probability of negative interactions" into - - Now it's in both. Does that help? Okay. All right. Anything else here? All right. Myra, back to you.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and the last bit of business here is a very tentative timeline, and so, if we can get the data analyzed, we'll bring you whatever we have to the December meeting, where you could consider approving it for public hearings, or I'm sorry. September. Then we would conduct public hearings in the fall, and bring that back to you for consideration for final approval in December, and so a tentative timeline. We don't need anything right now, and I imagine we'll be talking more about when things are going to be completed during the workplan discussion tomorrow morning.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on black sea bass? All right. Thank you, Myra. Next up, Chip is going to talk to us about the black grouper management strategy evaluation.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so I'm just going to give an update on the black grouper management strategy evaluation that FWC has been working on, just let you know what they're doing right now and what the plan is for the future. Just to give a real quick outline about what I'm going to go over today, it's explain why we're using the MSE framework, and what an MSE framework is, describe some of the components of it, and then get into just a little bit of the outputs, and then talk about next steps.

I know you all have heard this many times, but I don't think it hurts to go over exactly what a management strategy evaluation is, or an MSE. Once again, this is a simulation testing framework, and so understanding that we don't know all the things that are going on into the -- All the pieces that are going into an assessment with perfection, and what happens if we don't know those, and let's test some of those ideas. It's not only the data that's going into them, but it's also maybe the management ideas that you all would like to consider.

One of the great questions for an MSE is what if we use this management approach under different future conditions, and how would it perform, because we don't -- We're not able to really do experiments in fisheries, because it's somebody's livelihood, and let's experiment with the data and see what potentially could happen.

On the left side of the slide, you see what an MSE includes in it, and so it's going to include some of the fish population dynamics, and so that's going to be the life history, and also the abundance of the fish. Then we also have the commercial fisheries and recreational fisheries, trying to understand what's going on in the population, monitoring not only the catch, but the age structure of those, and then, in this one, I think it's a really good example of we have imperfect data with

black grouper. There is some question on both recreational and commercial landings, and so we can put some imperfect commercial and recreational landings into the MSE and see how these different management strategies potentially could operate.

With this, we want to look at some of the uncertainty scenarios, but another key component of a management strategy evaluation is identifying future management responses, right, and it's getting the ideas out in the beginning and think about exactly what the council would like to do, or what some of the stakeholders would like to do in their fishery, in order to better manage them, and this kind of socializes the idea, but it also enables you to understand, all right, is this going to be good in three to five years, and is this going to be good in fifty years, and which one is working better, but it also enables you to look at, all right, we assume that the stock assessment we got has a single OFL value, and what if there was a different pieces -- What if there was a different OFL, and how would this management strategy perform under this different scenario.

On the right, we have exactly how an MSE works, as opposed to looking back, like we do with a lot of our amendments. If you think about what we're looking at in some of the size limits, bag limits, and different pieces like that, we typically look at the last three to five years and see how things perform.

MSE operates a little bit different. It looks forward, and so it projects the scenarios forward, to see how these different management actions and management approaches would perform, and then another key part of this is it identifies tradeoffs and risks, and what are the tradeoffs and risks can vary among the species that you're looking at.

Quite often at this table, we hear, at least on the commercial side, one of the things we would like to consider is having fish available year-round, but we also want to have higher maybe commercial trip limits, and so, quite often, those two are in conflict with each other. A management strategy evaluation could be used to look at something like, all right, what is the percent of years when this fishery is able to stay open year-round with a different trip limit, and so it's able to evaluate those different scenarios that quite often the council is asking, in their head, how is this going to perform.

Then one of the big things, that I think one of the SSC members had pointed out, is how MSEs are effective. They're really effective at identifying things that don't work, and so, if there's something that the council is looking at, they can identify things that potentially don't work that well. It's not going to select the best one for you. That's still going to be a council decision on how to do that, and it's still going to be some of the hard decisions at the table, but it can help to inform some of your decisions going forward.

Why are we doing an MSE for black grouper? I apologize, and I'm trying to scroll with the left hand, and it doesn't work like it should, and so why are we doing it for black grouper? In SEDAR 48, which was the stock assessment for black grouper, it was stopped in 2017.

The major reason for that stoppage was due to landings issues. There was some uncertainty in the commercial landings history, and what happened with this is there was some uncertainty on how gag and black grouper were attributed to the stock assessments, and I know you all have recently looked at a gag assessment, and the reason that we can move forward with gag assessment, and potentially have to pause a black grouper assessment, is the gag assessment -- There's so much

more landings of gag grouper with certainty that they felt comfortable with the identification of gag grouper.

However, black grouper, there was a lot more issue with the commercial landing stream and the higher percentage of those landings that were questionable, and then there was also some questions of the recreational PSEs. There were fairly high PSEs for this species, and so all those can have a misreported catch, or uncertain catch can have an impact on stock assessments, but what an MSE can do is test the impact of those different assumptions.

This is just a slide to indicate what this one -- What this proposed MSE was doing. There is a report out, and what they looked at was to test if indicators can be used to stabilize biomass, making sure that, based on the assumption of an MSY for this stock, does it stabilize the biomass? Is it maintaining the management target, and so is it maintaining the biomass within the realm? Then it's also evaluating whether or not it's robust to certain conclusions.

Now, a lot of these don't sound all that fancy. It definitely does not have much stakeholder input in this, and so this is more of a desk MSE. MSEs can do a lot of different things, but this is kind of the precursor, getting the background information together for a future MSE that's really going to be more stakeholder-driven, and trying to get to some more of the fine-scale management approaches.

Once again, just going into the workflow of a management strategy evaluation, on the left side, you can see the monitoring data that's going into this, and this is no different than a normal stock assessment, right? It's looking at fisheries data and it's looking at fishery-independent data for indices of abundance, and then we have the second part, which is trying to figure out the indicators of how the stock is doing.

In the normal stock assessment approach, we get this full suite of things that we have listed here, which could be spawning stock biomass, fishing mortality, looking at trends in recruitment, looking at the size structure of the population, or the age structure of a population, and then recent catch trends. Those are typically always in a stock assessment report, and then from there, you know, this is -- It goes into a harvest control rule, and, all right, let's figure out what works to maintain this population at a sustainable level.

For this one, it was looking at maintaining the spawning stock biomass above the -- Or looking at maintaining the spawning stock biomass between 0.5 and 1, and this is a hypothetical scenario, and so don't think that this was being used for this population. Then, from there, you can figure out, all right, if these are our targets, based on the harvest control rule, then we can do adjustments to a TAC, or an ACL, and, if things are positive, then you can potentially increase the TAC.

If things are within the realm that you want it in, it could stay constant, or it could maybe change a little bit, or it potentially could decrease, and now, if you think about what you did yesterday, and I think this kind of follows exactly what Allie presented on yesterday, is you had a stock assessment that gave you an OFL. You have some indicators in there, and you have a harvest control rule that says basically we want to maintain this population above, and we want to end overfishing, and then we want to prevent -- Or rebuild an overfished stock, but, for mutton snapper and yellowtail, you didn't have to rebuild an overfished stock, and so you're trying to prevent

overfishing, and, from there, you develop an ACL, and you did that yesterday for two different stocks.

This is a normal management process that you all go through. What MSEs are trying to do, in some scenarios, is they're trying to identify this harvest control rule, and make it a lot simpler for you, as opposed to looking at all this information, and so spawning stock biomass, F , and they're looking at potential indicators that are robust in meeting your management goals.

In the example that we're using here for black grouper, it's going to be looking at something like recruitment or abundance trends over time, as well as potentially looking at the size distribution of a species, and so they would put those into this -- They would use those two indicators, put it through the harvest control rule, and then that would be used to adjust your ACL, and so you're not having to go back to the full suite of information that goes into a stock assessment. You're looking at potentially a simpler suite of pieces of information that could be done a little bit faster, and you can adjust your ACLs a little bit quicker.

The current MSE inputs for black grouper, there was limited access to the raw datasets, and so this is why it's kind of looking at some of the indicators that might work, as opposed to giving -- As opposed to really looking into some of the more fine-scaled management scenarios. They did use the management target of a 30 percent SPR as a proxy. That's on the books for black grouper, and then they also used biological information from SEDAR 19, as well as SEDAR 48, and some of those datasets include growth, maturity, catch composition, as well as age composition.

They have been presenting this MSE to the SSC, a couple of different times, in order to make sure that they're taking a good path in the development of it, and then, from there, they are looking at fifteen different management procedures to really develop indicators, and I have the suite of indicators that they're looking at for this.

One is a State Reef Fish Survey, looking at the abundance and length data based on the State Reef Fish Survey information. They're also looking at the commercial longline, focusing on length data. Now, you'll see that they're not looking at abundance data there. There's been some changes in the -- Or there's some differences between the South Atlantic and the Gulf on whether or not you're allowed to use longline to keep black grouper, and so there's a little bit of different information there.

Then, finally, fishery-independent data. They have the RVC, and so the Reef Visual Census, looking at abundance and length data, and the abundance is looking at basically trends in the population, how many fish are out there, and then the length data is looking at a slightly different aspect of it, and it's are you growth overfishing the stock, making sure that there appears to be a good, healthy stock there.

In a hypothetical situation for gag grouper, how would we get from an indicator and go to an ACL adjustment? Once again, we have all this monitoring data. An indicator has been selected, and let's just say we have mean size. It's on the bottom left, and, the mean size of a population, this is how you are projecting to change the fishery with your harvest control rule at the bottom left, and so, in this population -- You can see, in the green line, that the population is going in between the yellow and green, and so, if it's between the yellow and green, you're going to maintain your ACL there.

If it were to go above the green, and, if you switch over to the right, you can see, if it's a positive 1, if it goes above the green, then you would be increasing your ACL, and potentially changing other things in the fishery, but this would be the harvest control rule. You would increase the ACL by 20 percent in this example.

Now, if you look down to the bottom right, where Scenario B is, if you need to decrease the ACL, because the size structure is decreasing, you also have a response there, and so this is what we're trying to do in an MSE, is figure out exactly how to respond to different pieces of information, and this one mainly is looking at developing good indicators to determine how to adjust the ACL.

In the current MSE for black grouper, you know, this is -- What it's trying to do is identify candidate management procedures and indicators for black grouper. It's not trying to adjust the full suite of information.

They've developed a method to compare tradeoffs. A key part of an MSE is looking at tradeoffs, but this one was done at a desk MSE, right, and it's not getting the full manager and stakeholder engagement, and so the tradeoffs are going to be a little bit different once you get managers and stakeholders involved. They're going to want to see potentially things like a longer season balanced with a higher trip limit, and how can we get to the best one that's going to lead to that? It also designed a process to evaluate the robustness of the management strategy, and then it's going to support future interim approaches.

What it's not doing right now, it's not determining stock status. As I indicated before, they didn't have access to raw data, and so they're not comfortable in determining stock status. It's not going to replace the full stock assessment, and so what we're looking at really is just this is a starting point for the MSE to hopefully lead to better management in the future.

The next steps, as I alluded to, is to update input data, and also expand from a desktop MSE to the full MSE, with workshops with stakeholders and managers, to make sure everybody is onboard with this, and then it's also -- This current version is going to be going to the SSC in October for review, making sure that the model is set up properly, and some of the responses are there, and also comfort levels with the indicators for the stock, and, with that, I will do my best to answer questions, but please let me know if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Can you back up one slide? I think it's that slide. Maybe we don't know this yet, and I haven't talked to Luiz about it. What we're working on right now is just, like you're saying, this desktop version, and then it will move to this full version, and so, the timeline to get all the way through the full version, do we know that?

DR. COLLIER: I do not know that yet, but I can -- By Full Council, I can try to get you a timeline for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just curious. Other questions? I thought that this presentation explained the MSE, what it can and can't do, especially really well, and so really appreciate this presentation. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Chip, I think John or somebody told me that we had like four MSEs, you know, in the works, between this and dolphin and wreckfish and whatever, and this one particularly said it was not going to do stock assessments, and so are all of them going to fall in that same bin, where they don't do stock numbers, or some of them can, and some of them can't, or do we know?

DR. COLLIER: So this one, in the future, is going to be kind of more along the lines of a stock assessment, but right now it's not, because it does not have the real landings data. It was based on some of the information from SEDAR 48 and previous assessments, and so, when we're looking at the snapper grouper MSE, that one is not developing stock assessments. That one is using stock assessments that were previously developed through SEDAR.

For the dolphin MSE, that one is developing a stock assessment, because there is no other estimation of sustainability for that stock. For wreckfish, that one too is going to be looking -- Is going to be using an assessment as well, and so this one is going to be using an assessment as well, because there is no other assessment that's out there that it can tune to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and, Chip, can you go back to the next slide backwards, where it says the -- So, this can-do and cannot-do list, is this specific to this black grouper MSE, or is that actually specific to almost all the MSEs? I think that's where I was getting confused.

DR. COLLIER: No, and it's specific to this current version of the MSE. In the future, it might be able to determine stock status, and replace a full stock assessment, and it just depends on the overall inputs that are going into it, right, and it doesn't have the raw input data, and so it doesn't have current catch levels to help inform where the stock status might be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But will the second phase, that we talked about on the-next-to-last slide -- So that's what I was trying to get at earlier, but Amy is asking it better, and so, this cannot-do component -- It's just this first part of the black grouper MSE that it can't do, and, all of this cannot-do component, that would be handled in the second phase of the black grouper MSE?

DR. COLLIER: Yes. When the full MSE is coming out, and it has all the data inputs that it needs into it, it's going to do a much better job at determining stock status. You know, it depends on -- If it's using a data-limited approach, some of those don't give you stock status, and so you might be just looking at keeping relative catch levels at where they are now, or something along those lines, but it might not be able to give you a true stock status.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. All right. Any more questions? All right. Thank you, Chip. All right. The final item under Snapper Grouper is Other Business. Are there items for Other Business? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I've got a request, that's going to be a motion, for the Science Center, and who would be the best to type this one in?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey, do you want to make the motion?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I would also like to put the last stock assessment up there on the top. I think it was SEDAR, or the 73 update, 73U. **The motion is request an analysis from the Science Center based on the SEDAR 73 update stock assessment to compare the landings of red snapper for the commercial and recreational sectors under the current allocation of 72 percent recreational and 28 percent commercial to the corresponding landings under an allocation formula based on total removals, landings plus dead discards, and the results to be presented at the council meeting in September.** If I could get a second, I would speak on this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Seconded by Charlie.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that this is -- I think it's time to see, and kind of like -- Not a marker but a -- I don't know what the word I'm trying to use is, but the analysis to be done to see what this is, and what it looks like kind of going into the future, as things change, and so it speaks for itself. I think the last numbers that we had coming out was like 509,000 fish, 475,000 discards and 34,000 landed, is what we're allowed, and so I think this would also give just a comparison of what each sector gets, and what it allows and doesn't allow. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I would speak against this motion, and so there is active litigation right now, and discards are at the heart of that lawsuit, and, also, past court decisions that came out last year, or the year before, indicated that we don't have to include dead discards. The ACL doesn't have to include dead discards, but a lot of what is at the heart of the lawsuits are, including the one that's active right now, and I don't think it'll be concluded before September, is just the uncertainty around the discard information, and so I would prefer for the lawsuits to be concluded first, and then dive into questions like this, and so I wouldn't support this. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I totally understand your point of view, and, even with the uncertainty, and maybe that's one of the reasons we do need to see these numbers, so we can see does it pass the smell test, and, if it doesn't, what can we do to get a more accurate number, and if we see -- Then we can see maybe some potential ways, from each sector, into what they can do to maybe bring those numbers down, which would allow them to have more fish.

I understand there's a ton of uncertainty in places, but, if we don't at least put the numbers on the table, we're shooting in the dark. If we put them on the table, at least we can say, yes, this looks good, or, no, I'm not so sure about that, and start working on trying to get better data, so we can make better decisions. That's why I would probably be inclined to support this motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Jessica, I agree with you, and the only other thing I want to add to that is the fact that, if you remember Amendment 35, we pulled it because we were concerned about how the FES numbers are going to affect these streams that we've been using for landings. Those numbers aren't going to be available until the end of August, so far as that we know, and so I think, until we have those numbers, we're kind of in the same place we were when we pulled 35.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I just see the risk here of throwing more fuel on a fire, with information that we're already skeptical about at best, is going to be a big problem. You've got MRIP being updated, and we got this new assessment, and I think we ought to wait a little bit longer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just want to hear from Dewey with regard to the motion, because I'm not fully understanding, I think, the second half of it. With the second half, it says to provide corresponding landings under an allocation formula based on total removals. What are we referring to in terms of allocation formula, and are you wanting that, based on the motion, to be like total removal estimate for each sector?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and what I'm looking at is taking the ABC, with nothing taken off of it, coming down, and then after, on both sides, the commercial landings and discards comes off. The recreational landings and discards comes off, and then the next thing is spit out an ACL, and I believe it's the next mode that would give each sector 28 percent of what's left over for the commercial, and 72 percent for the recreational, based on that, and so it would be like taking the 509,000 number, and that you have 475,000 discards, and you're going to apportion them to one side, the commercial side, and one side to the rec side, and then, after that, that's apportioned, and you're going to take the landings off of that, and it's going to give you a number that you're allowed to be landed, and you're going to split it out 28 and 72. I personally --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so thanks for that clarification, and so, if that's your intent, I think, after "under an allocation formula", I would specify 72/28, but I will point out that the current allocation is based on landings, and not, obviously, total removals, and so that wouldn't necessarily be consistent with how we've set the current allocation.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes, and I understand that, but I would just -- I understand that it's taken off the landings, but I'm just looking for an analysis to be done, you know, and I think it's time for that. I think the public wants that. I know my industry does, because of the turmoil that we have to -- Or are given, and stuff like that, and so that's why I'm asking for this simple analysis, and I think it could be done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, relative to the ongoing litigation, I would just point out that that's relative to exempted fishing permits. The record for that litigation closed the day those permits were signed, and so this information, whatever the council is working on going forward, is not going to be a part of the record that's before the court in that case, but it could become an issue later in time., but, again, this is asking to analyze existing data, and so it's not really creating new information in that regard. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So I kind of want to -- I don't know if it's a clarification, asking it from Dewey, or just to make sure that in conversations that I had with you, and I don't remember us talking

about the 72/28 being applied at the ABC. What we talked about was looking at the fact that the 72/28 applies to landings, right, and that's just on the landings. It has nothing to do with the discards and all, and what you are asking is what is the percentage of the removals that go to each sector, which are going to be different percentages than 72/28.

Then, within those divisions, assigning to look to see the actual discard rate within the sector, and so you would get a very different number than the discards. As opposed to 98 percent of discards off the top, you would separate it out, but you would have to look at the allocation of total removals between the two sectors, and not the landings, and so the 72/28 doesn't carry into the allocation percentages and what you're asking for the next level of correspondence, right?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would assume so. Maybe I'm not technical enough of what I wrote, but my thought is, with the Science Center, is that -- Like I said before, is I thought that the commercial industry and the recreational industry get 28 and 72 percent of the landings, which we do, but, at the same time, each sector does not account for its own discards, and, if each sector accounted for its own discards, there would be a different number spit out.

DR. BELCHER: Right, and so what my understanding was, when we went -- When we walked through it on the phone, it was, if you go back and you think about the allocation for the removals, and I'm just throwing numbers, and don't hold me to them.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: We won't.

DR. BELCHER: But they come out, instead of 72/28, and you're looking at ninety-something on the recreational side, you know, and 10 percent on the commercial side, and then you did that split. and then, within that, you then looked at what proportions were discards, and so you would have a discard rate somewhere between 45 and 50 percent for the commercial, but a higher discard rate --

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

DR. BELCHER: Well, it depends on what dataset you're looking at, and so you get a different discard rate within the sector compared, and so that's where I thought our understanding was when we were talking, is that you're going to end up with a different allocation at the removal level than what we currently have, because you won't end up with a 72/28 percent, and so is that -- Just to be clear, because I'm just -- As I'm seeing this, I'm basically seeing that we're carrying 72/28 through different steps, but we're doing different carvings of the pie.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Does the Science Center understand what I'm asking? They're the ones that have got to do the analysis.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

DR. WALTER: Yes, and we understand what's being asked. Do you want me to repeat what my understanding is, or -- Okay. So, right now, the OFL, ACL and ABC are take the discards off the top, and say then what remains after that discards is then what can be landed, and so, in this case, it's saying put them back in, and then say what is allocated to -- Not allocated, but what does each sector catch, which includes both landed and discards, and so there's a lot of discards in the

recreational fishery that are dead. We know that. We've talked a lot about that, and so then there that's also what we've been talking about.

That's the scope for improvement, if you could do things like the descender devices that would be able to return those fish alive, and so I understand that. I think there's some scientific merits in being able to think about that. I won't comment on the rest of it, but I understand what the request is, and the Science Center could produce those numbers. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I'll just reiterate that, you know, Dewey, I understand the intellectual curiosity of the answer here, and I think it's potentially important, but I think we're talking about building a second story on a house that's got a bad foundation now, and I think that the likelihood that this analysis is, one, just going to burn up time for the Science Center, that has a lot of other stuff that we need to do, and then, regardless of what comes back, we're going to be right back talking about, well, do we believe in some of the inputs, MRIP, you know.

Yes, we know there are dead discards, but how much is the question, and we think, at the moment, at least we've overstated them, and so I think that we certainly need to continue to understand more about the red snapper fishery, but we need to make sure that we as a council are not creating analysis and studies and things that are based on things we already are questioning. That's just going to lead to additional infighting. Whether or not it gets into the litigation, that's just going to create further divide and issues between the rec and commercial sector that I think is driving a lot of the issues that we have here today.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question for John, and so, with SEDAR 90 ongoing, I mean, this is basic landings data. Would the landings for SEDAR 90 for commercial and recreational, as well as dead discards, be available now to do this analysis? I know the data workshop has been held.

DR. WALTER: A lot of this, particularly the discards, comes out of model output, and so it would be sort of a -- It wouldn't necessarily be readily available, and I guess the question I would ask is -- But it might be available, and so we could potentially use SEDAR 90 if the request -- I would have to look into how -- To look into that. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I guess the problem with SEDAR 90 is it's still going to be relying on the changes to MRIP-FES that are still coming to scale the SRFS landings and other data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip, and then Carolyn.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so the data report for SEDAR 90 is available. It's on the SEDAR 90 website, and that does have landings by sector, and, the most recent years, at least for the recreational, that's going to be based on the State Reef Fish Survey, and so those might be available, and so you could potentially be looking at the most recent time after the State Reef Fish Survey was available on the east coast, and so that's only for private recreational.

It would not have the charter boat estimates, but the charter boat estimates, I do not believe, have the same telescoping error that the private rec have, and so we might be able to do it for a short time period. It would not be able to go back in time, because, as Andy said, we would have to recalibrate those State Reef Fish Survey to the new FES values that would be coming available, in order to make the full time stream.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But I would also argue we don't have confidence in the commercial discards either. It's not -- We're talking a lot about recreational discards, and should we use State Reef Fish Survey data, which is what is being used in the upcoming assessment, but that's why I think that this motion isn't timely. There's a lot of other things happening right now. I think that maybe this motion is more timely after a couple of other things are concluded, and so I stand by that. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I was going to say, is there a possible concession, because it is an allocation question, in waiting until the assessment is done? I mean, no different than what we've done with the share-the-pain-share-the-gain approaches that Tim had provided before for other things, and is this something to consider when we're talking about the allocations at that time?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what I mean by timely. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: You know, no matter what one thinks, these formulas that were used, the data, whether MRIP is believable, or how much we like it, it was made to use the allocation. How did we get the data that was used to make the 72/28? It came from MRIP, or other past things, I believe, and so if it's -- All I'm asking for is an analysis.

I don't understand. We've heard so much about this. We've heard so much on social media. We've heard the public talk about it, and what's wrong with the analysis? I don't think it's going to take a lot of time. If it did, I'm sure the Science Center would say, hey, we can't do this, and so I don't know what else to say but to call the question, I guess.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just so I make sure, because there was a lot of discussion about the motion wording and whether -- You know, how it reflected the request that's being made, and I kind of drafted up a little bit of language that I would have to ask Dewey if you would want this to replace some of the text up here, and, John, if this, you know, kind of reflects your understanding of what is being asked of the Science Center to make sure that the language is correct for the request being made.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I hear that, but the question has been called.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **So I would like to see a show of hands of those in favor of the motion. Are you in favor of this motion? All those opposed, same sign. Any abstentions? It's completely tied up, and so, if it's completely tied up, then I get to vote, and I vote against it, and the motion fails.** That would be three in favor, four against, three abstentions. Is there any

other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Seeing none, I turn it back to you, Madam Chair.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 11, 2026.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
July 2, 2026

SG Tue 6/9/26

	Committee	Name	State	Affiliation	Seat
1	Snapper Grouper	Jessica McCawley ✓ (Chair)	FL	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission	State Agency
2	Snapper Grouper	Kerry Marhefka ✓ (Vice-Chair)	SC		At-Large
3	Snapper Grouper	Robert Beal ✓	VA	Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission	ASMFC
4	Snapper Grouper	Dr. Carolyn Belcher ✓	GA	GA DNR Coastal Resources Division	State Agency
5	Snapper Grouper	Gary Borland X	SC		Obligatory
6	Snapper Grouper	Amy Dukes ✓	SC	SC DNR Marine Resources Division	State Agency
7	Snapper Grouper	Judy Helmey ✓	GA		Obligatory
8	Snapper Grouper	Francis (Dewey) ✓ Hemilright	NC		Obligatory
9	Snapper Grouper	James Hull Jr. ✓	FL		Obligatory
10	Snapper Grouper	Trish Murphey ✓	NC	NC Division of Marine Fisheries	State Agency
11	Snapper Grouper	Lt. Tom Pease X	FL	Seventh Coast Guard District	USCG
12	Snapper Grouper	Charlie Phillips ✓	GA		At-Large
13	Snapper Grouper	Tom Roller ✓	NC		At-Large
14	Snapper Grouper	Robert Spottswood ✓ Jr.	FL		At-Large
15	Snapper Grouper	Andy Strelcheck ✓	FL	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region	NOAA Fisheries

John Walter
 Shep Grimes
 Sonny Ginn
 CJ Sweetman
 Rick DeVetor
 Mace/Robert
 Clay Foreh-web

Hayley Stephens

SG Tue 6/9/26

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SG Wed 6/10/24

	Committee	Name	State	Affiliation	Seat
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2	Snapper Grouper	Kerry Marhefka ✓ (Vice-Chair)	SC		At-Large
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Rick DeVictor

John Walter

Marcel Reichert

Shep Grimes

CJ Sweetman

Kristen Foss

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SG Wed 6/10/24

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SG Thurs. 6/11/24

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SG Thurs. 6/11/26

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June 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

06/15/2026 08:29 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
942-313-427	06/09/2026 07:51 AM EDT	8 hours 39 minutes	192

Staff Details

Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Not applicable for staff	Council	South Atlantic

Attendee Details

Last Name	First Name
Aines	Alex
Alkire	Carolyn
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Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Beal	Bob
Bernier	Quinn
Bertoline	Sue
Beyer	George
Blough	Heather
Bogdan	Jennifer
Bonura	Vincent
Boots	Benjamin
Bradshaw	Christopher
Brantley	William
Brouwer	Myra
Brown	Hunter
Bruger	Catherine
Bubley	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Califf	Julie
Callaway	Lillie
Cermak	Bridget
Clawson	Jessica

Collier	Chip
Crispe	Miriam
Curtis	Judd
DeVictor	Rick
DiJohnson	Alex
DuBeck	Guy
Dukes	Amy
Dyar	Ben
Emory	Meaghan
Figueroa	Alena
Flemming	Robert
Flowers	Jared
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
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Friedrich	Tony
Gervasi	Carissa
Gloeckner	David
Gore	Karla
Griffin	Aimee
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hackney	Heather
Hadley	John
Hallas	sara
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Helmey	Judy
Hilliard	Bob
Horstead	Adrian
Hubbard	Nolan
Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keppler	Blaik
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Klasnick	01Kelly
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Knowlton	Kathy
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Lavine	Craig
Law	Alexander
Lazo	Sarah

Lloyd	Victor
Lou	Jenny
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Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Masi	Michelle
McWaters	Mark
Mehlhorn	Anna
Mehta	Nikhil
Merrifield	Mike
Moore	Jeff
Moss	david
Muffley	Brandon
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Neidig	Carole
Newman	Thomas
Nicholson	Shaun
Offner	Tia
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Palmrose	Kristin
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Pike	Hannah
Porch	Clay
Ramsay	Chloe
Rathke	David
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Roller	Tom
SCOTT	TARA
Salmon	Brandi
Sartwell	Tim
Schlick	CJ
Schmidtke	Michael
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey

Spurgin	Kali
Starling	Savannah
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
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Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
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Walter	John
Whaley	Dave
Wilke	Kate
Williamson	Veronica
Willingham	Darrin
Withers	Meg
Woodward	Spud
Wynn	Chris
gwin	earl sonny
reese	dylan
sandorf	scott
vara	mary
zales	bob
zurbrick	james
Alhale	Sydney
Atkinson	Seth
Blum	Catherine
Borland	Gary
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Christina
Dash	Mark
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Drexler	Michael
Dubniczki	Hayden
Farrell	Delaney
Freeman	Chase
Gahm	Meghan
Graham	William
Gray	Alisha
Hutt	Clifford
Jacoski	Greg

Krebs	David
Lazarre	Dominique
Lazo	Sarah
Lee	Jennifer
Mackesey	Brendan
Marks	Rick
Mathis Jr	Robert
Norcross	Jennifer
O'Meally	Conor
Pease	Thomas
Redd Jr	Larry
Remsberg	Loren
Rose	Tyler James
Rule	Erica
SEWARD	MCLEAN
Soltanoff	Carrie
Stasser	Katie
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Taylor	Alexandria
Walsh	Michelle
Walsh	Mick
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Williams	Erik
Wilms	Sean
Zalys	Todd
adisa	sylvia
bonura	Vincent
spottswood	000Robert

June 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

06/15/2026 08:30 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
942-313-427	06/10/2026 07:34 AM EDT	9 hours 41 minutes	230

Staff Details

Attended	Interest Rating	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Not applicable for staff	Council	South Atlantic

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Last Name	First Name
Alkire	Carolyn
Aukeman	Trip
Bailey	Adam
Baker	Scott
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Beyer	George
Bianchi	Alan
Blough	Heather
Bogdan	Jennifer
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Boots	Benjamin
Bradshaw	Christopher
Bremer	Nik
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Brown	Hunter
Bruger	Catherine
Bubley	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Califf	Julie
Cermak	Bridget

Cheshire	Rob
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Cody	Richard
Collier	Chip
Cox	Jack
Crispe	Miriam
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Dash	Mark
DeVictor	Rick
Dobbs	Jeffrey
Drexler	Michael
Dukes	Amy
Dyar	Ben
Figueroa	Alena
Flemming	Robert
Flowers	Jared
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Friedrich	Tony
Gervasi	Carissa
Gloeckner	David
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hackney	Heather
Haddad	Nick
Hadley	John
Hallas	sara
Harrison	Alana
Helmey	Judy
Hilliard	Bob
Horstead	Adrian
Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
Hyman	Alexander
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Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Kinman	Charles

Kittle	Christine
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
L	Michael
L	M
Lazarre	Dominique
Leach	Scott
Lee	Jennifer
Lee	Max
Levy	Mara
Lima	Anthony
Lloyd	Victor
Locke	Charles
Lou	Jenny
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Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Masi	Michelle
Mathis Jr	Robert
McMahan	Trevor
Mcclees	Matt
Meehan	Sean
Mehta	Nikhil
Merrifield	Mike
Moss	david
Murphey	Trish
Neidig	Carole
Newman	Thomas
Norcross	Jennifer
O'Donnell	Kelli
Offner	Tia
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
PRENTICE	CHRIS
Package-Ward	Christina
Parsell	Steven
Perkinson	Matt
Peterson	Cassidy
Phillips	Charlie
Pike	Hannah
Porch	Clay

Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Kris
Riley	Richard
Roller	Tom
SCOTT	TARA
SEWARD	MCLEAN
Salmon	Brandi
Schlick	CJ
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Spurgin	Kali
Starling	Savannah
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Sweetman	CJ
Talton	Trista
Thomas	Suzanna
Treece	Andrea
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Whitmer	Morgan
Williamson	Veronica
Willingham	Darrin
Wilms	Olivia
Withers	Meg
Wynn	Chris
Zapf	Daniel
adisa	sylvia
bonura	Vincent
evans	joseph
gwin	earl sonny
oden	jeff
reese	dylan
sandorf	scott
vara	mary
zales	bob
Aines	Alex

Alhale	Sydney
Atkinson	Seth
Bertoline	Sue
Blum	Catherine
Borland	Gary
Brantley	William
Callaway	Lillie
Crosson	Scott
Curtis	Christina
DiJohnson	Alex
DuBeck	Guy
Dubniczki	Hayden
Emory	Meaghan
Farrell	Delaney
Freeman	Chase
Gahm	Meghan
Gardner	David
Graham	William
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Hubbard	Nolan
Hutt	Clifford
Jacoski	Greg
Kersting	Anne
Krebs	David
LaVine	Britni
Lavine	Craig
Law	Alexander
Lazo	Sarah
Lazo	Sarah
MCGOVERN	Jack
Mackesey	Brendan
Mackesey	Brendan
Marks	Rick
McWaters	Mark
Mehlhorn	Anna
Moore	Jeff
Muffley	Brandon
Neer	Julie
Nicholson	Shaun
O'Meally	Conor
Palmrose	Kristin
Pease	Thomas
Rathke	David

Redd Jr	Larry
Remsberg	Loren
Rose	Tyler James
Rule	Erica
Sartwell	Tim
Schmidtke	Michael
Soltanoff	Carrie
Stasser	Katie
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Taylor	Alexandria
Tenore	PARIS
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Michelle
Westcott	Lauren
Whaley	Dave
White	Geoff
Wilke	Kate
Williams	Erik
Wilms	Sean
Woodward	Spud
Zalys	Todd
spottswood	000Robert
zurbrick	james

June 2026 Council

Attendee Report: Meeting

Report Generated:

06/15/2026 08:30 AM EDT

Webinar ID	Actual Start Date/Time	Duration	# Registered
942-313-427	06/11/2026 07:45 AM EDT	8 hours 54 minutes	246

Staff Details

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Yes	Not applicable for staff	Council	South Atlantic

Attendee Details

Last Name	First Name
snapperwhackerhard@gmail.com	
Alkire	Carolyn
Aukeman	Trip
Bailey	Adam
Baker	Scott
Barbieri	Luiz
Barger	Jeff
Barile	Peter
Barrows	Katline
Bernier	Quinn
Beyer	George
Bianchi	Alan
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Brown	Hunter
Bubley	Walter
Bunting	Matthew
Byrd	Julia
Carruthers	Tom
Cermak	Bridget
Clawson	Jessica
Cody	Richard
Collier	Chip
Crispe	Miriam
Curtis	Judd
Curtis	Christina
DeVictor	Rick

Dobbs	Jeffrey
Dukes	Amy
Favale	Julianne
Flemming	Robert
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Gloeckner	David
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Hackney	Heather
Hallas	sara
Helmey	Judy
Horstead	Adrian
Howington	Kathleen
Huber	Jeanette
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Jacoski	Greg
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kersting	Anne
Kittle	Christine
Kittle	christine
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
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Lee	Max
Levy	Mara
Lou	Jenny
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Malinowski	Richard
Marhefka	Kerry
Marinko	Jeff
Masi	Michelle
McMahan	Trevor
McPherson	Matthew
Meehan	Sean

Mehta	Nikhil
Merrifield	Mike
Moller	Alexandra
Moore	Jeff
Moss	david
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Runde	Brendan
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Schlick	CJ
Shaw	Kristi
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Silvas	Rachael
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Stemle	Adam
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Stephens	Haley
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Sweetman	CJ
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Thomas	Suzanna
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Walia	Matt

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Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Williamson	Veronica
Withers	Meg
Woodstock	Matt
adisa	sylvia
evans	joseph
gwin	earl sonny
oden	jeff
reese	dylan
sandorf	scott
vara	mary
zales	bob
Aines	Alex
Alhale	Sydney
Atkinson	Seth
Batsavage	Chris
Beal	Bob
Bertoline	Sue
Blough	Heather
Blum	Catherine
Bogdan	Jennifer
Bonura	Vincent
Borland	Gary
Brantley	William
Bremer	Nik
Brogan	Gib
Bruger	Catherine
Califf	Julie
Callaway	Lillie
Cheshire	Rob
Cox	Jack
Crosson	Scott
Dash	Mark
DiJohnson	Alex
Drexler	Michael
DuBeck	Guy
Dubniczki	Hayden
Dyar	Ben
Emory	Meaghan
Farrell	Delaney
Figueroa	Alena

Franco	Dawn
Freeman	Chase
Gahm	Meghan
Gardner	David
Gore	Karla
Graham	William
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Haddad	Nick
Hadley	John
Harrison	Alana
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Hilliard	Bob
Hubbard	Nolan
Hutt	Clifford
Hyman	Alexander
Jones	Christopher
Keppler	Blaik
Kersting	Anne
Kinman	Charles
Krebs	David
L	M
L	Michael
LaVine	Britni
Lavine	Craig
Law	Alexander
Lazo	Sarah
Lazo	Sarah
Leach	Scott
Lima	Anthony
Lloyd	Victor
Locke	Charles
MCGOVERN	Jack
Mackesey	Brendan
Marks	Rick
Mathis Jr	Robert
McWaters	Mark
Mcclees	Matt
Mehlhorn	Anna
Muffley	Brandon
Neer	Julie
Nicholson	Shaun
O'Donnell	Kelli

Owens	Marina
O'Meally	Conor
Palmrose	Kristin
Parsell	Steven
Pease	Thomas
Perkinson	Matt
Peterson	Cassidy
Rathke	David
Redd Jr	Larry
Remsberg	Loren
Riley	Richard
Rose	Tyler James
Rule	Erica
SCOTT	TARA
Sartwell	Tim
Scalise	Timothy
Schmidtke	Michael
Soltanoff	Carrie
Stasser	Katie
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Sweeney Tookes	Jennifer
Taylor	Alexandria
Tenore	PARIS
Treece	Andrea
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Michelle
Westcott	Lauren
Whaley	Dave
Whitmer	Morgan
Wilke	Kate
Williams	Erik
Willingham	Darrin
Wilms	Sean
Wilms	Olivia
Woodward	Spud
Wynn	Chris
Zalys	Todd
Zapf	Daniel
bonura	Vincent
spottswood	000Robert
zurbrick	james