

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

## **SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE**

**North Charleston Marriott  
North Charleston, South Carolina**

**September 16-18, 2025**

### **Transcript**

#### **Snapper Grouper Committee**

Jessica McCawley, Chair  
Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair  
Dr. Carolyn Belcher  
Amy W. Dukes  
Gary Borland  
Judy Helmey  
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#### **Attendees and Invited Participants**

Monica Smit-Brunello  
Dr. Kai Lorenzen  
Sonny Gwin  
Dr. Walter Bublely  
Dr. Clay Porch  
Kathy Knowlton

Rick DeVactor  
Chris Schieble  
DeLaney Farrell  
Adrian Hordyk  
Kristen Foss

#### **Observers and Participants**

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going in the Snapper Grouper Committee. Our first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any modifications to the agenda? Does anybody know of any other business at this time that they would like to add to the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. Seeing none, we'll consider agenda approved.

The next order of business is Approval of the Minutes from the June Meeting. Any substantial modifications to those minutes? Any objection to approval to those minutes? Okay. Before we dive into the Regional Office updates, I'm going to pass it to Mike, who is going to show you where the decision tool is for black sea bass.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I'm just going to pull up the webpage for the meeting, for the September 2025 council meeting, on our website. If you look on there, and you scroll down along this right side, underneath Additional Materials, you'll see links there, and one says, "Red Amendment 37 decision tool instructions", and so this just kind of lays out the instructions for how to use the tool, what information is being conveyed there, and then you'll also see the recreational decision tool and commercial decision tool downloads.

I wanted to point those out at the beginning today. We're not talking about black sea bass until tomorrow afternoon, but that will at least give you an opportunity, if you hadn't seen those already, for you to download those. Those are Excel files. You can change or toggle the options. That way, you can come into tomorrow afternoon's discussion potentially having looked at some of the options that you would potentially want to consider for preliminary preferred alternatives, and so I just wanted to point that out for you, and, if you have any questions about the tools, feel free to grab me during a break, and I can talk to you, let you know how those things work, but there will be a brief introduction tomorrow before we start that for black sea bass, and that's all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Mike. All right. Next up on the agenda is the Southeast Regional Office Updates on Rulemaking for Submitted Amendments and EFPs. Rick, are you doing that?

MR. DEVICTOR: Yes. I'll give the quarterly update on rulemaking, where we're at. We've had some progress on rulemaking. There's four that we're working on, Amendment 55, Regulatory Amendment 36, and there's the commercial e-logbook amendment, and Amendment 48, and so all four of those have been approved by the council and submitted to NOAA Fisheries Service for rulemaking.

Amendment 55, of course, that's got the statutory deadline for the rebuilding plan for the scamp and yellowmouth grouper complex. If you recall, we had the NOA, and we published that, and that comment period ended, and we were just waiting on the proposed rule to publish. I'm happy to report that that did finally publish on August 25, and the comment period ends in eight days, and so we'll be finishing up the NOA and proposed rule comment period on those, and then the next step is the final rule, with the implementation date, and so getting closer on Amendment 55 and the rebuilding plan for scamp and yellowmouth.

Then we move on the Regulatory Amendment 36. If you recall, this changes the gag and black grouper vessel limits, and also the stowage of on-demand gear on that, and so, that one, we are working on the proposed rule package right now. That's undergoing internal review, and so we're getting closer on Regulatory Amendment 36, and so that's just a proposed rule, and not an NOA, because that's a framework amendment.

Then the next two are a little more complicated. There's a little more behind the scenes going on. We have the commercial electronic logbook amendment. You submitted that to NOAA Fisheries, and so we are working on the notice of availability, because it is a plan amendment, and then the proposed rule on that, and so those are currently undergoing internal review, so we'll hopefully get that up to Headquarters relatively soon, and so that one's ahead, the commercial e-logbook, of Amendment 48, which I'll go through in a second.

Just a little bit, and we touched a bit about the commercial e-logbook amendment and sort of behind-the-scenes activities that's going to happen with that. Obviously, there's going to have to be outreach with that, going from paper to electronic reporting. Earlier this year, you did get an update from the Science Center on some work that's going on for outreach and education, and there will be some voluntary reporting that will go on.

You know, that's dependent on the permits, and getting that fixed, but we're sort of looking at November of this year, or later, to do some voluntary reporting, and people can start reporting electronically, just testing it out, and so, in fact, that's -- I've got early next year for that voluntary reporting, and so we're going to -- The next steps are to publish the proposed rule and NOA on that commercial e-logbook amendment.

Then, finally, Amendment 48, which is probably the most complicated one out of all these four, and, of course, that modernizes the wreckfish ITQ program, moving away from that paper coupon-based program. That one, we are working on the proposed rule and notice of availability. There's four major tasks with this, again kind of behind the scenes.

We need to hire contractors to build the electronic system, and so we're going to get contractors onboard to do that, and that could take up to nine months to test that system out. There's some Paperwork Reduction Act compliance we need to do, and then outreach, and outreach is going to be a part of Amendment 48. Of course, it's a smaller fishery, and so we probably can do one-on-one sessions for that outreach, when we finally get there, but so the next step for Amendment 48 is to publish the proposed rule and NOA, and so that's an update, a quick update, on the four amendments that we're working on rulemaking.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Questions? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Not so much a question, but a comment. When you all refer to Amendment 48 as going from paper tickets to electronic tickets, I think you're burying the lead there, because I actually think the bigger change is the hail-in and hail-out requirements, and all the other things that we ended up having to put in there, begrudgingly, and so I would just -- The reason I make the comment is because, when you do outreach, when you when you speak about it, I encourage you to speak about it publicly in its broader sense, because, if it's just a matter of changing the ticket type, you're not going to get the same attention as you would get otherwise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions for Rick? All right. Thank you, Rick. Next up on our agenda is the Commercial Subcommittee Report and Discussion of Amendment 60, and so I'm going to go over that report.

The subcommittee met yesterday to further develop Amendment 60 to the fishery management plan, and we approved an agenda and minutes from our last meeting. Then we received some updated commercial snapper grouper landings analysis, and I'm not going to read all of that, but we did ask staff to further examine this information on a state-by-state level for any unique trends.

Then we went into Amendment 60 and recommended developing the following actions. Action 1, which is to revise the two-for-one snapper grouper commercial unlimited permit policy, and that includes the range of alternatives and future goals for the commercial sector and examining permit data, corporate versus individual by location, and then Action 2 is establishing dynamic step-down trip limits that vary throughout the season, based on the tracked catch and the time remaining in the season for snapper grouper species with species-specific trip limits. We had a number of notes under Action 2, and I'm not going to read all of those.

Then we removed the action that was considering the multiday trip limits. Then we said include Action 3, establish an incidental or out-of-season allowance for harvest of deepwater species. We also included Action 4, revise existing stowage requirements for gear onboard, and then there's a question for us there, and I'll look to the Snapper Grouper Committee. Do we want to establish possession allowances for specific gear types, or are we talking about a more general allowance regulation, and so I'm going to look at look at Jimmy. Jimmy, do you have thoughts on this?

MR. HULL: I think the more general allowance is the way that we would want to go.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I wanted to make sure that this question got brought up, because - - So, right now, the way that the regs are written, with regard to gear and allowances, and so you are allowed to have possession of snapper grouper species. You're allowed to have these gears right here, sink nets, bait nets, and cast nets, onboard and still be able to retain your full limits of snapper grouper species, like any other any other time.

There is a specific regulation related to longline gear, in which it specifies a group of species that you are allowed to retain. Those would be like your deepwater species associated with the golden tilefish longline fishery, and those are the only snapper grouper species that you are allowed to retain with longline gear onboard, and so, if we're just -- If you all are just talking about changing the allowance of having longline gear onboard, and being able to retain other species, then we would address that one longline type of gear.

The more general this type of action becomes, then you get into the specifics of many different types of gear, and having to specify appropriate stowage for many different types of gear, and so that's something I wanted to point out to you, and so if, really, the goal of this is to be able to allow longline to be onboard, and allow the fishermen that use that type of gear, or I know that sharks have been another one of the fisheries that have been brought up, and, if it's just a specific, one or two specific, type of gear, then that may be clearer, to address those one or two specific types of gear, as opposed to trying to formulate some regulation that would be so broad that it would be

really hard to specify all the -- I guess all of the details that you would have to check-off in order for these extra gears to be allowed onboard at the same time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Well, with that said, I would just have to leave it to you, to staff, to come up with a solution that is doable and not delay this whole amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the most doable thing would be, if you have one, or maybe two, specific gears in mind that you would that you think commercial fishermen should be able to have onboard, and stowed properly, and be able to switch to another fishery, then let me know what are those one or two gears, and that's what we can write it for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It seems like one of them is longline, longline for sharks. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Rod-and-reel, okay, and handline, and bandit.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So rod-and-reel and bandit reels, those are all like legal gears, and so those can be onboard regardless, and be able to retain snapper grouper, and it's only those gears that are not authorized gears, such as longline is not an authorized gear outside of golden tilefish and then the suite of deepwater species that are associated with them, and so that's why we would have to change the longline regs specifically, and, if that's the only one that needs to change, then that's fine. We can take that guidance and develop something for longline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, Jimmy, do you think that's -- That longline is the only one?

MR. HULL: I do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I've got other hands. I've got Kerry, and then Charlie.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I have a logistical question, and I'm sorry, and, you know, I'm not as familiar with the different types of longline gear, and so bear with me, Jimmy. Your shark gear, is that a noticeably different setup, rigging everything, than someone would use to bottom longline for snapper grouper?

MR. HULL: Yes, and you can first start -- I mean, everybody's boat is different, and a different type of reel, I use monofilament for shark fishing, and so the main line for snapper grouper is going to probably be a cable, right, and so that's the first big difference, and then I personally use what we call a short bottom longline, which is just a green stick spool, and we use shorter leaders. There's definitely going to be differences, if you were ever to do that, try to address a -- Does that answer it?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and that was my only -- My only concern was just that, you know, there was a time where bottom longlines were allowed in this fishery, like back in the 1980s, outside of the deepwater species, and it was just a very efficient gear, and there's a reason that it's not allowed anymore, and I just want to make sure that we're not opening some loophole, where someone can

use that to catch snapper grouper species, but, if the gear is different, and we write it properly, I'm super comfortable, but I just want -- That's just something that was going through my mind.

MR. HULL: Yes, and, well, that's why we're going to require stowage of some portion of the gear, like the leaders and the hooks, so that, when you're in the act of harvesting snapper and grouper, that gear has to be stowed. I mean, it's kind of -- It doesn't really matter if the gear could be used when we're -- You know, one gears is -- If it's stowed, you're not using it, and it takes some time to cut bait and hook all the -- You know, bait all those hooks and get ready to set gear, and so I think definitely stowage of the hooks is the way that I would talk about it, and that's the only gear that I can think of would be longline to be able to snapper grouper fish with other gear and then be able to go set for, you know, in my case, sharks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Golden tile -- Now, golden tile longline is going to be probably a lot closer, or the same, as what they used to use years ago, and those -- As Jimmy says, it's a totally different reel. It is cable, but we also have to remember that there's only a handful of people that have either shark longline access or golden tile, and so you don't have a very big universe here, like you did forty years ago, when anybody could get -- You know, put a longline on the boat, and so you've got a much smaller universe of people that -- But it definitely can make things much more productive if you get out there, and the tilefish aren't biting, and you just need to stow your gear and go try to see if you can pick up some beeliners, or amberjack, or anything to finish up a trip, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we have what we need here, and I'm going to continue moving through the report. Staff will develop actions and alternatives for initial review in December 2025. A draft amendment will be developed for review at the March 2026 council meeting for the council to consider approval for public hearings. Is scoping occurring between this meeting and the next meeting, or has scoping already occurred?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Scoping already occurred. That happened between June and this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Then the subcommittee directed staff to wait to bring this amendment for discussion at the Snapper Grouper AP until it's more fully developed at the AP's April 2026 meeting. Staff will update the Snapper Grouper AP on the actions and alternatives that are currently included in the amendment at their next meeting in October 2025. The subcommittee also directed staff to present the amendment to the Law Enforcement AP at their next meeting, which is January/February 2026.

Then the committee went into Other Business, and so the subcommittee was notified of difficulties experienced by fishermen attempting to sell fish on days when fish houses are closed, and the subcommittee recommends that the Snapper Grouper Committee consider revision of applying trip limits to the sale of fish as well as potential vehicles for addressing this change. All right. We need some discussion on this here, since we're coming into Snapper Grouper Committee, and is discussion on this, where you want to put it, how fast you want to move it? Kerry, would you like to -- Sure.

MS. MARHEFKA: Do you want me to get into the background, for people that weren't here, or do we feel like it's covered? I'll try to be really brief, because most people have heard it, but there has been cases, in north Florida, of fishermen who were fishing their trips, coming in and offloading their fish, but the fish house was not open, and so they were not technically able to sell their fish to the fish house, because it was like a Sunday, and the fish house was not open, but they did offload their fish, and they went back out, and had another trip a different day, and, when they came in, they were in violation of having multiple-day trip limits, even though they had offloaded their fish from a different trip, is sort of the very short version, but I think most of you know the long version.

The confusion comes from the idea that I think a lot of us held, is that the offloading of the fish to the fish house was the end of the trip. Therefore, another trip could begin, but there's words in the regulations that consider the sale of the fish as being when the trip ends, and that's complicated, and not practical, for many, many reasons, and I don't think most of us knew that was actually a provision, and, in fact, it's being enforced and interpreted differently in different regions.

What this is doing is causing fishermen who are being enforced differently than some other fishermen to lose up to two days of fishing, because their fish houses aren't open, and so what we would like to do is to -- Or what I would like to do is to remove the word "sale" and further define what a trip limit means, and when a trip limit is considered, and when that trip is considered ended, and that trip limit has been set in stone, and they can go fishing again. Sorry, and I think I said it better the first time we did it yesterday.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so are you -- How are you suggesting, and how fast are you suggesting, that we do this?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I wanted -- I would like to do it as fast as possible. I mean, in a dream world, what I would like is for like Jimmy said, is for everyone to acknowledge that there's a way to do this with paperwork, and everyone be on the same page, and we don't have to do any regulatory action, and that would be my dream world, but I have a feeling that's not going to happen, and so the next best thing would be either slip it in something that's already moving along, and I don't know if that's black sea bass or something else, or if it is a -- It sounds like our next option is a framework, and it should -- If it's one action, I'm hoping it would be quick.

I know I said this yesterday, and I know there's this perception that it only applies to red snapper, but now that this issue is out, and everyone is talking about it, if OLE decides to enforce it the same across the region, and I would assume they would choose to take the more conservative approach to enforcing it, than it is actually going to have implications for other species, because there are fish houses in the Carolinas as well, that are dealing with more than red snapper, that are not open on the weekends.

The alternative I'll tell everyone is that what we don't want to happen is, you know, if I was the one, and I was being enforced in this manner, I would go out and get a dealer permit, and just be my own dealer, and just, every Tuesday, file a no-fishing report, except for the couple times that I come in and have to act as my own dealer, and I don't think we want the proliferation of a bunch of dealers out there, but that is a workaround for people, and so I think the sooner we do this the better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we were debating about the mechanism here, and so, Kerry, do you mind making a motion that you would suggest that we initiate an action to do this, either in an existing amendment, or an amendment coming soon, or something, and I don't want to tell you what to put in your motion.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. **I move that we initiate an action, the mechanism to be determined later, to revise how trip limits are applied to the sale of fish.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Charlie. We had a lot of discussion on this in the subcommittee, and I appreciate Kerry taking the time to explain this again, and we also received some advice from Monica about kind of how to word this, what we were looking at, et cetera, and is there any additional discussion on this? I see heads shaking no. **Any opposition to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think, between now and Friday, we can have some conversation about whether or not this could be included in Amendment 37. My main concern is we don't want to slow down 37, and so we had a similar conversation at the Gulf Council meeting about a red grouper action being inserted or not inserted into that amendment, and so I think, along those lines, if it's going to slow down 37, then we need to look at a different vehicle, but we'll be prepared on Friday to talk more about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. All right. Then the subcommittee had another item for Other Business. The subcommittee was notified of a request from commercial fishermen for Starlink to be added to the Coast Guard's list of approved telecommunication devices. The subcommittee members noted that this process would require an application to the Federal Communications Commission from Starlink and could include changes to Coast Guard regulations that would accommodate Starlink communications.

The subcommittee recommends sending a letter to the Coast Guard, of similar form to a letter sent by the Gulf Council, requesting approval of Starlink as an approved telecommunication device. Do we need a motion to do this? I'm sorry. Tom, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: You know, I'm not a part of this committee, or, well, the subcommittee -- I'm just saying like I wasn't here for -- I was listening, but I wasn't part of the conversation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MR. ROLLER: As attending virtually the HMS Advisory Panel, the Coast Guard spoke to this. I think Starlink is great, but they used very, very strong language as to why it could not be used as a communication device, and so -- I don't want to misquote them, but they were very adamant about it. Now, I fully support sending a letter forward, but I just wanted to put that out there, that that had been discussed just recently.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that, and so Mike says we don't need a motion, but just direction to staff. Does the Snapper Grouper Committee want to give direction to staff to send this letter? Okay. I see heads nodding yes. Dewey, go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just think it would be a good idea. It's been brought up at HMS, and it's been brought up at the Gulf Council, and I think it would be good if we follow-up with the same type of thing. We understand what we want. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Dewey. Any more discussion on that? All right. We're done with the business from the Commercial Subcommittee. As soon as Mike gets that last item in there, we're going to go back to the agenda for the Snapper Grouper Committee. Sorry. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, and I realized yesterday that maybe we didn't put a conclusion to it, but we had talked about possibly copying the Gulf and sending a letter about the closure, about the red snapper commercial closure, and so I don't know if this is the -- I don't think we like got it in writing yesterday, but it needs to be in writing, whether it's here or at the end of the Snapper Grouper Committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would you like to make a motion to that effect, and we'll capture it here on our list of motions?

MS. MARHEFKA: Do you think we need to?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think I would do a motion.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm happy to do that. **I move that we send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce inquiring about the delayed closure of the commercial red snapper season, our concern about overages, and, I mean, my concern is also how bad it looks, but, whether that gets included in the letter, I'll let someone else decide.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, can you check out that motion, to make sure that that matches -- Send a letter to the Secretary of Commerce inquiring about the delayed closure of the commercial red snapper season. Are we sure that "inquiring" is strong enough? Okay, and then can you edit it, please?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes. **Concern. Expressing our concern.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got it. All right. Do we have a second to this motion? Okay. It's seconded by Tom. It's under discussion. Tom, did you also have your hand up for discussion? Okay. We've talked about this already yesterday. Any more discussion on this? **Any objection?** All right. **Motion carries.** Anything else, Kerry, from earlier? Okay. All right. Okay. With that, thank you for those discussions. Now we're going to move into -- I'm sorry. Just kidding. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just thinking about the conversation yesterday regarding letters, there was also a third letter that we discussed about sending to NOAA Fisheries, specifically to the Science Center, in order to have them help prioritize a list of the state-led items and items that the Science Center can no longer complete with their new staffing levels, or is that something we've already accomplished?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We think -- No, and you're good. These are perfect questions, and so we think that it was already done in Full Council I. Okay. All right. Now we're going to dive into yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper ABC and jurisdictional allocations, which is Amendment 44, and I'm going to turn it over to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so this is not the first time you guys -- Maybe for some people in the room it's the first time looking at Snapper Grouper amendment 44, but, before I dive in, I'll go over some of kind of the background on how we got to where we are right now, and so you guys were working on Snapper Grouper Amendment 44.

There was some concerns about data, and a new assessment was -- At that point, we were just looking at yellowtail snapper, and there were some data concerns, and there was a new assessment requested, and mutton -- The mutton assessment was currently being worked on, and so those kind of came out together, and so those species are now lumped together into Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, and then Reef Fish 55, and so mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper are both one stock within the Gulf and South Atlantic, and so this is a joint amendment.

A quick reminder that, the last time we worked on this, we were the administrative lead, and so it would come to our meetings and then go to the Gulf. This time around, the Gulf is the administrative lead, and so they're going to be a meeting ahead of you as we walk through the schedule.

In June, you guys reviewed the assessment, and so I'm not going to go into too much detail about those. They're linked in your decision document, but, essentially, the status for both stocks out of that those assessments were not overfished and not undergoing overfishing, and so, again, at your last meeting, and your committee report is linked here, and that's pretty much all we did with this amendment, is reviewed those assessments.

For this meeting, what we're going to do is look at the proposed set of actions and alternatives. This went to the Gulf Council at their August meeting, and so we'll review their discussion, and their motion, and then we'll just be looking -- We don't really need a formal motion, but just looking for guidance on how this moves forward.

Then one thing I do want to remind you, before I kind of go to some other things, was that your original plan for mutton and yellowtail was to continue with the joint amendment with the Gulf, and that would essentially only modify the stock OFL, ABC, and complete that jurisdictional allocation, and so that would give you guys a South Atlantic ABC, and so, essentially, the pie has to get cut twice for these species. You have that stock OFL and ABC and that has to get cut into South Atlantic and Gulf, and then, from there, you guys, you know, set your ACL, and you can change your allocations and whatnot.

I'll talk a little bit more about this as we go through, but not establishing an ACL in this amendment -- We've had this come up kind of as an issue. With one of the alternatives that we're going to present in this amendment, your proposed ABC is smaller than what's currently in place, and so there would be issues Magnuson wise, but we have a path forward, and I'll talk through that as well, to try to keep this moving on pace.

Like I mentioned, the Gulf is the administrative lead, and so this timeline includes how the Gulf will see this, and so they reviewed it in August, and you're reviewing it now. We're planning to have public hearings in early 2026, and then planning for amendment submission in the summer. I'm not going to spend too much time on the acceptable biological catch section. This just kind of provides you that stock OFL and ABC, and then the SDCs for each species, and Table 2 and Table 4 are your SDCs.

Then I did want to kind of touch on kind of the management review for both of these species. I think it was -- It would be pertinent to your discussion as you kind of move forward on how to complete the actions that we need to get done, and so, in just looking at the snapshot of mutton right now, the jurisdictional allocation is at 82 percent South Atlantic and 18 percent Gulf. You have your stock OFL and ABC, the current ones, and they're listed, the current South Atlantic ABC and ACL.

Now, remember that these catch levels are inclusive of MRFSS, and so they need to be updated with MRIP-FES and SRFS, and then you have your sector allocation, and so mutton is going to be a much more heavily recreationally-allocated species, seventeen-and-change to commercial and eighty-two-and-change to the recreational, and then you have the coordinating sector ACLs. I do want to note that the mutton recreational ACL is in numbers of fish, and so those numbers kind of look wonky, because it's pounds and numbers of fish.

Then, with yellowtail, your jurisdictional allocation is at 75 percent South Atlantic and 25 percent Gulf, and then same thing. The sector allocations for this species is a little bit more 50/50, or closer to 50/50, than mutton, and then the next table just shows you the management measures that you have in place, and so, obviously, you guys -- It's early, but no management changes have been yet discussed, but I wanted to put them out here, in case you wanted to consider them.

Figure 1 and 2 just show some recent landings, and so the green line is the Gulf landings, and the red is the South Atlantic, and the blue are total landings, and that is for mutton and yellowtail respectively, and then the other thing I included in here is just a kind of like a closure snapshot, and so, for mutton snapper, there has not been any commercial or recreational closures from 2012 to now, and then, for yellowtail snapper, there has not been any recreational closures. However, in 2015 through 2019, there were commercial closures, and so just some things to keep in mind, and, obviously, we'll do season projections as this amendment progresses.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Sorry, and it was just a clarification. I wanted to make sure I was reading the table right, and so, Table 5, that's commercial and rec, because it reads as jurisdictional allocation South Atlantic and Gulf, and I just want to make sure that I'm not misreading the table.

MS. IBERLE: This column here is the commercial allocation between the two councils, and then this column here is going to be your sector allocation.

DR. BELCHER: Okay. I was misreading it.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry, and there's a lot of information in these tables. All right. That brings us to the purpose and need statement. I'm not going to read these out. The one thing I do have

highlighted is that regional ACL, and so this is, like I mentioned earlier, one of those sticking points that we need you guys to discuss, is whether or not the ACL is modified in this amendment, but I think it might be easier to explain looking at the action itself, and so I think it might be better to just move on to the action.

All right, and so the way this was presented to the Gulf Council was a single action with alternatives for each species, and so you would have Alternative 2, and then you would pick a letter for each species. When the Gulf saw this, they decided it would be cleaner and neater to have this broken out into two actions, and so it would be the same action duplicated, one for mutton and one for yellowtail.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. I'm just going to go ahead and say it. Yes, because this is somewhat confusing.

MS. IBERLE: So the way I have it broken out here is, the table that has the mutton, that will be Action 1, and then the table with the yellowtail will be Action 2, and so, when this comes back to you, that's how it'll be set up. Right now, this action modifies the stock OFL and the stock ABC, and so it essentially takes those levels from the stock assessment, and then it will modify the jurisdictional allocation and establish the ABCs for the South Atlantic and the Gulf.

The sticking point would be whether or not we included the ACL. A proposal from the Gulf was that we include the ACL within this action, and so Action 1 and 2 again would be the same, and it would just be one for mutton and one for yellowtail, and you wouldn't be seeing alternatives like you typically do for your ACL.

The ACL would just be established within this action, and so it would be kind of like an omnibus action. You would be establishing your stock OFL, the ABC, the jurisdictional allocation, which would then give you a South Atlantic ABC, and then you would set the ACL from that ABC. Currently, for both stocks, you don't have a buffer in between the ABC and ACL, and I think we would need to be okay with not including a buffer, because, if you wanted to get buffers then we would need alternatives, and I think we could write that in, and then that would achieve everything that you need to get done here.

The one thing I will say is that, if you establish an ACL based off of this new ABC, there would be a de facto sector allocation, because you would be changing that number, and so you could, again, keep those same sector allocation percentages. The numbers would shift a little, and I know that was a lot, and so I'm going to turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so that's where you lost me, because you're not changing the jurisdictional -- I mean, you're changing the jurisdictional in this document, but then you would split rec and commercial in the next document, and so that's -- I don't understand the last thing that you just said. It doesn't make any sense to me about why it would be in this document versus the next one.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and this is it's kind of confusing, and so I think the sticking point isn't sector allocations. It's the ACL, and so, right now, your ACL is based off of a MRFSS-inclusive ABC, and so the last time -- I think, the last time you modified it, it was based off of MRFSS. You know,

the jurisdictional allocation was determined, and you had your South Atlantic ABC, and so then, from that, you set your ACL.

What we had originally planned was to modify your ACL in a separate amendment, but I think the problem lies -- If this amendment doesn't include the ACL, then you have this period of time where you have an updated South Atlantic ABC, but an ACL that doesn't match that value.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's also how the Gulf does it, but -- Yes, and they do everything like jammed into one action, whereas we do it all in separate actions, but, anyway, I definitely think that this should be split into two actions. I guess it's okay to do the ACL in this document, and do other people have thoughts? Kerry. Go ahead, Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Hi, guys. Can you hear me?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. RINDONE: All right. It's great to speak to everybody, and so, just to elaborate on what Allie was saying, the way that we had it set up would establish the jurisdictional cuts of the stock ABC, and then the ACL would be set equal to the ABC, and so each region would have its own ACL, and then your sector allocations, if they're not modified through some other action, your sector allocations as they currently exist would just be applied, and, because SRFS estimates slightly higher recreational landings than MRFSS did, it would be a de facto reallocation in that direction, because you would be maintaining things in that way, or, sorry, to the commercial, because you would be maintaining things in that way.

If you update your sector allocations using the SRFS data that were used in the SEDAR 79, which is mutton, and SEDAR 96, which is the yellowtail stock assessment, then, using the exact same formulas that you used when you established them the first time, it would give you slightly more of the allocation shifting towards the recreational sector.

The idea behind doing this is just what will be, at least at this point anyway, the two actions, one for mutton and one for yellowtail, was just to try to keep things as streamlined and efficient for the councils as possible, but, if more work needs to be done on the South Atlantic side, because of the sector allocations, then we can certainly accommodate that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that explanation, Ryan, and so I think I'm okay. Since we don't have a buffer, and ACL is equal to ACL for these two species, I'm okay with having ACL in here, but, also, I think we then need to initiate another amendment instead, and I don't want to put it in this amendment, but a separate amendment where we then look at allocation, and figure all that out, and that's just my two-cents. I don't know what others think. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Your concern about including it in this amendment is just the time it would take for the allocations?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, also, why is the Gulf commenting on the South Atlantic Council allocation split? That's what happened last time. Every time we do a joint amendment, then there are people on the other council that then want to talk about the allocation split after the jurisdiction

split, and I would rather that just be a South Atlantic discussion, since the Gulf doesn't have a rec and commercial split for either one of these species.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I don't disagree with you there, right, that it should be the South Atlantic Council decision, and they're, obviously, the ones ahead, in terms of leading the amendment, and I guess I just caution against having another amendment split out, or another action split out here, just because of economies of scale, building it into one amendment versus two amendments. I hear your concerns about the Gulf Council, but I feel like we could address that with the Gulf Council, in terms of focusing on actions that affect, obviously, their portion of these fisheries.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So I can't help it, and I'm going to ask why then you don't have a separate amendment that deals with everything on its own. I know this is a joint amendment, and so remember, when this first came up, there was a comprehensive -- Your comprehensive ACL amendment, and then the Gulf had, I think, a generic ACL amendment in which you dealt with some of these species, like these two, yellowtail and mutton, and you had the same action as the Gulf, in terms of the jurisdictional split, and then you went and dealt with the allocations all in one amendment.

Albeit, it was a gigantic amendment, but, in this case, if you were to split this out. and have a separate amendment, and the Gulf would have a separate amendment, you would have to have the same action. Both councils would have to agree on the jurisdictional split, and there would be one OFL, right, that would apply for each stock, that you would both agree on, and then you would deal with everything in just one amendment.

I think you discussed this at your last meeting a little bit, in terms of dealing with allocations separately, and, Jessica, I read your comments. I think they're the same thing you just mentioned, about having the other council weigh-in on a South Atlantic allocation, but this -- It gets a little wonky, when you're going to be dealing with allocations separately in a follow-up amendment, and maybe you can justify it.

If you want to keep one document, right, one amendment, and it amends the reef fish plan and the snapper grouper plan, but, if you want to keep this joint document, that's fine, but I think you ought to then have a really good discussion on why and how you're going to follow it up with an allocation amendment and all those sorts of things. To me, it makes a little bit more work for your staff, but that that's up to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let me just let me ask my questions over here, because, sorry, and this is just after-lunch discussion, but how in the world could we have two separate amendments when there is a jurisdictional split between two councils? Do you not have to take that action in a joint amendment? That's the part that's hung me up, and like how could you possibly split the jurisdictional allocation in a standalone amendment in the Gulf and a standalone amendment in the South Atlantic?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So that's what you did previously, and I'm not trying to advocate for it, but I'm just saying that that is a possibility, and so, when you had your comprehensive ACL

amendment, and the Gulf had their generic ACL amendment, there was no jurisdictional allocation at that time for yellowtail or mutton, and I think there was maybe black grouper. There were a number of species, but the two councils agreed on the same jurisdictional allocation. The Gulf did I think it was 25 percent to the Gulf, for example with yellowtail, and 75 percent to the South Atlantic, and both councils agreed on that jurisdictional allocation, with the OFL and all that, and so, really, then you dealt with the ACLs and other things, but you each had to agree on that same action, that jurisdictional split.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But how was that done in a transparent public process? Like that's the part - - Myra, can you explain how that was done?

MS. BROUWER: Sure, and so I was one of the lucky staff people that got to work on the comprehensive ACL amendment. I was really green, and it was like one of my first amendments, and it was really, really big. My recollection is, you know, there was a lot of back and forth with the Gulf, but we basically agreed on a range of alternatives. Then each council discussed those separately, and it really wasn't -- It wasn't that painful, and maybe I blocked it out of my mind, but I don't remember it being that convoluted.

The other issue that I see, if one council sets the total ACL at the ABC, is where are you going to potentially consider a buffer between the ABC and the ACL, right, because I heard Allie and Ryan talk about the total ACL would be set at the ABC, but what if the council wanted to set it lower? Where do we analyze that, and so it seems, to me, that what Monica has proposed is probably going to be cleaner, and we would just have to work to make sure we explain this to the public really well, that the councils are going to have to collaborate on one action, and then they're going to do their thing independently.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I guess I just don't understand the mechanism, because, in the past, we have brought the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Council together at the same time to have those discussions about some of these Florida species. Instead, we're just going to have a discussion, and then staff is going to go tell them this is what we picked out, and, no, we want a different jurisdictional allocation, and like I just can't decide which one is the cleanest and most transparent, because it seems like it could get slowed down if we're just relying on negotiations happening outside of council meetings, et cetera. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I agree that it's not without its difficulties, but it has been done before, and I think it could be done. I think there would be a good bit of coordination between each council staff, and that would have to be on the record at the council meeting, so that everyone was quite clear in the public meetings, right, of what's being done, and so I think it could be done. I think it has been done.

If you want to do it that way, that's a way forward. If you wanted to keep the joint amendment, that's another way forward, but each has its own peculiarities, I guess, and it's kind of little odd situations, in terms of keeping it together or separating it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry, and I have PTSD from these last meetings with the Gulf, where we were all sitting at one table together, trying to make decisions on mutton, yellowtail, black grouper, you know, goliath grouper, all of these different species, and it was horrendous. Corky Perret was

there, and that's just enough said, and so what does the committee think about us just doing our own amendment?

I see pros and cons to both to both of these, because -- Two things. One, it seems like we're not really looking to overwhelmingly change the split between the Gulf and the South Atlantic for these two species. Also, I don't know that we're going to change management measures either, but we here on the South Atlantic side do have a commercial/rec split. The Gulf does not, and so that's -- You know, you would want to, I think, keep that separate no matter what, and then the Gulf often considers ACTs, and we don't really use that typically here, nor do we have ACTs set up for mutton and yellowtail.

Maybe the two separate amendments were the two councils, as Corky would say, break up, and we get divorced, and we just have two separate amendments that just move through each council, but I will look to the committee members, if you have an opinion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't have a lot to offer, and, obviously, I don't have a lot of experience with the species. I will say that my experience reflects your initial concern, which is, when I've been at the Gulf Council, and there's been the discussion of sector allocation, I've had people pull me aside and say why are you doing sector allocation, you know, and so it does feel like there's a large disconnect there, that's not compatible, or we have irreconcilable differences, if we're sticking with the divorce puns. With my limited experience, I think the idea of two separate amendments makes sense, but, again, I'm not an expert.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess one more question is about the speed, and so I thought that we were jamming this in together, and then going back and forth between the two councils actually to make it move faster, and so then, if we split it into two separate amendments, does that affect the timing, I guess, and, Andy, I saw you put your hand up, and then so does Monica. Do you want Monica to go first?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So I guess let's -- Why don't we have a discussion about what you -- How quickly you wanted to follow this up with another amendment, and so, if you're going to go forward with this document like it is, right, and so it's a joint document between the two councils, and you're going to deal with the stock assessments, right, and you're going to get your OFL and your ABC, and then you'll do a jurisdictional split between the two councils, and that's what we're calling jurisdictional split, then how -- That's all.

Then how quickly would you follow that up with the other amendment that's going to necessarily have to -- You know, your allocation trigger policy is involved at that point, because you're going to have to look at allocations, and I guess then you would do your sector ACLs and all that, and is this something you're going to have almost in parallel with each other, or how are you going to be doing that? What's your idea?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was thinking that it would happen almost in parallel, but I think it would depend on the speed of this document, and if anything got hung up between the two councils, and I guess my biggest fear, no matter what, is, you know, we were working on this, and then we stopped it to ask FWC to rerun these stock assessments, because the data was so old, and to use the State Reef Fish Survey, and so I would hate to embark on any process, one document or two documents, that slows this down such that, by the time we actually adopt the ACL, it's three years

old, you know, and so I guess those are my concerns, is the speed with which we can move these documents, because that's what hung us up last time, and we all decided that the data was too old, and we had to rerun these stock assessments. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm certainly cognizant of your concerns, Jessica. I'm still thinking the fastest path forward is to keep this together, include the sector ACLs for the South Atlantic, you know, essentially ask the Gulf to be silent with regard to weighing-in on those, that that's a South Atlantic decision.

Where the hang-up would be is, because we maybe aren't meeting jointly, as to whether or not there's going to be agreement on that jurisdictional split. What I'm seeing in the data, for the most part, is, if we change the jurisdictional split, there's a lot of consistency, in terms of all the alternatives that we're considering, and so it's not like it's greatly variable, in terms of how the math actually works out with that revised jurisdictional split, and so I'm hopeful, optimistic maybe, that this may be easier than we're laying it out to be right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, based on what Andy said, I would keep it in one document that moves between both councils, and then I'm okay with adding the action that then splits the South Atlantic ACL, and so you would be adding ACLs in here, and then you would split the South Atlantic ACL into the commercial/rec split, and we would discuss allocation, and we would ask the Gulf Council to stay out of it, basically, because that's our decision. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I love that idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: In addition, while Allie is typing this up, we would still also -- Within this document, we would have a mutton snapper action, and then we would have yellowtail actions, and so they would be separate actions, instead of all jammed into one right now.

MS. IBERLIE: So I have direction, and I just want to make sure I'm clarifying, and so the direction to staff that I just captured was to include modifying the ACL within what will be Action 1 and 2, and then add an action to modify South Atlantic sector allocations, and does that capture it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I think so. Then, that way, if the Gulf would like to consider some ACT, or some type of buffer or step-down on their side, then they could do that in this document as well, because we're going to add some South-Atlantic-specific actions, and so I'm fine if the Gulf wants to add more to this that just applies to them. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think that, with you adding the additional actions, covers your Magnuson Act bases, and it -- You will have done what the council set up in your allocation trigger policy, and all those sorts of things, and so, if you can deal with it that way, it's, I think, a great way for the council to go, and then you don't have to have another amendment that follows on its heels that does some of these same things.

MS. IBERLE: Also, I added clarification of sector allocations for both species, and so that will probably be two separate actions. Again, it will be the same, but just for both species. All right, and so the final thing I have for this one is just to review the Gulf discussion that they had recently, at their August meeting, and I linked to their report. Again, I already discussed that they were good with splitting it into two actions, just for ease of analysis.

Then the other discussion was it was recommended that we only retain jurisdictional allocation methods that were the bowtie formula, and so, if you look up here, for each species, there was options that would calculate the jurisdictional allocation based on just an average recent landings.

The Gulf preferred removing any alternative that was based on average recent landings, and only retain those bowtie formulas, and so the jurisdictional allocations are based off of this bowtie formula now, and then we would also retain the alternative that would just take those percentages and apply them to your new ABC. Their motion is here, and, again, the alternatives, you know, a and b, 2a and 2b, will change once we separate those actions, but that was the main discussion that they had, and so I'll turn it back over to you guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I think it's the last -- Allie is highlighting it right now, just to be clear which ones they removed, and so those ones in yellow that are not the bowtie formula were removed by the Gulf Council, and so one of our questions today is are we good with removing those from further analysis, because it's not the bowtie formula that was originally selected, and so I'm looking around the table on that. Okay, and I see some heads nodding yes, and people saying sure. Okay.

MS. IBERLE: I think I can record that in direction to staff, and they made a motion, and so I think we're good there, and so I think I have what I need, and so next steps with this amendment -- I forgot about these, and so Tables 8 and 9 show you the actual ABC values for each one of those alternatives, and so if you wanted to glance at that, and I included them here, and so what will happen next is the IPT will, again, split those actions, build those two extra actions for the allocation, and then we'll start to analyze, and get you guys some season projections, and then this will be going to the Gulf Council in November.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A couple more questions for you, and so the next round of this document, when we look at the season projections, that will tell us whether there will be early closures? Okay, because we don't know that information yet. Okay.

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and what I'm envisioning, and, again, this is just me, and the IPT will discuss, but you'll have a projection for the jurisdictional allocation, and then it will also tier down to your sector allocations, and so you'll kind of be able to look at how that plays out with those puzzle pieces together.

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

MR. STRELCHECK: Two things. One, I appreciate Allie saying, you know ,direction staff is sufficient. I think, because of the back-and-forth ping-ponging, I would recommend having a motion just to be very clear. Then the second would be do we want to provide any direction to staff regarding the sector allocations, for development of those for the next meeting?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so, first, let's do a motion that, in Action 1, move alternative -- There's something weird in that motion. Move Alternative 4 to Considered but Rejected, and so this is removing those alternatives that were highlighted, and so would someone like to make that motion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that, in Action 1, we move Alternative 4 to Considered but Rejected.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there a second? It's seconded by Charlie. Does everybody understand what we're doing here? We're matching the Gulf and removing the options there for the jurisdictional allocation that are not part of the bowtie formula. Okay. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.** Now we need some alternatives on the sector allocation. Andy, did you have some thoughts?

MR. STRELCHECK: I do not have thoughts. I guess I would look to staff. You know, we typically kind of use a similar range of alternatives for looking at allocations, if you have ideas in terms of how to approach this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Could you just use similar alternatives that are developed for the regional allocations for the sector allocations?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so she's going to go back and look at the formulas, and Allie will bring those back in Full Council, and so we'll be looking at some of the similar allocations from last time. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and then Myra mentioned that we probably should look at our allocation decision tool, in order to do it, and so that might be the most appropriate method for getting about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we're good. We've made some decisions here. I appreciate all the discussion on this item. Anything else on yellowtail and mutton? All right. Thank you for that discussion, and thank you, Allie. All right. Let's take a ten-minute break, and then, when we come back, we're going to start diving into these reports, and so a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going. Next up, we're going to get a series of updates, and so first up is an update on the recreational aggregate bag limit discussion, and I'm going to turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. This should be Attachment 3 in the Snapper Grouper folder, and it's also under, unfortunately, late materials, and sorry for getting it to you all so late. I was just trying to put everything together for this analysis of some of the recreational data.

This is just some preliminary analysis to help guide some of the discussions that the council has been having, or this committee has been having, in regard to aggregate bag limits. We just wanted to put some information out there to help guide the discussion, see what's available, and see what the catch rates look like, and so, starting off, the council does use either aggregates or complexes in a variety of ways.

They have some complexes in order to track ACL monitoring, and some of the reasons might be difficulty in identifying species, and they could be low catch values in recreational data, and so that could mean they have some very high PSEs and, by combining across species, you might get to a little bit more stable of an estimate.

In Table 1, we have all the complexes that are part of the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan. We have the deepwater snapper grouper complex, the grunts complex, the jacks complex, the porgies complex, the shallow-water grouper complex, and I think that's called OSASWG now, and it might go by other names, but that's what I have it as in this one, and then we also have the snapper complex.

Once again, this is used for tracking annual catch limits. However, when the council has been setting up some of the management, they have additional aggregates that they've been using, and some of these are to develop a seasonal closure, maybe for co-occurring species, close for one and close for all, and so there's the shallow-water grouper closure, and that's associated with spawning of some of grouper species.

There's also the grouper and tilefish aggregate, and that's designed to prevent overages in some of the ACLs in the recreational, and you can see that's limited to three fish. There's some differences within the grouper aggregate on how many fish you're allowed to have. I didn't put those in there, and I meant to, but there are different species that might have a limit, such as snowy grouper, and that is one per vessel for the recreational sector.

We also have a snapper aggregate that's limited to ten fish, and this does not include all the snappers that are in the fishery management unit. Vermilion snapper and red snapper are out of it, as well as cubera snapper that are greater than thirty inches, and then we also have a twenty-fish aggregate, and this is meant to be a catch-all. Within this twenty-fish aggregate, you're not allowed to have more than ten of a single species, and so there are a variety of aggregates that the council already has been using in order to control harvest on some of these species and to prevent overages in ACLs.

For this analysis, what I really took a deep dive in was the Marine Recreational Information Program. There are other components of the recreational sector that I'm not really analyzing here, and so the headboat component of the recreational sector is not really analyzed for this analysis. That's been hit pretty hard in the headboat analysis, and so, if we want to go into that, we can look at some of those reports as well, but I just really wanted to focus on the private recreational and charter components of the recreational fishery.

Starting off just looking at overall landings, I have, up top -- This is the number of fish that are landed in the private -- In the charter boat, private recreational, and shore-based fishery from 2019 to 2024, and I just did it for this short time period, trying to make sure I had my analyses correct in the beginning before we extend anything beyond that, if there's additional questions.

For this, I do have a shore component, just to provide some information on how much landings or catch is coming from the shore component of the recreational sector. Below the landings up top, we have total catch, and so this is inclusive of the total number of fish that are released. This is not just dead fish, and this is the overall number. Discard mortality is not applied to any of these,

and that would take a long time to do it for all fifty-five species and come up with a discard mortality rate.

Two things I want to point out, and the first one is, if you look at the thirty million fish, compared to the 7.5 million fish in the landed, and so there are a lot more fish being released than there are being caught, and that's expected, but it's about a four-to-one ratio that you're looking at between these two. The other thing to note is, in the private recreational sector, it appears that there's been an increasing trend, going up from about twenty-five million fish up to around thirty million fish, just in the short time period.

Scrolling on down, then I wanted to look at, all right, which fish are most important in the recreational sector, and, once again, this is inclusive of charter, shore, and private, trying to get all the landings in the in the MRIP landings database, and the way I interpreted -- Most important, I did it based on numbers of fish. Obviously, if you did it on weight of fish, a gag grouper weighs a lot more than a small black sea bass, and so this is going to be biased depending on whichever species you select, or whichever metric you choose to select as most important, but, just as a starting point, I started out with number of fish, because that's how the fish are reported in MRIP.

It's as numbers of fish, and then, in this table, we have the top twenty, based on the catch rank, and so we have gray snapper which is the number-one caught fish, at just around sixteen million fish per year, and then we have an average landings of just over three million. It ranked number one in both. If you go down to black sea bass, it ranks number two in the overall average catch, but, if you look at the rank of landings, it drops down to eleven. A lot of this is because many of the fish are being released because of size limits that are already established for black sea bass.

Yellowtail snapper is number three, as far as the catch rank, and then it's number two in landings, and you can go through and look at the list. One thing that might stand out to you is I have things in there like snapper family, and I was trying to be as inclusive as I could. Sometimes when fish are released, the best that the interceptor can get, or is reported to them, is a family of fish, and not all are broken down to species.

Now, getting into some of the information on how many snapper grouper species, or how many individual snapper grouper species, are landed on a trip, and what I did for this is I just looked at the private and charter boat fishery, because shore-based is difficult to look at when we're looking at a per angler catch, and what I had to do was take all the catch that occurred on a trip and divide it by the number of anglers that were on that trip, and then come back out, in order to estimate the total landings.

When you see zero on here, and there's also landings associated with that, obviously, if you had zero catch, that would also mean you had zero landings, but what this means is the zero means zero to one fish, and so, if you had less than one fish, it shows up as a zero here. I just didn't have time to develop the code to change all of these axes properly.

When we're looking at this graph, you start at zero fish per angler, meaning zero to one, going all the way up to twenty-plus fish per angler, and this graph here is landings per angler, and so this is the -- Looking at this graph, and I have a dotted line at ten, because that's what the Florida EFP was checking out, was ten fish per angler, and seeing how that was working, and so, if you follow

that ten fish per angler up, on this charter boat side, you can see, at ten fish per angler, that accounts for around 80 percent of the overall recreational landings that are coming in.

If you want to try to interpret this a little bit more, if this were to drop down to let's say 75 percent, that indicates that there's a higher percentage catching more of that fish at a higher bag limit, and so just think, as you drop down the curve, that's increasing the number of fish that are caught on it, on a per trip angler basis, and so if you were to take this, and now comparing between private recreational and charter boat, it looks very similar between the two. Overall, they're catching -- Around 85 to 90 percent are catching ten fish or fewer snapper grouper species, and, when I say "catch", I apologize for that. I mean landings in this graph here.

If you scroll down to Figure 3, we're looking at catch, and so, if you look at this one, you're right around -- The charter boat is on the left side, and private is on the right, and everything else is the exact same, and so, for catch, you're looking, at about 60 percent of the overall catch, they're only catching ten fish per angler. Does everyone understand those graphs? Do they all make sense, because it took me a while to put this all together, and two minutes to talk about.

All right, and so I know the next question that was going to be coming up is, all right, well, what species is most important to the catch, and so we have these broken down. It's a similar pattern for the species level, and what I'm trying to do is zoom out, and I apologize for people not being able to read it, but I think it's beneficial to look at it at one time with the number of fish caught, versus the number of fish that are landed, and so the top graph is going to have -- So Figure 4, in this instance, and Figure 5 below it, they're going to have the exact same species in the exact same order. The top one is going to be a number of fish caught, and the bottom one is going to be number of fish landed.

You can see, for something like gray snapper, which is in the ten-fish snapper aggregate, very few people are keeping up to even three fish, three gray snapper, and most of them are being released, and so there is some mechanism why recreational anglers are not bringing those fish in, and it's beyond regulations, at least beyond the bag limit regulations.

Then you can go to something like vermilion snapper or red snapper, where, for red snapper, we have one fish per angler, and you can see that showing up in the data, and then you see, for red snapper, there's a really high spike, at least in the number of fish caught, where they're catching twenty-plus fish per person.

I didn't really talk about these graphs too much, but I do have it separated out into charter and private. Most of these catches are coming in the private sector, and so you're really not seeing too many patterns right now in the charter sector, and I can break these out in finer detail, if that's what the council wants, but this is meant to be a thought paper for you all to tell us what additional information you will need.

Scrolling down into Figures 6 and 7, this is more of the twenty-fish aggregate species, and so we have species like almaco jack, white grunt, gray triggerfish, but I also have black sea bass in there, which is not part of the twenty-fish aggregate, and so, once again, you're seeing, at least for something like almaco jack, a really high spike, at ten fish per angler, and that might just be they're guessing that they caught ten fish per angler, or it could be an expansion, but, for something like black sea bass, once again, you're getting a lot of fish caught, at twenty fish per angler, but, when

you come down to how many are kept, you're looking at less than one fish per angler is the majority of the catch.

Then, going into some of the groupers, remember these fish are limited to three fish per angler, at least for keeping, and you can see the number of fish caught here, for a variety of grouper species, and then the number of fish landed, and so I think that's all I had for you all. If you look in the appendices, you can look to see how many -- All the species that I included in the analysis, as well as full landings of all the fish reported, and so everything is available to you, and it's by year. I just tried to aggregate some of the data, so I didn't have to go through so much, and bore you all, like I normally do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I appreciate this analysis, Chip, and the time that it took to put this together. I know we're going to talk about aggregate limits when we get to the MSE as well, but any questions on this data or other things that people are wanting to see relative to aggregate limits? I don't see any hands. Oh, wait. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thank you, Chip. Not necessarily a question, but just kind of thinking out loud here a little bit. When we look at this, you know, how do you feel that this reflects on the potential impact of discards? I know you kind of touched on it initially, but I wanted to circle back to that.

DR. COLLIER: I think this highlights, on some of the species, where you're seeing that recreational fishermen are releasing the fish, regardless of regulations, and so they're they just don't want to possess those fish. Other fish they're targeting, and they want to keep them, and so let's say, something like the groupers, you're not seeing a big difference, in some of the species, between the landed versus the caught, and, you know, motivations of the recreational anglers are very diverse, and why you would keep one fish over another is extremely challenging.

For us to come up here and really think about it, I think it's going to take some time to dive into, and I think understanding why people are releasing some of the fish, even though they don't have to, is important to know when you're developing an aggregate bag limit.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So, you know, when I look at this, like gray snapper, and, well, you know, folks throwing lures for snook or stuff inshore probably catch gray snapper, and they don't want to keep those, and that's not what they're fishing for, and I can think of very few instances where somebody is out fishing for snapper grouper and throws back a legal gray snapper, if they haven't met their limit. That doesn't -- Then my next question is so where did the -- Is the catch data based on FES data, or where is that coming from?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and all this catch information is based on FES. It is not based on the Florida State Reef Fish Survey.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Is it possible that part of the disconnect there is that we're reflecting more catches than there was potential for a landing in?

DR. COLLIER: I mean, that could definitely be an issue, but it would be extrapolated on both sides of it, and so your landings would be extrapolated along with your overall catch, and so, unless you're -- The survey, the State Reef Fish Survey, is sampling a different pool of people, then I

could see there being a difference, and I don't know. I struggle with this on, and I haven't thought about that in great detail, and so --

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: You know, I'm conscious of how much work this took, and so I appreciate that, and I know we've got a lot of work ahead of us, but, maybe at some point, kind of doing a test comparison with the State Reef Fish Survey, just to see are we seeing the same pattern here, or is this something that we need to further investigate, and that's something I would like to think through.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, and also the EFPs, and so, you know, we have aggregate bag limits in the EFPs, and I think -- So the council will see more of the workup of the data on our three EFPs at the December meeting, but I think that some of what we're seeing in the EFPs is kind of matching this, that people aren't necessarily taking the ten fish in the aggregate, and so, I mean, we're hoping to have more information that will kind of go hand-in-hand with this as well. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. Just for discussion, so if the aggregate bag limits are intended to reduce discards, I think that it would have to be with total retention, no size limits, because, otherwise, you're still going to have a size limit, and it's going to make people discard, and they'll keep trying to catch the aggregate, and so that's just a thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that was my thought as well. I think we're going to talk about that more when we get to the MSE, and try to figure out what all we want to analyze in the MSE, but I agree. I had some of the same thoughts on that. Andy, and then Gary.

MR. STRELCHECK: A comment and a suggestion. First, Chip, thanks for putting this together, and, in terms of Robert's suggestion on the State Reef Fish Survey, certainly I'm open to looking at that, but I believe the State Reef Fish Survey is limited to a certain number, or a subset, of snapper grouper species and so that would limit the comparison.

We talked about the aggregate bag limit, and it's only being tested right now off of Florida. It would be interesting to look at this maybe parsed out geographically a little bit more, and I don't know what scale, and I know it, obviously, would be sample size driven, but just to see if there is differences regionally throughout the South Atlantic in the outcome of this analysis.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That would be super cool. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Just to Jimmy's point, you know, we sit here at this table, and we look at those discards, and until -- You know, the recreational fishermen just wants to go fishing, right, and, if one fish is open in the complex, they're going to go fishing, and they're going to discard everything they catch, except for that one fish that's open.

Until we get to some type of full retention, and put a max number of fish on that, and stop them from fishing once they hit that max, you're going to continue to grow discards, no matter what, and we keep growing the fishery, and we sit here around and around and around, going around the circle, and I feel like, until we get to that point, we're going to continue to see the discard problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Gary, thanks for that. I, obviously, share a lot of that opinion. I do think there might be some species, that we've kind of talked about in the past, like yellowtail and others, that may not have as big of an impact, and so there may be some opportunity to, you know, look at that a little differently on the full retention model, but I don't disagree with everything you said there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other comments on this at this point? All right. I don't see any additional hands. Thank you for all your work on this, Chip. Next up, I think we're going to dive into a discussion on blueline tilefish jurisdictional ABCs.

DR. COLLIER: So, at the last council meeting, the council had requested that staff send a letter to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in regard to the regional allocation of blueline tilefish, and we received information back, and the Mid-Atlantic Council is willing to work with the South Atlantic Council in setting up a workgroup to discuss the regional allocation of blueline tilefish.

However, they're going to move forward in establishing, or putting these new ABCs in place that were recommended by their SSC, and so we just wanted to provide that information to you all. We do have an ABC recommendation for the South Atlantic region from the SSC, and so that the council could consider moving forward with an action, in order to put that in place, or making an amendment to put that in place, and so I'll let the council discuss, given that the Mid-Atlantic is moving forward with their development of an ABC, based on SEDAR 92.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: When I first brought this up, about the jurisdiction, my response to it was not have too big of a swing based on a random survey. This swing that happened here was 14 percent, and so, given that it's a random survey, that's going on right now, there could be a shift the other way, and so is management going to react that quick to it? This can be something that can be an ongoing conversation.

Right now in the South Atlantic, it's my understanding that there's 92,000 pounds of available ACL, 50 percent to the commercial and 50 percent to the rec, based on the allocation split, and what we need to look for, in the commercial industry, is how to get that -- How to get them fish in the bank, and so, in June of 2026, and I'll give that extra time, or maybe July 1, that we are able to fish on that, and so if it could be a framework, abbreviated framework, or something that, once the council decides, and staff works it out, and it can get to SERO, and however long it takes there, and, you know we don't know that yet.

That way, for the June and July season, the recreational and commercial can take advantage of a stock assessment that happens about every eight years, and so this would be probably about the first time, if it was to happen, in my memory, that we've got some extra crumbs, as I like to say, and so can the council, given what we have here, what has to be looked at, and how fast of a framework, or abbreviated framework, or whatever the correct terminology is, to get that to where the fishermen, the fishers, recreational and commercial, can take advantage of the stock assessment.

It shouldn't take us years, a year or more, to get quoted in the hands, once we've had a stock assessment, and something else that I would like to further look at is increasing the commercial trip limit, which takes a little longer, from 300 pounds to 400 pounds, and I know you have to have a variance there, and I've looked at that extensively over the time period, of what states are landings different things, and that, in in the majority of the landings of the blueline tilefish, we need a May to September season.

We saw, this year, where the season was stopped on July 23, and we've got 7,000 pounds left on the table, and we're getting ready to have a fishery open up, just shy, a couple days shy, of two months later. We don't need fish two months later. We need fish when it's applicable and the best markets to sell, and so my ask, in looking at this, is how fast -- What do we have to look at, and how fast can we get this quota into the hands of the recreational and commercial fishermen to be able to use this quota for the 2026 season, preferably in July, or before then. We don't want to wait till after the end of the year, or something like that, and so I'll stop there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I was trying to understand exactly what the Mid-Atlantic did and how that relates to us, and so, Chip, the Mid-Atlantic Council is moving forward with the 2026 specifications, and so Dewey is kind of saying the same thing. Dewey is suggesting that we move forward with the 2026 specifications for the South Atlantic Council, and could that be done with a framework amendment, or would it have to be some other vehicle?

DR. COLLIER: So that could be done through an abbreviated framework, if you're just looking at the ACL, ABC and ACL, adjustments. However, there are changes to the catch systems, and so we will need to have the council have some discussion on allocation, because we're changing from CHTS to FES, and so it would be good to talk about that.

If the council would like to just change the ABC and ACL, that could be done through an abbreviated framework. If they want to change the trip limits, that's going to require a change through a framework amendment, and that will take maybe a little bit longer, but maybe not too much longer for blueline tilefish, and Monica and Mike, if I misspoke, please jump in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: No, Chip, and you got it right, and I was thinking that -- So the current allocation between the two sectors is very close. It's 50.07 percent to the commercial and 49.93 percent to the recreational, and, if you wanted to act in 2026, much like the Mid is doing, I think, if you kept -- If you would look at your allocation policy, and decide what you want to do with allocations, but perhaps you want to keep the current allocation split, implement the increased catch limits for 2026, and then take up the Mid's invitation, and your invitation, to look to get a subcommittee of the two councils together and look at changes going forward, and then you might --

For 2027 and onward, then you might want to look at a bigger look at allocations at that point, but I think that, if you kept the current allocations, it's possible to get this done via an abbreviated framework. Again, your document should discuss why you're doing it that way, and why you're doing it just for 2026 perhaps, and then you're going to, you know, get with the other council and look at this more comprehensively, if you will, for the later years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: How many meetings would it take to do an abbreviated framework? Is it three, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: An abbreviated framework can be done from this meeting to December, and you can go final in December. If you initiate this meeting, then we would work with SERO staff, and like the way that it's designed and set up is for you all to initiate at one meeting and then, potentially as soon as the next meeting, you see the draft, and it's a one-action draft amendment, and you all would go final at that point. The fastest track would be it could get done in December.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Is that something that we're interested in, and so, once again -- I see the heads nodding yes, that that's what we're interested in, and maybe we could have a motion to that effect, and so it seems like we need to just look at 2026, and then we would come back with a different vehicle after this joint subcommittee, I guess it's called, between the two councils to look at things for the future, and that's when we could look at allocation in 2027 and beyond, et cetera, but, Dewey, would you like to make a motion to do an abbreviated framework action for blueline tilefish for 2026?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: **For an abbreviated framework for 2026 for blueline tilefish.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion and a second, and we're getting that on the board there. Just stand by. **Okay, and so the motion is to initiate an abbreviated framework for blueline tilefish for 2026 to implement the SSC-recommended ABC and establish an ACL.** Motion by Dewey, and seconded by Kerry. Any more discussion on this? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two things. We'll have to evaluate it, but we think this could be done through a categorical exclusion, which could simplify things as well, in terms of the NEPA documentation, and then I just want to remind the council, right, and this is going to be important in terms of discussion at the end of the week, about prioritization, and so, if we're going to add this, what, if anything, would slide, and how would we shift workload in order to accommodate this, if needed, and so just keep that in mind as we move forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just for clarification for the record, so you would want this implemented for the 2026 season, right, but the idea is not to let it sunset, right, after that, and it would be in place, and then you're going to address it in the future, or in this subcommittee after that, with further discussion on allocations and those sorts of things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Exactly that.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay, and you would keep the current allocation ratio, correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: In the abbreviated framework, yes.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on this? Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just a clarification on the process that would be needed to do this in the timeline that's being talked about, and so, first of all, it would be helpful to have some discussion, some rationale, from you all as to why you are maintaining the current allocations for this amendment, just so that we can build that record, because we -- You know, there is the transition in the recreational estimation method, from CHTS to FES, for this stock, and so just being able to build that rationale out, and we can include that in the amendment.

Then the other thing to note is that, in this process for an abbreviated framework, the public hearing for this amendment would be held at the December meeting, and it would be held in concert with the December -- The Wednesday public hearing session that is held at the council meeting, and so that would serve as the public hearing for that amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you for that, and so, in talking about the allocation, since we need a little bit more discussion on that, Chip has a table for us, and so I'm going to pass that over to Chip to talk about the multicolored table.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so this can be a complicated thing to look into when we're trying to get to sector allocations, when we're having changing numbers based on the information sources that are used to estimate the recreational removals, and so what I have here is the years in Column A, the area, because we're looking at a stock assessment model that included information for the Mid-Atlantic region and the South Atlantic region, and then there was a set, a second analysis, that was just that was done for catches south of Cape Hatteras, and so we have the different areas that were considered in the development of this, and so we have the Virginia area north, we have the Cape Hatteras area, which is often called the sliver, and then we also have south of Cape Hatteras, and then we have a combined South Atlantic.

This combined South Atlantic simply adds the Cape Hatteras sliver area to the south of Cape Hatteras, and then I have the commercial landings that were recorded for that time period, and then I have different estimates of recreational landings, starting off with the VTRs, and these are vessel trip reports that are used in the Mid-Atlantic region, as well as values of recreational catch based on CHTS, or the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, and then we also have the FES values of recreational catch.

Then, going beyond that, then we have the SEDAR 50 estimates that we're currently using for management right now, and so, if we look at this, north of Cape Hatteras, we had a value of 156,000 fish. That was the ABC for the estimate north of Cape Hatteras, but then that had to be split. That value north of Cape Hatteras had to be split based on this allocation that we were talking -- Regional allocation we were talking about earlier, and so these values were added to the South Atlantic region, and you can see the values.

Overall, for the South Atlantic region, it came out to be an OFL of 328 000, almost 329,000, pounds of fish. Based on the reduction for scientific uncertainty, going down to the acceptable biological catch level, you can see it was 233,968 pounds of fish. Based on the 50.07 commercial and 49.93 recreational al/locations, you can see the recreational and commercial allocations, and, from there, I estimated the 2019 through 2023 estimates of the ACL that was harvested during that year.

The reason I'm going to get to this is this will help with discussion of allocation in the future, and so sorry for boring you, but I'm just trying to get all the information out there in front of you, and so we'll ignore north of Cape Hatteras, and so the Virginia area north, but you can see those values should add up to what was recommended for the region. For the South Atlantic region, and that Cape Hatteras area, the SSC recommended 193,800 pounds of fish. South of Cape Hatteras, it recommended 133,000 pounds of fish.

Now, when we're talking about these pounds of fish, these are overall catch. This is inclusive of discards, and so there's a reduction here that I put in there for an estimate of discards, and then, based on allocation percentages, you can see what it comes out to be for the recreational and commercial sectors, and then I also wanted to compare that to what would this -- What would have happened from 2019 to 2023 if we had used these values, basically looking how the allocation that is currently, and would we be -- Would one sector be impacted more than another.

Let's go down to these rows here which is Q through R, or Columns Q and R, and then K and L, which are the allocations, and so you can see here that the commercial sector -- They were catching less in the more recent time period, because the ACL has gone up for the species, or the ABC has gone up.

For the recreational sector, there's some instances where it went up, and there's one instance where it went way up, and then other instances, and let's take another instance where it was very high, but it went down, and so the recreational sector is going in different directions, but, overall, the change isn't that much different between the two different data sources, whether it's FES or CHTS, and so that might provide some rationale of saying, moving forward with the current allocations the way they are, that there's not much difference in the overall catches of the recreational sector.

However this doesn't get to the importance of some of the recreational sector that the allocation decision tool talks to, and so it would be good for you all to talk about your decision on whether or not to include allocation for blueline tilefish in the abbreviated framework.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a question. We do have the precedent also set of saying we are waiting until we get the FES pilot study results before we make changes in allocation as well, correct?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and you can use that argument as well. That's additional reason to delay, but Monica, or Mike, go ahead.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess one difference here, versus some other scenarios, is that, in this case the -- Like, right now, there is the ABC value that is that is available here, and we don't have a process in motion in which we would get those new FES values and then a new stock assessment would be conducted following that to update that ABC value, and so, in the case of other species where we have an active assessment process going, then that would get updated much more quickly than what is being talked about for blueline tilefish, because that next assessment isn't necessarily underway, and so the currency would be kind of the same as where it is right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, who asked you? No, and I'm just kidding. I'm totally kidding. I think we have plenty of justification in our earlier discussion, but you do -- But, while this is fresh on my mind, I do want to ask, because you bring up a good point. Say that we get the results of the study, whenever we're supposed to, and I forget when now we're supposed to get them, and it turns out that there are some major flaws, and we do have a species like blueline tile that isn't in the assessment pipeline, and, at some point, are we going to have a mechanism for figuring out -- Then do we just revert to CHTS? I don't know, and it's a bigger question than this, but, while we're talking about it, you make a good point, even though you take away my good points on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Sorry, and I'm not trying to provide any argument against, necessarily, because, at the end of the day, as a council, you all can choose an allocation, or you can you can make the decision that this is in the best interest of the fishery, and, you know, you build you build your case around that, and it doesn't necessarily need to be tied to the landings stream. You have other pieces of rationale that you can use to support your decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've had some good discussion on this. Do we need more, or are we good? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just feel like it would be good to wait for a lot more information to come in on the FES, or CHTS, or different things, and look at the discussion between the Mid-Atlantic and the South Atlantic, and wait until it's a little bit further, because, when I look at these numbers, we would have to import boats and fishermen out of Oregon Inlet, North Carolina, and you still would fall short of catching the amount of pounds that's here.

I just -- It almost probably would be biologically impossible for these numbers to happen, some of them that's come out there, and so let's let the -- The recs are fishing three-and-a-half, three to four, months, and they've got their stuff, and the commercial has got their time, and let's see if we can't get some furthering, but this is a perfect case study of why MRIP is not good for rare event.

I would love to be on the argument of that case study, given my knowledge of this fishery and the location of where it's coming out of so, and, also, the SADL work that's been done for the last four to five years here, you know, doesn't show the extent of some of these numbers, and so let's just wait a couple years, or whatever, until everybody gets this stuff figured out, and see what happens, but, anytime we can get the increase, once it comes out of a stock assessment, about eight or nine years, and we like to benefit when you get something, and that's a good thing. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just wanted to make sure that staff got what they needed, because I still think -- Like my earlier point, I don't think, was germane to the rationale you probably need for this one argument, but, if I can sum up what I think we were saying earlier, it is the benefits to everyone, both sectors, especially being that the right now the sector allocations are fairly even, the benefits to rushing through doing this abbreviated framework, and getting the new ABC in place, far outweigh the time it would take to do the allocation discussion, and we absolutely have plans to then, in the next amendment, do the allocation discussion, but we believe everyone benefits from

doing it in this order, and with these mechanisms, and so I just wanted to make sure, despite my snarky comment earlier, that that we gave you what you needed for this document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think we're good. **We still have a motion here that we haven't voted on, and so, once again, the motion is to initiate an abbreviated framework for blueline tile fish for 2026 to implement the SSC-recommended ABC and establish an ACL.** Any additional discussion on this? **Any objections?** All right. **The motion carries.** Andy, then Dewey.

MR. STRELCHECK: A quick question for staff. Blueline, remind me, and we open May 1, and does it have a fixed seasonal opening and closure, or did we change that in Amendment 52, for recreational?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If I remember correctly, NMFS sets the season. This is one of the ones that is annually specified for the for the end date.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. All right, and so I just wanted to kind of set expectations here, in terms of what I think likely is to happen, right, knowing that we never have a crystal ball, and so assume we get the abbreviated framework done in December, and council staff has to turn that around and submit it to NMFS. We then begin our rulemaking process.

Once I submit a rule to headquarters for review and clearance, obviously, there is a timeframe that that normally takes, and we're seeing that slower now under the new administration, more time. and so I could see what would happen is we would essentially have to close the commercial fishery if the current catch limit is met, if we can't get the new catch limit in place, and then reopen once the higher catch limit becomes effective.

Then, for the recreational, I think we would have to open May 1, and project, obviously, the season based on the current catch limit, and then, to the extent we would need to be able to reopen, or could reopen later in the season, we would have to reevaluate that once the new rulemaking went in place, but, because the rulemaking typically takes, on average, four to six months, I would expect that would be kind of hitting right in the middle of the year, with the recreational season already beginning.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: This year, the recreational season, with 116,000 pounds, closed July 22. The commercial season, with 117,000 pounds, closed July 23, with 7,000 pounds left on the table, and so, even if we were to get -- Or were able to, and everybody gets to check this out, and all the things are done, you know, if we got the quota in July, that's seven months from January, and that would be ample.

Closing -- I know you all have you all's different things, where you have to meet deadlines and statutory and stuff, but getting fish for the commercial season in October, the end of September or October, is very difficult for us to harvest, but anything that we can get it done sooner, and the projections -- You know, even if you have a May to September 1, or August, like you've had for recreational, you just -- We just need to make sure we can get it done.

I mean, it would be like -- You know, most times, we're not able to get something done, because of different things, and we've got to wait every eight years for a stock assessment. I think it would really be great if -- I guess we've just got to get the people up top o board, and so I appreciate it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I'm not disagreeing with you, Dewey. I'm just setting expectations right now, because there is things that are in my control, in terms of moving things, and there's things that are out of my control.

In terms of this season, because it's been brought up a of couple times, and I know we shared with Dewey a fairly detailed email, we had projected the season closure, and we had estimated actually that more than 100 percent of the quota had been caught, based on both actual landings and projected landings. As weeks went by, we actually saw the landing starting to decline, as the reports started to, you know, be finalized and come in, but it takes a good month for those landings to kind of stabilize and for us to determine that there's going to be no more reports coming in.

I know it's frustrating to Dewey and others that we're reopening, you know, a month-and-a-half two months after we closed, and what would help us, obviously, is to have accurate dealer reporting, as timely as possible, because then it avoids situations like that, and us having to close the fishery prematurely and then having to reconsider what time to open, based on the data that we have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: You know, the uniqueness about blueline is we're not talking about 10,000-pound trip limits. We're talking about 3,000 pounds, and, for the last four years, probably 50 percent of the landings have come from three dealers in Dare County, North Carolina, and so I know that we all need to be cognizant, and looking at different things, but the track record of these landings, particularly the majority, are coming --

You only have a 300-pound trip limit, and you only have about six or seven vessels, or seven or eight vessels, that are this is actively -- They need these fish to make their year, and so, even though I know we have to watch out for late reporting and different things like that, God forbid, but we're not talking like thousands of pounds of potential could be overages. If there's any way that I can help facilitate the majority of the dealers, where the majority of the fish for the last five years, and I'll follow-up with you all to see if we can make sure that that happens. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Thank you, Andy. Thanks for that discussion. All right. We're good on blueline. All right, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Sorry, Madam Chair, but I was just going to thank Chip for that apples-to-apples demonstration for the FES to CHTS, and is that something that is shareable with council staff, or council members?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I'll get it put on the webpage as late materials.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Now we're going to dive into golden tilefish, and I'll pass it back to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: At the last council meeting, I came forward indicating that there was some discrepancy between the estimated landings in SEDAR 89 versus what was being used to monitor the fishery, and so there were discussions at the state level, as well as with ACCSP and National Marine Fisheries Service, and they have worked together to come up with a new estimated landings stream, and that has been submitted to the agency, in order to re-estimate, or rerun, the SEDAR 98 stock assessment with these new estimated commercial landings. That is currently on track to be presented to the SSC in October, and so we should have new golden tilefish landing values for you in December, and that is the update on golden tilefish, if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions? I don't see any hands, and I'm going to pass it back to you on vessel limits for headboats.

DR. COLLIER: We're just getting ready for the March 2026 meeting. There are a list of points that the council has talked about for headboats, and one is they recognize that restrictive vessel and bag limits can be overly burdensome for headboats, especially when they're carrying sixty-plus people, and so a vessel limit can be extremely difficult for them.

In March, you had requested information from the advisory panel on how to develop recreational limits. The AP made some recommendations, and basically a number of anglers divided by six, or consider vessel limits proportional to the number of anglers, and they also gave guidance on gag and black grouper, to set an aggregate for that of basically two fish for every six passengers, similar to how it's set up for private recreational, or for the overall sector, right now.

In June, we had presented information on the areas north and south of Cape Canaveral, to better understand some of the fleet, and then the council reiterated their intent to consider different regulations for headboats than for charter or for private recreational vessels. You all are talking about an aggregated recreational limit for the snapper grouper species, and this could potentially be used to address the needs of the headboat fleet.

There's council members that said that there's no -- That they're not considering sector separation to address this issue, and then we're going to be bringing this back to you, and then you're going to be talking about your innovative management tomorrow morning, and that could be informed by this, but this is -- We're scheduled to talk about this at the March 2026 meeting, and so, if there's anything that you all would like to see that council analyze for the headboat analysis, please let us know, and we can get it done for you, or we can request National Marine Fisheries Service to work on it with us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: How many headboats do we have participating in the EFP program?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just one.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Just one. For whatever it's worth, it's probably pretty good information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and are there -- So we talked about this a little bit yesterday, when we were talking about what items are going in our letter responding to the executive order, and so one of the things that was said is, maybe after we get past looking at the first two or three species that have vessel limits already, and so we've got gag and black, and scamp, and I can't remember what our two or three are, but we could, in March, focus on those species, and then we talked about, every time a future species amendment comes online, and if we are considering something like a vessel limit, then we would fix those at that time, and so, when we come back in March, are we just looking at the two or three species that have a vessel limit and asking staff to bring something back on that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: The only thing I don't know is what we do about black sea bass, and so do we just want to punt that to when we look at black sea bass overall, knowing it's coming up, or include it here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess in terms of what concerning black sea bass?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, do we want to begin analyzing and throwing -- Whatever the rough beginnings of this headboat discussion look like, the species that we're going to talk about at the beginning, and like I think it is gag, scamp, and what else was the other one you said? Black, and do we just go ahead and roll black sea bass into that discussion, knowing that we're going to have to make --

I assume, and I'm making some assumptions, that we're going to be looking at some kind of reduction in effort for black sea bass, based on the assessment results, and, when we do that, we're going to maybe lower the bag limit, which will impact certainly, at the very least, the northern headboats, and so that will come into play.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So this would be -- This is, I guess, mostly addressing recreational vessel limits, as they apply, and, as of right now, and I don't know if this is a direction that you all are intending to go, but, as of right now, there is no recreational vessel limit for black sea bass. It is a per-person bag limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so then - All right, and so, in addition to, in March, bringing back those three species, something else we talked about yesterday, when we were talking about the EO, is possibly, for headboats, applying something like the vessel limit applies on a for-hire vessel like per every six paying passengers, or something, and so that would be some wording to consider when this comes back in March. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Yes, and I like that. That's like a scaler, as the passengers increase, but, also, I know we saw a lot of analysis on headboats, like the maximum number of gag grouper that they caught on trips, because they have observers, and we really need to see all that again, to get an idea of what they have been catching, you know, with all these passengers, so we can make a good decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. It sounds like, Chip, Jimmy is saying also can you bring back some of that data that we looked at before, and it seems like we looked at that when we were looking at gag and black, in that amendment, like what headboats were catching, et cetera, and so can you bring that data back when we look at this in March? Okay. Anything else relative to

headboats that we would need to see to inform that March discussion? I can't think of anything else, but Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I know we've talked about this a lot, and I just want to make sure, and headboats have to be -- They're federally inspected at a hundred ton, right, but I guess what I want to make sure, and they're not -- It's not limited entry right now, and that's not where I'm going. What I want to make sure is, as we go down this road, do we need to consider the barrier -- Is the barrier of entry into the headboat, to get a headboat permit, so low that it behooves people to get one, so that they have an increased vessel limit, and I just want to make sure I'm thinking --

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

MS. MARHEFKA: That's my -- That's what I'm asking now, because it's not a world I live in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I think that what Kerry is asking is just making sure that, when the information comes back in March, it explains the requirements to be considered a headboat and those types of things, multi-passenger and all that. I hear Bob Zales saying this like in my mind, like how he explains what headboats are.

All right. Anything else that we need for the March discussion on headboats? All right. I don't see any more hands, and I don't see anything on that. Okay. A five-minute break, and we'll probably be spending the rest of our time in the MSE this afternoon. We have a hard stop at 5:30 tonight. All right. Five-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Come on back to the table. I know everybody is thrilled to talk about MSEs, and so we are diving into another management strategy evaluation, and I want to remind everybody that we have a hard stop at 5:30 today, and, with that, I'm going to pass it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Jessica, and this will be the last time you have to hear me today, and not the last time for the meeting unfortunately, and so what I want to do is first start out -- I know you guys all know what a management strategy evaluation is, but I think it's always good to repeat what these things are doing, in case in case someone new is listening in, and so what is a management strategy evaluation?

It's a quantitative approach to evaluate different management approaches, and so what we're looking at with our snapper grouper management strategy evaluation is really looking at the evaluation of these management strategies. Yesterday, you talked about a dolphin MSE that is going to be evaluating, and also developing, an ABC recommendation that would be coming out of that, and then management strategies along with it. This one is going to be potentially just looking at some other information that has already established the ABC and ACL, and so you're really just looking at the management strategy that best accommodates your objectives.

An MSE is meant to inform, and not prescribe, how different management approaches would perform under a similar framework of assumptions, and so what you're trying to do is look at this complicated analysis. Everything is put through the same assumptions, and then there's going to

be some winners and losers. Ideally, this is just going to inform your decision on how to figure out which one best meets your objectives.

Once again, this is going to compare across different performance metrics to evaluate how the approach could achieve different objectives, and the objectives are something that the council and stakeholders both agree on as a way to evaluate how these different management strategies are working. Another important part about this is it's a repeatable process, so that management can adapt based on new information, and so, if something new comes along, you can pivot fairly quickly into these new pieces, or evaluate the new pieces, of information coming in.

Why are we developing a management strategy evaluation for the snapper grouper fishery? I don't think this comes as any surprise, and red snapper has been a challenge to manage, and this is a tool that potentially looks at a variety of pieces of information, in order to help to guide developing management strategies. We did not need to develop an acceptable biological catch level or annual catch limits. Those were developed during different SEDARs, and so those are available for this management strategy evaluation.

When we're talking about this, we're also -- We've also developed this management strategy evaluation to incorporate black sea bass and gag grouper, but it could incorporate other species, both while black sea bass is not faring well, based on the most recent index of abundance that Tracey presented earlier in her trap index, and then gag grouper is in a rebuilding plan.

The number of discards has been increasing in the recreational fishery, and, if you look -- Remember from just the presentation that we gave on the overall number of discards in the recreational fishery, that's been increasing for the about the past five years, and it's preventing -- It's limiting the landings that can occur in the fishery, and, finally, there was a desire for a new approach to manage, and, once again, you guys are going to be talking about an innovative approach to manage the fishery tomorrow morning, and so I feel like all these things are coming together, and management strategy evaluation can help support the council make a decision.

Getting into the background, we started working on this management strategy evaluation in 2022. We contracted with Blue Matter Science, and you heard Tom Carruthers yesterday, with Blue Matter, and Adrian Hordyk has been our main contact for the snapper grouper. They are the experts in management strategy evaluation, and they're used worldwide to develop these things, and, you know, they know what they're doing, and they've been a great asset in developing our management strategy evaluation.

What we've been using as inputs, we've been using the BAM assessments, and that stands for Beaufort Assessment Model, and we've used the ones for black sea bass, gag grouper, and red snapper. In our previous evaluations, we looked at the status quo, and so what was going on as the stock assessments had ended, and we looked at some full retention models. We looked at changing minimum size limits, and then spatial closures.

In order to evaluate the performance, we looked at the probability of rebuilding. Once again, these stocks weren't in great shape, and so we were looking at how the stocks would get back to the target SSB, and then we looked at relative short-term landings, relative long-term landings, and then the fraction of fish that were discarded. Since we were talking about -- The reason that the

fraction of discarded was selected is because we're trying to address the discards in the red snapper fishery.

Then, for robustness tests, we hear a lot about that, and what we want to do is make sure that any of the management scenarios that are selected don't just perform well just based on the certain pieces of information. We tested a variety of pieces of information in here, and these are common for different stock assessments, but so we looked at differences in natural mortality for all the stocks, and we looked at different recreational catch estimates, and the reason that we had looked into those recreational catch estimates was because of potential overage in the FES estimates of effort.

We also changed levels of effort. If you remember, Adrian had presented a variety of effort scenarios, looking to see what performed best, and then, for many of these species, we've been seeing changes in recent recruitment, and so that was investigated as well.

With all this, they developed the modeling framework, and did it for three different species, which is no easy -- I mean, that's not an easy task. There's not many multispecies MSEs that are out there. This is one of the few, and so it's been nice to get these. They did match the BAM assessments very well with the models that they developed, and I don't think this resonates all that highly, but there were 132 different models that you all looked at.

You did it in an afternoon, and it's amazing that this level of work was looked into, and what it provided was looking at five different management categories of the status quo, full retention, minimum size limits, nearshore spatial closures, and offshore spatial closures, and then there were combinations of these. There were basically twelve different combinations that were investigated.

Then we evaluated different recreational effort, and I'm not going to get into the recreational effort part of it, but I did want to go into one of the plots that Adrian had provided in the report and presented to you all, and so what we're looking at here is a tradeoff plot for the three different species that were investigated during our management strategy evaluation, in the first round, and, on the X-axis down here, we have the spawning stock biomass compared to a rebuilt population. What you want to see here is getting closer to one, and that means the stock is doing well, and it has a high spawning stock biomass.

On the Y-axis, we have relative landings and the STY, and that is short-term yield, and so, for this, you want to see higher short-term yield, and, basically, that indicates you're doing better. The one here is relative to what the current level is, and so let's go over to status quo, which is green for all three, and you can see the status quo is fairly low, as far as the SSB rebuild, but it's going to maintain your relative short-term yield about where it is.

We have another management strategy that was looked at, and this was at 30 percent of the recreational effort, and you can see, for this, when you had 35 percent of the recreational effort, you decreased your short-term yield, but you increased your probability of getting to this spawning stock biomass and rebuilt. If you did another management strategy, which is a full retention offshore, the FROS, not only do you get a higher rebuilt population compared to the status quo, but you also get a relatively higher short-term yield.

Now, carrying this over to gag grouper, it did not perform the same way that it had done for red snapper, these exact same management strategies. Status quo did better, as far as short-term relative yield, but, once again, it performed fairly poorly relative to SSB rebuilt, and then, for black sea bass, it performed fairly poorly for all three, where we're looking at relative SSB rebuilt being fairly small, and also your relative short-term yield also being low, and so, for the council, they would have to take some tradeoffs between these three different approaches, if you were just balancing based on these two different metrics.

We also have the relative long-term yield, and the performance was fairly similar across species, and across management scenarios. Then, looking at the fraction of discarded, and this one you've got to look at differently than when you're considering the fraction of relative yield. You want a lower fraction of discards, and so, status quo, you maintain a fairly high level of discard fraction, but, for red snapper, you see the full retention offshore. There's very low discards, and the probability of rebuilding increases.

For gag grouper, here in the middle, there is a fairly low discarded fraction overall, and that's been consistent with status quo, and then all different management scenarios, and then, for black sea bass, under status quo, you have the current level of discards, and then it's decreasing, because there's very few black sea bass offshore.

Once again, looking at these as a full picture, taking it all in at once, overall, the status quo performed seemed to perform the worst for spawning stock biomass, meaning you're not getting much of a rebuilding based on these management scenarios. Full retention offshore tended to perform better for red snapper and gag grouper, but worse for black sea bass, and so this was our previous model, and we're looking to update it now, and we've continued a contract with Blue Matter through September of 2026 to revise the MSE, based on council feedback and stakeholder feedback.

What we need to do is really dig into the details of some of these management scenarios, in order to get you the information that you want to help guide the development of an amendment. We would like to explore other objectives, and we just had a suite of four objectives there, but are there other things that the council would like to consider to think this could be a potential successful way to manage a fishery, and then are there additional uncertainties to address?

Are there things that keep you up at night when you're looking at these assessments and saying that doesn't seem quite right, and can we incorporate that thing that keeps you up at night and say, all right, given these different management scenarios, if we have different levels of that piece that's keeping you up, can we address it, and hopefully you all aren't staying up at night thinking about these things, like I do.

In addition to the MSE continuation that I've talked about here, there's been additional work that has been funded through the council, and one of them was called a situation assessment, and this was done by the University of Florida, where they investigated perspectives among stakeholders to gather future input on a survey, and Kai Lorenzen is here, and he's in the back corner. He is going to be doing some of the survey work, looking into how people perceive this management strategy evaluation, and also get some comments from you all.

In addition to that situation assessment, we do have stakeholder input that we're looking to gather. Kai has put together a panel to develop a survey and aid in the development of the MSE, and, when I'm talking about a panel, it is a variety of people that have been basically contracted with in order to gather insights into management and potential surveys for communicating with different stakeholders.

With the stakeholders, they're looking to do a survey to gather additional input from the general public as well, and so there's a lot of different pieces that are going on outside of the MSE, to help guide it and develop it, based on some additional input.

What we need from the council is we need to select management scenarios, and, basically, can we narrow down this list, and we'll go back through this list after I go through everything, but I basically have a list of seven different items up here, and the reason that we're asking to talk about these is these different management scenarios can be put into that survey that the University of Florida is developing. They can't investigate all of these, and so what the council would like to do -- It would be best to get information on what the council would like to do, and they can take it out and put it into the survey and get feedback from the public.

We have different -- We have the different scenarios here, and it would be great if you just select maybe up to three, to limit this, and we don't want everything selected. That would make it extremely difficult, and so we have the spatial management, and this would likely be similar to how it was developed before, an inshore and offshore component, and there's seasonal management that could be considered.

There's also size limits, although, if you look at the previous management strategy evaluations, size limits were not an effective tool in order to address discards. There were bag limits that could be considered, and there's harvest tags that have been talked about in the past, although this leads to extremely complex management scenarios. There could be mandatory retention, mandatory stopping, and so those are two different options. There could be mandatory reporting, and then aggregate bag limits, and these aren't a full list of everything. If there's other things that you all would like to consider for the recreational fishery, please let us know, and we can potentially get those input, but this is currently the suite of options that we're considering.

When we're getting into something like aggregate bag limits, what does this potentially mean, and how does the council envision it, because what I worry about is people are seeing different things with an aggregate bag limit, and what it can do, and so, to the right, Adrian has developed a plot on what full retention would do for a species, and that's plotted here, as well as a no-discard presentation, and so let me go through the different graphs that are over here on the right side of the slide.

We have the biomass of the population going through time, a historical time series, and I'm sure you guys are asking which species this is, and it is red snapper, just to make sure everybody is aware, and, if you look at red snapper, the historic performance, you can see, under a status quo scenario, it looks like it's going to be going down, when all the assumptions are similar.

If you have a full retention policy, what it's going to do is potentially decrease the overall biomass of the population, and that's every fish, every red snapper, that's caught is retained. Now, if you have another scenario where all your discards survive the event of release, then you potentially

have an increase in the population, and so, once again, thinking about these two different things for an aggregate limit is a little bit different, because I think some people assume that all the fish that are going into an aggregate limit, that all of them would survive, and just making sure people are aware that there are -- If you go with full retention, it does look like you're going to have very high landings in the first year, and then, five years later, that population is going to crash, and your harvest at those future levels is going to be where it is right now.

You would get a short-term reward, and your biomass would go way down, and they would become very uncommon, almost going down to levels that you saw back in the 1990s, where red snapper was not talked about much at this council.

The other thing to look at in this in this overall plot, that I found interesting, was, if you look through time, and you look at the landings versus the removals, you can see that, all the way through about 2008, or maybe up to 2010, the landings and removals were very similar. After that, you see a spike around 2008, or 2009, and there's a fairly large increase in your overall removals, but you're seeing a slight, a much slighter, increase in your landings, but, since 2014, you're seeing this increase in your overall removals, due to discards, but you're seeing a very little increase in your overall landings. That was just something I noticed as these plots have come out.

Once again, these different management scenarios that you have, with a full retention model, you can get a short-term reward, but, if you have a no discard model, the population is going to be in much better condition. Over the long-term, you're going to end up with higher landings, and your landings and removals will be about the same, because you're not having any discards.

What we would like to council discuss on this is how they envision an aggregate bag limit to occur. In the aggregate bag limit paper that I had talked about, we had talked about different ways to do it and the different aggregates that are currently in place for the snapper grouper fishery management unit. I would envision that many of those current aggregates that are in place would remain in place, in addition to this overall aggregate.

Then, finally, when we're talking about an aggregate bag limit, Tom had brought up the difficulties in doing a bag limit analysis for dolphin, and this would be a bag limit analysis on steroids, because we would be doing it for multiple species, and so we would need guidance on, you know, what species the council thinks is most important to incorporate into this aggregate bag limit, and then we need to think about how many fish would be in that aggregate, provide some guidance on what you think a good aggregate would be.

Then I talked about which species to include in the MSE, and I have a variety of ways that the council could consider this. One way they could consider it is species with stock assessments. Currently, we have thirteen species with federal stock assessments, and four state assessments, and basically consider those Tier 1. If you want to see the full list of species, that's in Attachment 4b, in one of the tables there in the appendix.

Then we could consider another way to consider this as species with indices of abundance. If you look at Tier 1 and Tier 2 species, all those species would have indices of abundance. Probably my least favorable one would be include all snapper grouper species, with all fifty-five, and we don't have sufficient information to really develop an MSE that would be doable within probably a decade, and we probably don't have the information that would really get you what you need.

Then, finally, the council can come up with a modified list of snapper grouper species to include.

Then we also have an additional question for the council, and it's estimating abundance and biomass, and so we could recondition all the models using a data-limited framework, and the reason that we would have to do that is to make sure everybody is being analyzed in the same currency, and so, if you have some species that don't have a stock assessment, they're going to be analyzed with the data-limited method, compared to a species like red snapper that has an age-structured model.

Do we want to have these different scenarios analyzed -- Do we want them to be in the same currency, essentially, assessment currencies, or would the council prefer to use the assessments available and then, only for a limited subset, use those data-limited approaches, in order to limit the amount of work trying to assess the populations, and get you more work on the potential management strategies, because, if we go back to the reconditioning models using data-limited approaches, that's going to take a long time to put that together. We're not going to analyze in detail as much as we could, as far as the management scenarios. The MSE technical team was suggesting to go forward with the BAM assessment models and use data-limited, as appropriate.

Then, finally we have the performance metrics, and their performance objectives, and one of the - - I guess you can call it the must-haves is making sure that the stock is not overbuilt, and we have successfully rebuilds overfished stocks, or avoids overfished status. Short-term landings use the last one to three years, and then long-term landings use average landings of the last ten years of the projection, and then we also have a discard fraction. Lower is better for this, if the council would like to consider that as a potential performance metric. Those are all on the left side.

On the right side, these are additional options that the council could consider adding in there, which is access for angular trips, and it could be either angular days that a season is open, or the number of trips, and it could be consider an economic proxy, based on the revenue, index-based, or it could be a distributional equity, making sure that it's similar, any changes are similar across areas and modes, and that is all I had for you all on the management strategy evaluation and inputs that we would like to get from you all in regard to the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation.

The next slides are requesting the council input, and what they would like to consider, and I have, underlined in some of these, basically just some recommendations that we were thinking, but this is in no way keeping the council's hands tied to any recommendations that the technical team comes up with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't know how you want to capture the information, but so we already had hands that were going up during the presentation, and so I have Jimmy, Robert, and Kerry.

MR. HULL: Thank you, and so, in terms of the what should be evaluated, obviously, I think we should include the aggregate limits in there, and then, as far as the spatial closures, you know, that seems to be what all the MSEs on snapper grouper have come up with as a solution. However, it doesn't seem that that's ever going to be able to be implemented, because of the severe economics of it, and so maybe that's something that we just take out of there, as it's not really a plausible solution. We need to come up with something different, and I also think that we need to -- If the spatial stays in there, we need to exclude headboats. Those are some of the notes that I have on it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Chip, thanks for putting this together. I'm looking at the describe aggregate bag limit slide, and perhaps everybody else has a better understanding, but can you help me better understand the distinction between full retention and then what's meant by no discard mortality?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so, when you're looking at this model, right now, what it's talking about is a full retention means all fish that are caught are kept.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Meaning there's no parameters on that at all?

DR. COLLIER: There's no there's no discards. Right.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Okay.

DR. COLLIER: Everything that's caught is kept, and then, when you're looking at the no discard mortality, that is saying that all the fish are released survived unharmed, which is not a likely assumption, but we just wanted to demonstrate what these different types would look like.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: So it's safe to say that this graph is just displaying what the extreme scenario for retention -- Got it. Then my second comment, and I talked to you and John about this a little bit, and, the slide that says select performance objectives, I almost feel like this is where we should start, and put it back to the MSE, to model however they can to meet our objectives.

You know, giving kind of specific input about different parameters of this I think leads to more guesswork, and more having us to repeat the process again, and so that was just kind of one of my thoughts when I saw this slide, and I'm like this seems to be the slide that I think we need to focus on, is what are ultimately the goals of this exercise. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: My point is actually -- I have two points, but my first one is a little bit towards that. The performance objectives, and I've been thinking about the exercise we're going to do tomorrow, and then the next meeting, where we're going to be doing the innovation plan, and part of that innovation plan is looking at the high level of what we want this fishery to look like, which, in my mind, is very similar to what would the performance objectives be, and I understand Robert's point, too.

It's like do we say this is what we want the fishery to look like now, and, smart people, go figure out which things produce that, and, I mean, am I saying that in sort of a dumber way than you said it, which I think does make a lot of sense too, but, at the very least, if that's not how the MSE process can work, at the very least, it does seem like -- Do we have time to use a little bit of what comes out of our innovation discussion to inform the MSE, because, if not, they're running on two paths, that may diverge, and then I have a second point after that.

DR. COLLIER: So I think that the MSE can definitely be used to evaluate some of this, and the performance metrics might be able to be done later on, after you all have some more guidance. However, looking at the different scenarios, that needs to be set up faster. We need some of those scenarios set up in order to start analyzing, and getting the model set up, and making sure it performs.

Then, the performance metrics, those would come in later, where we have the available data, and we would likely be revising that, because I think some of Kai's work, where he's going to be reaching out to the stakeholders, and they too would be having some of this discussion on what they want to see out of the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: All right. Thanks, and then my other point was to Jimmy's discussion about spatial closures. I'm not saying I necessarily disagree with you, but I also think you might be thinking about it really narrowly, as far as like the closure that was most recently proposed, and, Chip, I'm wondering if that was the intent, or if spatial closures mean all kinds of things, like ten-by-ten MPAs, or rolling spatial closures, an inshore closure, and then, a couple months later, like an offshore, and like I'm guessing that you mean a wide variety and not just this area is closed off of this part of the coast fulltime.

DR. COLLIER: No, and you're absolutely correct. It can mean a wide variety of things, and that's one of the reasons that the technical team is not necessarily recommending it, is because of all the details that would come in with that spatial closure, and our ability to maybe manage at a spatial level. You know, we don't have VMS on any vessels out there, and so putting out additional closed areas could be a challenge for enforcement.

MS. MARHEFKA: However, in this case, we do have fish that pretty much stay in one place, versus all kinds of other fish that don't, and so I would just be hesitant to like completely remove it, where it falls in the priority, and I don't know. It's a good tool.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got lots of hands going up, and so I have Charlie, Carolyn, Gary, Andy, Amy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chip, back to your aggregate limits page, and I think you mentioned they couldn't do all fifty-five species, but you could probably do the ones that were -- Go back to the ones with all the pictures on it. I like pictures. You could do the stuff that had assessments, but these are not necessarily the fish that they're mostly going to be interacting with, and they're going to be interacting with vermilion, and black sea bass, and gray triggerfish, and probably much more so than a coney or a rock kind, and so how are we -- What kind of direction would we have on figuring out what fish to put in the aggregate, and, if it's not in the aggregate, I guess you can catch ten in the aggregate, and then you can catch whatever in the bag limit outside of the aggregate, and I'm a little fuzzy on that. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: So let me pull up the list of species that would be in Tier 1. The image that I provided was from Release, and it wasn't necessarily appropriate for a tier, because that had all the pretty pictures, and it's always good to talk about citizen science, because it collects some great information, and so here are the different tier species.

Like you had mentioned, in Tier 1, that would include species like black sea bass, and potentially a gray triggerfish. Some of these assessments haven't necessarily been implemented for management, but they could be considered through the MSE for potentially guiding some management strategies, and, if you do Tier 1, like I said, there's this variety of species that are incorporated in there.

Mutton snapper, hogfish, black grouper, and yellowtail snapper, those are all done by the State of Florida. Wreckfish, I think we could remove from this. That is -- There's an MSE that's being done for that. That's going to be done outside of this, and there's very little bycatch of wreckfish in any of the fisheries, in the shallow water fisheries, and so these are the list of assessment species that you could consider.

These other species here, there is potentially an index of abundance for them, and not all of them have been investigated in great detail, and so we have some that would be -- That would have an index of abundance that have been collected through the SERFS index, and that's the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, and then there's some that are collected through the diver survey off of the Florida Keys, and so there's some indices of abundance that could potentially be gathered from those as well. Does that make sense? Sorry. I had a pretty picture, and I just wanted to use it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I'm going to kind of circle us back to the checklist there, and I'm looking at it from things that we can exclude. Harvest tags, we've had a number of years of conversation about harvest tags, and not getting much purchase on that, and so I would think that would be something we could consider dropping off the list. Mandatory retention, stopping, mandatory reporting, without mechanisms to do that, I think it's kind of one of those pie-in-the-sky if we could, but, right now, if we were trying to get this off the ground, we don't have a way to do any of that for the recreational fishery, and so those would be two others that I would think of not moving forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Gary.

MR. BORLAND: Chip, thanks. Do we have -- You modeled there a full retention, and you modeled no discards, and is there a way to -- You know, you mentioned, in one of them, to mandatory retention and stopping, and do we have a model where recreational fishermen could catch X amount of fish and stop, have to stop fishing?

DR. COLLIER: We don't have it developed yet, and I'm not sure if Adrian can speak to that, but there could be a potential in there, if fishermen are acceptable to it, that, yes, once they get to X number of fish, they would stop fishing. Adrian, if you want to speak, go ahead and raise your hand. I know this would be a complex analysis, but --

DR. HORDYK: Sure. Thanks. You can hear me okay? Yes, we that can be done, and I think it's a good one to -- A good analysis to do. Those plots that you showed, those three analyses, were, obviously, very simple, to sort of show the extremes, like someone mentioned, but I think that would be a good one to show, full retention, which would reduce, or minimize, discards, and then the challenging part to model would be the stopping when they reach their -- As part of the say the

aggregate bag limit, or some indication that they've reached some maximum catch, or something like that, but, yes, that can be done, and I think we should investigate it.

DR. COLLIER: I think, for something like that, where we don't know how effective it could be, we could look at different levels of compliance, and say what do we think people would comply with, and do we think it's 50 percent, 80 percent, and we know it's not going to be 100 percent, and so we don't need to go there. We hope it's going to be over zero, because some of you all fish, and so it should be over zero, and so we have different inputs that we could potentially look at for compliance, but, you know, I think that would be another -- Maybe a robustness test that we would add in there if you add in something like a mandatory retention or a mandatory stopping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Gary.

MR. BORLAND: I would go back to what I said earlier. You know, the psyche of the recreational fisherman, and working all week to have a boat, you know, to afford to buy a boat, they just want to go fishing, right, so and we've got to stop dead discards, and so, somewhere in the middle there, you've got to give them access, and I know this is the big million-dollar question, but you've got to give them access, but yet stop them from throwing back dead fish all the time, and this complex, obviously, is the hardest thing that we've ever been challenged with. I mean, I think the stakeholder group could help us tremendously on some of those decisions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I've got a list of hands going. Is it to that point, or is it a different point? I'm going to keep going to the list, and I'll circle back to you. I have Andy, Amy, Robert, and then Clay.

MR. STRELCHECK: So, like Carolyn, I was thinking in terms of some things that we would eliminate from the list, and I agreed with the harvest tags and the bottom three items there. I think mandatory retention and stopping is still useful to demonstrate the utility, or lack thereof of it, for, you know, the interest of the public and stakeholders, and I appreciate clarification from Kerry, because I think spatial closures, obviously, have the negativity surrounding the secretarial amendment, but, thinking of those more broadly, and given those showed promise, they're at least worth exploring as part of this.

One thing that's not on the list, that we've given some thought to is, you know, we have these multispecies snapper grouper complexes that are harvested, and, you know, looking at more of like a multispecies MSY concept, right, and how we could manage the snapper grouper species that are caught collectively together toward an MSY goal, recognizing that there might be some shifting of status and health of species within a multispecies MSY, and so I mention that.

In terms of the performance objectives, or I forget what you call -- Yes, the performance objectives, and I was looking at our goals and objectives on the website for snapper grouper, and just -- I'm not going to quickly read them off, but the things that jump out to me are maximize social and economic opportunity, reduce and mitigate discards, allow consistent access to the fishery, consider sub-regional differences, and some of that is in there, and some that is not, but, to me, access and minimizing discards at least are two of the things that jump out, as well as kind of this economic proxy, as our own objectives that align with what is being considered there for performance objectives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Well, I'm going to repeat a little bit of what Andy said, because that's kind of where I was or some of that. From the last list, Chip, from the -- Can you switch back to that other slide? Thank you. I too kind of like this idea of the mandatory stopping component continuing to stay in there, and harvest tags, yes, can go away, but, you know, Andy talked a little bit about the spatial side, and looking at the nearshore versus offshore, and I understand where that one is not necessarily going to be as applicable here, but, when you talked about your aggregate analysis, we specifically were talking out loud about that sub-regional spatial distribution, and I think some of that is going to need to come into play here, perhaps a little bit, if you're talking about an aggregate limit.

Some of those species are going to change, depending on where you are here in the region, but perhaps kind of going back to using your aggregate analysis, and expanding that to that sub-regional, that could potentially provide us some insight into maybe what that species list would look like, slightly differently, depending on where you're fishing in the southern or the northern part of the range for the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just heard that she made it more complex, but I think I got it. I was -- I'm going to try to summarize here when we get through a couple more people. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and I was going further back up and looking at the list of the different options and trying to figure out what exactly the difference between aggregate bag limit mandatory retention and mandatory stopping is. I think, to Kerry's point, without, you know, kind of the mandatory stopping, or a limit on that, in my mind, that wasn't -- That just wouldn't work, and I think we see the full retention model, and so we all know that -- That's not the right path. Chip, we talked about, or you talked about, compliance uncertainty, and is that something that we separately apply to any other analyses, or is that captured in management uncertainty?

DR. COLLIER: That's normally not looked at in great detail, but this is something that, you know, that's the difference with management strategy evaluation. Usually, you get guidance from your Law Enforcement Advisory Panel on whether or not regulation will work, and, from there, you decide whether or not you'll go forward with it, but this one would be putting a quantitative value with it.

It's just making sure that whatever you select is robust, and is there a certain point where it breaks, and, you know, if you're only expecting 50 percent compliance with it, is it going to meet your objectives? If it gets 25 percent, does it still meet your objectives, and, as long as it meets your objectives, that means it's robust to the inputs going into it, and so maybe it differs along the way, but, you know, I think this is one of the values of the MSE, is you get to go through that loop, and you get that iterative process to think about some of these more difficult issues that aren't necessarily followed through in the typical management process.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Sure, and, just to follow-up to that, and I think I saw it in here, and, in some of my discussions, I think potentially some of these other strategies we're talking about, like aggregate bag limit, might actually have the opposite impact, and create greater compliance, because of the streamlining of rules, and a little bit of clarity for some of our rec fishermen, which I think is -- It probably drives most of the non-compliance, and just people don't know the rules,

especially down where I'm at in the Florida Keys. There's four different folks that can pull you over, and four different sets of rules.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. A couple points, and one with regard to which species to add. I completely agree with Chip that we don't want fifty species. In fact, we've got to be pretty careful, because you don't want to just over complicate this, and then you get a bunch of noise in the system. All you really need is maybe a couple more kind of generic life histories in there to get the, you know, potential, you know, possibilities across, and you just really don't need to contaminate it with having them trying to model a whole bunch of individual species.

Second, although I get some of the challenges that people perceive with the spatial management, spatial and seasonal management, it's not necessarily true that they have negative economic consequences. In fact, they can have very positive economic consequence, and, in the spirit of, as John Walter always says, to show and don't just tell, I think it's really important to run some of those scenarios, and I would add, along with some of the things people have already mentioned, this idea of sort of the opposite of an MPA, where you have, you know, a permanently open area, and so, yes, the population in that area gets fished down, but people still have opportunities.

When you have a stock that's, as someone said earlier, relatively discus, and I think it was Cassidy's term, and, in other words, the stock just doesn't freely move all throughout the range, you know, very quickly, that process can work pretty well.

It's sort of the -- It's the same principle as MPAs, but in reverse, and so I think that's something that could be considered, and then you actually -- You have the economic value of maintaining, you know, access for a large fraction of the year, but you're also, in tandem with some closures, allowing -- Preventing discarding and allowing the populations to grow in those areas, and so there's ways that you can do this that is going to have a net economic benefit, and I just don't think we want to exclude them right off the bat, and we give them an opportunity to show us how that works.

Then, finally, just thinking of the kinds of scenarios that we should look at, I'm wondering, and this more a question to you, Chip, but have they considered, in the modeling, the kind of nonstationarity that we're seeing in productivity, or we think we're seeing, where, you know, you're having a changing environment, and winter and spring spawners seem to be less successful lately, and their recruitment is going down, and the summer and fall spawners seem to be doing pretty well, like red snapper and vermilion, and kind of incorporating those potential changes, to see if whatever management actions we're considering are robust in that situation.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, Adrian, I'll let you follow-up on the discussion of incorporating the recent recruitment, but I think, as opposed to looking at an overfished level, Clay, like, if we're having nonstationarity, it's very difficult to define overfished, right, and so maybe we prevent overfishing for that stock, and maybe that would be the metric to use, as opposed to the overfished, but, Adrian, if you want to talk on how you've incorporated some of these nonstationarity issues in the current approach.

DR. HORDYK: Sure. We did do some of that in the last round of analysis, where we focused on recruitment, recruitment trends, and so, when the projection is going forward, we either -- One option is to assume that the recruitment, or the recruitment error, the process error in the projections, is from the same statistical distribution as the past, and so it's just more the same sort of randomness as we've observed in the past, as estimated in the assessment, and so that's what we did as a base case.

Then we re-ran the analysis as well, using just the recruitment deviations from the most recent, the last I think ten years or so, and I forget exactly, but to see, you know, what if recruitment was -- The recruitment error was, you know, in a regime shift, and things had changed, and then, for some stocks, like the red snapper, it was more positive recruitments than you would have in the other scenario.

The challenge is, like Chip said, is how we relate that to the reference points, biological reference points, and like do they also get -- You know, we don't -- We assume, if it's random error, then we can we just average it out and calculate the reference point equilibrium values. If there really is a regime shift, and things really are different now than in the past, does that mean we should recalculate the reference points with this new regime? It's easy enough to do technically, but it's just a question of, you know, what the council wants to do in terms of their management objectives, and like what do they want to rebuild to, and so on, and so that's all possible.

The challenge, I think, for red snapper is, because the fraction of discards, the actual fish that are caught and discarded, whether they're alive or dead, and just the ones that are discarded, about 25 percent of those die, according to the data we've got, but the actual fish that are discarded are about three or four-times higher than the ones that are landed, and that ratio doesn't change. We don't expect it to change with different recruitment scenarios, and so, yes, we can incorporate it, but it may not change, or it will change quantitatively, but it doesn't necessarily change qualitatively the impact of the discards in this fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay, following-up on that?

DR. PORCH: Yes, and he answered most of my questions. The only thing I would add is, for instance, when we're managing to an SPR level, there's an implicit spawning biomass associated with SPR. We may not know what that is, because we don't know what the long-term recruitment is going to be, but we can identify management strategies that will tend to get us there, even if we never actually know what the long-term recruitment is.

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

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, and I was just going to go over a few things that I was thinking about, as far as I was against the closures, but then, after Clay said, you know, maybe we could come up with areas that you could close it, where there was a high volume of fish that we were trying to save, and so maybe that might not be bad.

Harvest tags, that wouldn't be good, I don't think, but what if we came up with something like an aggregate bag, and then no minimum size limit, and then stopping? That way, the fishermen would get to fish, try to catch what was in the bag limit, make a game out of it, and, you know, like I caught twenty fish, whether they were this big or not, but most of the fish that you're going to be

targeting anyway will be pretty good sized when you catch them, like the red snapper, and so that's what I was thinking.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Judy. Go ahead, Chip.

DR. COLIER: Yes, and I had thought about a scenario like that, and, if these fish all stayed offshore, that would work, but, with some of these fish occurring inshore, like gag grouper and black sea bass, removing the size limit on those could open them up to a lot of harvest in inshore waters, and, if you're looking at something like black sea bass, there's a significant portion of the landings that are coming from those inshore waters, or in state waters, where they're smaller fish, and it could lead to some negative consequences. We could examine it if you like, and I just -- Knowing the numbers of fish that are caught on that inshore side, I think it could have some really negative side effects, for black sea bass and gag specifically, with that inshore component.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Coming back to one of the points Kerry made earlier, and I was -- You know, one of the things I'm struggling with is, if we did an aggregate bag limit, asking for the range of that limit, that's kind of where I see the dart throwing and guessing happening, right, because we're going to give you a limit, and you're go back and tell us this is how it came out, and we'll say, okay, well, try this limit, and we're just going to be kind of moving that around a lot, and causing a lot more work.

I totally agree this this aligns perfectly with our goals later, but I'm kind of hoping that both of these processes can inform each other, and, as we move through this, you know, it's kind of a chance to start thinking about that now, and, later, when we think about it, we might come back and change some stuff, but it's becoming, you know, more clear to me that I think we need to give the MSE kind of more of our desired outcomes, and let them play with things like what should the aggregate bag limit be, for example.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just -- The conversation that's going on, it sounds like you're matching, for the most part, staff recommendations, and it's on page 5 of the other document, and what I was going to point out was we really haven't talked about what species to include, and it looks -- I kind of see -- I see the points of what the staff is recommending, and there's several species for Tier 1, to keep, and some to remove, and the same with Tier 2, what to keep and what to remove, with some pretty good rationale, and so I just wanted to throw that out there as a talking point.

Getting to the -- You know, talking about the size limits and aggregate measures, the recommendation by the staff is to keep the current size limits, which I think I heard already here, and then use the same aggregate measure, and so I assume that means you're suggesting -- Staff is suggesting using the aggregate limits that we have in place now in this scenario, in this MSE, and so I just -- I just think the staff makes some pretty good recommendations here, and it kind of sounds, for the most part, that folks are agreeing, and so, if people want to look at page 5, I thought it was very useful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to try to summarize more. Back on the slide with council input scenarios, it seems like there are folks that still want to look at spatial nearshore and offshore closures. One of the things I thought Amy was going to say, when she was talking about it, was closing state waters for black sea bass, but I didn't hear her say that, you know, and so I haven't heard a -- Just that's where I thought you were going, and I kept listening.

So seasons, and I haven't heard a lot of discussion about seasons, and so it seems like this doesn't necessarily need to be analyzed. I've heard a lot of support for this aggregate limit, but then we, like Trish said, need to come back to the list of species, and then mandatory retention and stopping was on the list, and everything else, the harvest tags, mandatory reporting, minimum size limit, individual species bag limits, seems to be off the list, and then aggregate stopping, and no minimum size limit, was a scenario that Judy put forward.

Going back to the aggregate bag limit discussion, and maybe you could put that other document back up there, on either page 7 or page 5, so that we can look at those species a little bit, about what species should be in the aggregate, and I feel like this is one of the hard decisions. I had looked at some top -- Like the top species composition, but some of those are on the list for removal, like yellowtail snapper, and so can you talk a little bit about why you would be removing hogfish, mutton, and yellowtail? Can you talk about that?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I think it gets to some of Amy's points, where you were talking about regional differences, and those fish are down there in south Florida, and that is regionally different, and I'm -- I don't think they should necessarily be excluded. I just think it they are in a very different situation than many of the other species.

They're concentrated in south Florida, and very few intercepts of those occur north, although some of these species are being observed more often. Hogfish, although there is a separate stock that's up off Georgia and the Carolinas, there's not a stock assessment for them. There's a data-limited approach in order to -- That is used to set the ACL for that, and so those are some of the reasons for removing them.

I could also see that, you know, there's a separate MSE that would try to address things like that, but I think there's just so many challenges, and the council, in its previous functions, had a -- They tried to develop a south Florida committee that considered -- That had both Gulf Council members and South Atlantic members, but there's just challenges down there, and I think we're going to run into those same challenges, and some of the depth areas would change.

The appropriate depths would change for the model as well, and so those are some of the thoughts that we came up with, and, as Clay said, you know, maybe this is too many species that are in the keep. We have some of those deepwater fish that are in there, and we have snowy grouper, tilefish, blueline tilefish, and those are all deepwater species. Maybe those could be removed, and maybe get it really concentrated on something that is addressing species that are commonly associated with red snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like where you're going. It's almost like we need to take what you have listed on the Tier 1 keep list and see if we need to whittle that down any more, and maybe we can do that. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. At the risk of creating more complication, I mean, it almost sounds like, regionally, there may be a backup for different aggregate bag limits, and I say that because, down south, mutton snapper, for example -- Like you don't want to have a separate ten-fish-per-person limit there, and then, you know, that's not going to cut down on the red snapper issue for us down there, and so just one example, but I think that, at some point -- I'm also wondering if --

Is it too much to do all this for everybody right now, and should we focus on more of a regional area as we do this, to try to get a better perspective on what the outcome of this would be in one of these, you know, fisheries? I'm viewing kind of my fishery down in south Florida very different than northeast Florida, and certainly North Carolina, and so just a thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I wonder if there's some way to do some EFPs in the southern part of Florida, or something, and I'm sitting here on the outside listening to this, and this just ain't going to work everywhere, because it's totally different. If you go -- I've been to the Keys one time, and, if you go five miles out of the Keys, you can catch a lot of different things.

You go five miles off of North Carolina, you're not going to catch but maybe a pinfish and small sea bass or something, but, I mean, it just ain't -- There's got to be something to try to do to get some ground, because it just -- It ain't going to work, the route this is going right here, because of the diversity of stuff, and so you better focus on some EFPs, to do a pilot project somewhere like that, to get started, to get some ground in the reality of some thought process, because this is -- I just don't see this working.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I have a number of hands, and I'm sorry that I just skipped Carolyn, and I think that we have a hand up online here, but I guess one of the questions, and maybe this is what you guys are intending to answer, but is could there be a regional aggregate, which just sounds even more complicated, and it is likely more indicative of what's happening out there, and so it's almost like a regional aggregate of cooccurring species with red snapper or something, but that might not be -- It might be too complex, and so I'm going to go back to you guys, and then I'll go back to my list of hands.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and I'll speak first, and then, Adrian, if you want to follow-up, and I apologize. I saw your hand has been up for a little bit, and I just -- I didn't see your hand was up for a little bit, and so I'll do better at trying to see your hand when it comes up.

As far as a regional component there are -- There is a regional aspect that's currently in the MSE, and so we have three different areas, I believe, along the coast, and then we have an inshore and offshore, and so there's six different regional components that has already been integrated into this.

There are some challenges with that, because the underlying model that's used, and so the Beaufort Assessment Model, isn't a spatial model, and so they're having to apply a spatial component on top of that stock assessment, and so it leads to some challenges. Adrian has been working through it, and he got it to work for the three species that we had completed before for gag, red grouper, and black sea bass. Maybe lightning can strike twice, and he can do it for other species as well, and

so, Adrian, if you want to speak to that, and I apologize for missing your hand earlier, and so you can speak to your other point.

DR. HORDYK: No worries. Thanks, Chip, and I've got a couple of comments. First, just on this regional -- This idea of regional -- Different regulations by region, for example the aggregate bag limit, I think it's worth exploring, and one thing we would need to do, Chip, with the MSE technical team, is I think it would be good to go back and look at some of the data, like the stuff that you showed earlier in your presentation, and people asked to see it by region, and for us to look at that data more closely, so we can make sure we capture the distribution, the regional distribution, of fishing effort, particularly different species. I think we can do that, and it would be valuable to do, and we should talk about that next time we meet as a technical team.

I think the idea of at least using the MSE to explore that idea of different species within the aggregate bag limit by region is a good one, and so, on that point, which was raised a little earlier, about -- I think it was Robert who said it, about the management objectives, and they need to come first, and it can be a little bit difficult to sort of choose from this list of scenarios on the board right now, and I fully agree with that.

I think it's really useful, for us as the MSE team, and we don't need it necessarily right now, but it's useful for the council to be thinking about it and providing us any information on this, is what does success look like? Like what is the ultimate objectives for this fishery, and like what are the things you would look at to say it's doing better, or it's doing it's doing good, or we're very happy with it now, because that's, obviously, the things we, as the MSE team, are going to try and work towards.

Now, there will be tradeoffs, and there will be some things that maybe aren't achievable, or there will be some things, like, you know, to get, you know, faster rebuilding, you have to have maybe more dramatic reductions in catch, or something like that, and so there will be tradeoffs, but I think having the overarching sort of goal, the council's goal, would be useful for us to sort of present the results of the information as it comes through in that context.

Then sort of related to that was this question of -- I think it came up in that same discussion, about it's a little bit difficult for the council to provide, you know, values for these things that are on the bullet points on the board right now, and I think that's true, and I think what we need, as the MSE team, is we can explore all different sorts of scenarios, and so, for the bag limits we can -- Once we've got the thing coded up properly, and we've got the regional distribution, and we're satisfied with that, we can test all different types of things in the MSE.

That's what the MSE is for, and so I don't think council needs to choose the species right now, and then, you know, maybe we present the results, and it doesn't work, and we don't like it, and repeat the analysis, and I think what we need, or what would like, from the council is more sort of those, like I said, sort of overall objectives, and kind of, I think, like hard limits, or like this management approach, would just never work, and it's not feasible to implement in the fishery, or it's no compliance, and it's not possible to make them comply, or whatever, and that can be ruled out, or those sorts of things.

So, for example, we took, you know, this idea of aggregate bag limits, and is it plausible, or is it feasible, to have different bag limits by region? If it is, from the council's perspective, then we

can explore that in the model, and so I think that's kind of what we're looking for here, and this discussion has been really good on that, the sort of more higher level kind of shaping the overall analysis, and then we can present the results, that are in some sort of meaningful context, back to the council. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we have -- Just a time check, and we have ten minutes left. I have a number of people's hands here, and we'll get through all of these folks, but I think that we need to come back to this discussion at this meeting. I'm happy that people are excited, and engaged about this, but we just heard, from Adrian, that we need to think about the objectives, and you heard from Kerry that maybe we need to think about the overall objectives of the MSE after we have the innovative management discussion.

I feel like we're going to need to come back to this, and so I'm going to go back to my list of hands, so we can make sure we get everybody's comments, while they were thinking about it today, but I do think, after talking to Chip, and hearing what Adrian said, that we need to come back to this at this meeting after we have some other discussion, and so my list of hands left are Carolyn, Trish, Tom, and Robert.

DR. BELCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The one question I had was, and, if it's not pertinent to talk about it now, you can cut me off, but I was kind of wondering about Tier 1 and Tier 2, because, as we identified -- I understand Tier 1. We've got the assessments, and we've got all this information, but, when we start talking Tier 2, and we have the parenthetical saying species with indices, and we've talked about the issues with indices relative to interim analyses, and not all indices are created equal, and so it was just one of those things of thinking about that.

I mean, again, what we're looking at, you've kind of given rationale based on what percentage of retention and catch they represent, and so I just kind of wanted to caution that, if you're using the index as a potential signalment for abundance or whatever, we've recognized that not all indices are necessarily good at that.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for that. You're absolutely right, and so the lane index might not be all that great for the entire coast, but I would say that, if we're looking at a regional component, the SERFS index does very well for white grunt. They catch a lot of them, and they are -- They do have a good ability to potentially track that abundance, and one of the reasons I have a fish like white grunt in there is that just depends on the perception of an aggregate bag limit.

If you want to have a higher aggregate bag limit, and we're looking at a variety of species here that they don't really have all that many fish that are caught, you might be able to get a higher aggregate bag limit by including white grunt, because it seems like it is a fish that 50 percent of the fish that are caught are actually kept, and so it does seem like there's a high desirability for it, and that might get a higher bag limit, and so it might be able to go from let's say a five-fish aggregate bag limit up to a seven-fish aggregate bag limit. There's different ways to do it, to get to where you might want to be, where, you know, the aggregate seems like it would be worthwhile going fishing offshore.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Yes, and I think, to that, that's part of the thing that's kind of difficult with this exercise, is because you're -- Like, again, I'm thinking about it from the standpoint of just like the original slide, and what are things that we can functionally do, versus the wish list of things that we would like to know we could do, but then, when it comes down to it, we're never going to be able to control it, and so why did we look at it.

Again, in a perfect set of understanding simulations, and, like I said, I get that part of it, but so, with the species list, that's something that's a little bit different than saying what species do you want in an aggregate, because I think we're going to be looking at it all with different lenses, and different eyes, as opposed to we give you ten fish, and how do we fill in a padding, based on something that's not utilized at the same level as something else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and I think that also, if you overlay the regional aggregate on top of that, you've got a whole other issue, but, yes, those are good points. Tom. Okay. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I had the question that was raised, which was is there any precedent for a regional aggregate bag limit, and is that something that's possible, before we go down that that path, and, if so, does it make sense, based on the State Reef Fish Survey and the EFPs that Florida has been running, to focus this effort on what the Florida, or, you know, southern regional aggregate bag limit would look like, and allow the other states to get their EFPs going, data recording and other, that would help inform that, you know, and I -- Perhaps that sounds a little selfish, being from Florida, but, at the same time, just recognizing I think there may be some additional data that may help us down there get a little more clarity on what this might look like.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Dewey, because he had his hand up as well, I mean, I think people need to think about these types of things tonight, over the next day or so, plus we need to get through the innovation exercise, and then we need to come back to this and think about things like what Robert said, and think about things that Adrian said, like about the objectives and other things, and I think we've done a good job narrowing down some of these scenarios that we think can be thrown out, and so that's narrowing down the list, but I think we need, and we want, a little bit more work on this this week, but so, Dewey, last word.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that, I mean, I don't understand how this is all going to work, I just looked up the recreational ACLs on the SERO quota monitoring page, and, over the last few years, there's only been about four or five species that has ever closed, because their ACL was met, and two of them were deepwater species, snowy grouper and golden tilefish, and one of them was blueline, gag, and red snapper.

You have all these other species that has never met their ACL, and so some of them may be at 50 percent of their ACL, and so you have all these fish supposedly to play with, and you have a few that's meeting their ACL, and so, somehow, the disconnect of believing the numbers or not, or you're not meeting it, because you've got plenty of quota left on the table, thousands of pounds, according to our best available -- The way we're monitoring the fishery, and I just threw that in there, just because I was -- I don't see how somehow is going to work, but you've got deepwater species, and they're like the only ones, blueline and golden and snowy grouper, that you're meeting your ACL, and then you've got gag and red snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I saw Andy put his hand up to respond to that.

MR. STRELCHECK: I wanted to make sure that Dewey didn't have the last word. No, but, Dewey, I mean, it's a great point you just made. What I would add though, right, and what we've wrestled with around this table, is that the landings are only one part of the equation, and the aggregate is looking at total mortality, and trying to figure out how we reduce some of those discards and more efficiently use the resource, right, and so I think that's the key as to how does an aggregate bag limit potentially helps to achieve that, and how does that ultimately affect what our catch limits could be in the future, for some of these species that maybe are either underutilized, or essentially are creating a lot of waste in our fisheries, because of the management regime we're under.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I appreciate the comments, and I appreciate the engagement from everybody on this topic today. Be thinking about this more, thinking about it especially relative to we're going to have this innovative management discussion, and lots of good points that have been brought up as part of this discussion, and we'll come back to it this week, and so thank you, Chip, and thank you, Adrian, and thank you, committee, and I'm going to pass it back to Trish. We're ending for today, and I think we're coming back at 8:30 in the morning, but I'm going to -- Okay, and is that it? So be back at 8:30 in the morning, and there's dinner tonight. Get with Amy if you need an address. If you haven't paid, you need to do that as well, either before you leave or once you get there. Thanks, everybody, and so 8:30 in the morning

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on September 16, 2025.)

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SEPTEMBER 17, 2025

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're definitely going to be doing something different this morning, new and different, and so just a reminder that we started this at the last council meeting. This was something that John and Kerry and I worked on, this innovative management approach for the snapper grouper fishery, and so what we're going to be doing today is John is going to give you a presentation to remind you kind of where we left off at the last council meeting, and then we're going to be getting up out of our seats, and we're going to be using the sticky walls, and doing some brainstorming for ideas, and then we will be prioritizing those things, and then we will work on some actions and stuff at the December meeting.

This will be a multi-meeting process, but, this morning, it will be more interactive, to try to get some of these ideas on paper, organize them, and get us thinking a little bit differently, to kind of maybe break the mold, break out of some of our old habits here in the snapper grouper fishery, and so, with that, I -- We already talked about the NMFS management and rulemaking processes.

We had a nice presentation from Allie, when we were looking at the executive orders earlier in the week, but you have that document, if you're thinking about timelines and how long it takes to get a full plan amendment, versus abbreviated process, and you have that as reference as well, but, with that, I'm going to turn it over to John to give us a presentation to get us going.

MR. CARMICHAEL: All right. Thank you, Jessica, and, with that, I'll jump right into the presentation. This is hot, and it's just been updated. It's not the in the briefing book on the website, but we'll get it out there here shortly, and so let me jump right into it. Innovative and comprehensive management, and so I'm going to hit on some things that are reminders from our last discussion. Those will be the title highlighted in the blue there, and a few new things, to help you focus in on what we want out of the brainstorming exercise, and we'll do the exercise, and we'll come back around the table, and we'll talk about our next steps.

The goal of this is using innovative methods to adapt to the future that we're facing. We would like to be more efficient in our business, more timeliness in our actions, and be more proactive and less reactive. If you wanted the elevator pitch, that's it. We want to be efficient, timely, and proactive, because everyone is frustrated by how reactive we seem to be quite often.

The components, a reminder again, are the goalposts, which is guidance for evaluating decisions, and is intended to be high level, and the principles are just some things that we agree to, so that we don't have to debate them at every meeting, and we don't have to get ourselves all wrapped up on them, and then the action goals is really our plan for getting these types of things into our way of doing business, and our actions, and so, what the goalposts are, they are intended to be things we want to achieve, the principles and standards to guide individual decisions around the table.

They should be informed by the feedback that you get all the time. You get it from constituents at comments, and you hear from your APs, and we've done port meetings, and we take lots of public comment, and so you have a lot of this. It's just trying to get it kind of down in a way that you can all agree and work with.

They don't replace the FMP goals and objectives. Figure this as being like a higher tier than the goals and objectives, and so it should be more detailed and precise, and then, really, we want this to be where we're going kind of in the distance, the future, and what leads us to success, and so here's some new content.

Trigger questions, and these some things to think about when you go to the sticky wall and put down your goalpost ideas, and so one would be what do you want the fishery to look like in the future? What are your ideas for better snapper grouper management, and what changes would you like in how we conduct Snapper Grouper Committee business, and so innovation is about how we approach the fishery management, but also how the business is done around the table, because there is improvements we can make in both fronts.

So some more content, some examples that we've come up with, working with Kerry and Jessica on what could be goalposts, and so one could be ensuring year-round access to some portion of snapper grouper for our fisheries, commercial and recreational, pathways for new commercial entrants, which is something we've talked about, and it's fine to have something that maybe we've talked about and want to do and make its way onto these boards.

Promoting gears and practices to reduce discard losses, increasing regulatory flexibility to better meet local needs, improve trust and confidence of stakeholders, improve management and science compatibility, streamlining our routine actions and discussions to dealing with ACL changes, and increasing use of local ecological knowledge, and so, as you can see, there's kind of a range of things here.

Some of them are about how we do business, you know, streamlining our actions, and some are about just the underpinning support for what we do, using the local ecological knowledge, and some are just about, you know, fixing longstanding problems that are really overarching, dealing with the trust and confidence of stakeholders, and so it's kind of anything that you come up with that you think would help snapper grouper is something that's worth putting up there.

I'll also say too that don't get too caught up in like, oh, is this a goalpost to our principle. Get it up on the wall when the idea comes to you, and, if we have to move some around, that's fine, and, because this is fisheries, everything we do has probably more gray than black and white, and so there are things that will be kind of like, I don't know, and maybe we'll agree as a group where it goes, or maybe we'll find some that we say, oh, that's a little bit of both. None of those are problems. The important thing is that we get it up there.

Now the basic principles, as a reminder there, and the goalposts are, you know, they're at the end of the field, and the boundary lines are kind of on the side. They keep you in play, and so these are supposed to be simple, factual statements on which we agree, and consent, so we don't have to bring them up during every discussion.

They ideally keep us from repeatedly debating issues with each amendment, or action, over and over again, and they limit our need to rehash discussion points when we all know the consensus position, or perhaps we all know that there is no answer to this question, and there's no need to keep bringing it up until some time or another we can actually get an answer, but I think we all know we deal with questions that are simply unanswerable.

There are known unknowns, and they're going to stay that way, but, ideally, these will help put some boundaries on our discussion, so we can focus on the things that we do control, and the actions we have to take, and not, you know, see a squirrel and run off in a direction on something that we end up wasting all of our time and then realize that, oh, wait, we really have a decision to make.

Triggers, questions on the basic principles, what are some facts you think all council members agree to? What are some of those axle-wrapping squirrel topics we can't change that slow our progress, and hinder discussion of things we can fix, and we all know those are things that happen, and we just sort of -- We go down a rabbit hole, as Charlie likes to say, and we don't get to the business we've got to do, and then what habits do we have as a group that potentially limit our effectiveness, and so we want to think about how we would fix those.

Some examples, and this one is right at the top, because I think it's something that we've recognized people agree on, but it can definitely be a rabbit hole, and the council does not desire significant changes in sector allocations. Avoid blaming others, whether it be a sector, another state, a rule, the SSC, for problems we must all solve. Recognize that science will not provide clear answers to all our questions or resolve all of our conflicts. We have to do the best we have with the science

that we have, and Magnuson clearly states that that's what we do. You make the best decision with the information you have before you.

Avoid rehashing unanswerable questions and debating the known unknowns. Make timely decisions using our best judgment with the information we have at hand, and, I think, importantly, because this comes up all the time, no actions of the council are forever. This is in place until you decide to change your mind. Sometimes it's longer than you might want it, because of your workload, but no actions of the council are forever, and so that's the principles, and we will brainstorm this, and then, after that, we'll talk some about the action plan.

We'll do more of this in December, but this is supposed to be how we put this into place. You develop it, and it could direct at multiple council needs, how we implement this approach, with some in the EOs and NMFS directives, and how do we get innovative ideas into our management, and so just a little reminder that this is coming, but we'll expand on this more come the December meeting.

Something to think about, as we do that, is, you know, what does success look like of this overall innovation process? One is certainly that our amendment schedules stay on track. That will go a long ways to letting us be more proactive, and less reactive, and we free up space on our workplan to proactively address bigger-picture topics, and we have increased constituent satisfaction. Pretty heavy lift on that last one, I recognize, but it certainly should be something that we try to do.

Then how does this fit in the council process, and so these are just a few things that we know are big pictures that are probably thoughts on people's minds, and so it's really directed at how the council does business and approaches our solutions, and starting here with the Snapper Grouper Committee.

As I said, it's viewed to be higher level than the goals and objectives, and so there may be things that come up in the brainstorming that are similar to goals. They may echo goals. That's not a problem. It's just we want this to be a little higher level, and I think we know, with goals and objectives, they can exist at different levels, and it really should build on the visioning. I mean, there's a few people around the table that recall the visioning process.

This is intended to build on that, and to build on the other constituent input, by taking those ideas that, you know, may be helpful and useful, but we don't really know how to fold them into our management process, and so this hopefully will lead, through the action plan, to a framework that's going to help guide our discussions and our decision-making, and so it's really about putting some of that stuff better into practice, and so that's what we're hoping to achieve.

A big step today is going to be brainstorming, so that we get a chance to hear from everyone about what you see is goalposts and principles, and we're going to do this with a sticky wall exercise. Some of you are familiar with the sticky wall exercises from outreach events and things that we've done from interactive things with constituents. I think the first time we may have ever used it was back when we were doing that citizen science workshop, and it was a huge hit, and it's a great way to get a lot of people's input in a short period of time.

We have two sticky walls. We have one for goalposts, and we have one for principles, and so we're going to do the exercise, and then we're going to review the outcomes, and then we're going

to do a sticky dot exercise, right as you go to lunch, in which we'll give you some sticky dots, and you'll get a number for each wall, and you'll go over to the things on the wall, and you'll put your dots on the things that are most important to you. That's going to provide the foundation for ordering things in the report from this process as well as discussing the next steps in December, and then that's what we'll do in December.

Here's how this will work. We have goalposts and principles. Principles is on the left, and goalposts are on the right. We're going to do the goalposts first. You'll have fifteen minutes, and so everybody is going to get up, and you're going to go over there. There will be staff supporting you. There will be Kerry and Jessica supporting you. You'll have fifteen minutes to write down your goalpost ideas and stick them on the wall, and so tell a staff person what you want, and they're going to write it down on a sticky note and slap it up there, and they are giant sticky notes.

Then, after fifteen minutes is up, Chip is going to say time, and we're going to go over to the other wall, and we're going to do the same thing. Now, when you're at the wall, the wall portion is not being recorded, when you're sticking stuff, and so this is just for you to put your ideas. There's no judgment at the sticky wall. This is super important. It's a no-judgment zone. Every idea is a good idea. There's no that's terrible, and so don't talk about your ideas so much, you know, because we want to talk about it when we're together on the record, and so just put your ideas, and then so we'll do the one wall, and we'll do the other wall.

While you all are doing the second wall, staff is going to go over there and start kind of getting things in order a little bit, and then we'll take a break, and then we'll get the other walls in order, and we'll have them what we call kind of clustering, which is a way of -- You know, because multiple people are going to put the same idea up, in some cases, or they're going to put similar ideas, that are just written a little different, and so the clustering is a way of kind of organizing, and triaging, and saying, okay, what do we really have as ideas, and so we will, after the break, go back to the goalpost wall, and we will do a review process.

You will all gather around the wall, and we'll have chairs set up, and we'll have a microphone to capture the discussion, and we're going to review them, cluster them, consolidate them. We'll decide what things belong, what things don't, what things are duplicates, and we'll get them just preliminarily organized, and then we'll go over to the other wall and do the same thing, and those portions, as I say, they will be available over the webinar and part of the meeting recording.

Then photos of the sticky walls will be saved to be an appendix to the report, and every idea that's on the sticky wall will be reflected in the report, to make sure that there's transparency, and so, while people in webinar land won't be seeing you do this sticky wall exercise, every other part of it will be covered, and all of the ideas will be in the report, to have a complete documentation, and so, after we do all that, then we'll come back to the table. We'll have a final wrap-up. We'll review some of the next steps, and we'll try to get some feedback from you for what we want to do in December, and then, as I said, we'll break for lunch.

You'll get your assigned dots, and maybe we'll put a staff person at each wall to give you dots or something, and we'll figure that out, and then you can go and essentially put your dots on the things you think are most important, and so hopefully that's clear to everybody, you've got a general idea. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: The goalposts that we saw listed, are they -- Is that what's written, principles and goalposts, up on the wall up there?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes. You have the examples, and you have the trigger questions are over there, to help you get started, and, on the pieces of paper around there, are the trigger questions and the definition of what they are, and so we'll come back, and we'll finish up this presentation, and get your ideas, but I think we're ready to go do the first exercise, if no one has any further questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we're going to that back corner?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We're going to the back right under the exit sign, to start. All right, and I think Chip will start the timer when everybody gets back there and gets ready to go.

DR. COLLIER: I'm starting it now.

(Whereupon an interactive activity was conducted and not transcribed.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to go ahead and get going here, and so I want to thank everybody for that great discussion this morning. I appreciate people stepping away from the table to have these good discussions, and I heard really great ideas, and so I appreciate the time that it took to do that. I really want to thank council staff, because I know that this was challenging to set up, and so I really appreciate all the extra effort to set up the sticky wall and the post-it notes, and I know that people got here extra early to try to get this ready for us, and so I appreciate all that.

We just have one slide here about the next steps. We're not done today, and we still have the sticky dots but, just thinking about this moving forward, there's going to be a summary of all these ideas in the Snapper Grouper Committee report, and, when we get to the December council meeting, then we will look at the ranking from the sticky dots, and we will continue to review some of these ideas, prioritize them, and I heard, from at least one person, that they wanted more time to look at this, and think about it, and then we also, in December, will think about next steps, like an action plan for all this, and how we're going to bring this into the committee discussions. Kerry, I don't know if you want to add anything here.

MS. MARHEFKA: The only thing I did want to add, because it kind of got buried over there, and it may come out separate, is this concept of having the physical things that will come out of here, possibly, if everyone is in agreement, which is we talked a little bit over there about having, at the committee meeting, whatever comes out of this, our goals sort of always on display, so, when we're wrestling with hard decisions, we can refer to the goals and go where does this decision fit into our goals.

Then the other thing was this idea of this booklet, or folder, or something, that we all have at each council meeting that has information that we all ask for and refer to commonly, like the SEDAR schedule, the workplan, whether it's a list of amendments, and, if you guys have ideas, and it's almost like a quick reference guide for stuff that, yes, you can look up, but, when you're in the middle of like trying to make a comment, and you want to find something quickly, and so, if you all want to be thinking, in the next of couple days, about something that you would find useful to

always have on hand, and we talked briefly with staff about it before the council meeting, and whether that's like a booklet you carry back and forth with you, or one that they put on the table and pick up when we leave, but sort of what's appropriate for a council quick-reference guide, was one of the process things that we didn't talk about over there, and that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John, do you want to add anything?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and we're thinking this is kind of a cheat code booklet, you know, and you can certainly have the roster of the committees and everything else, and things like the SEDAR schedule, as we said, and FMP goals and objectives, and just an acronyms list, that type of thing, just stuff that always comes up, and it would be something you would have as a hard copy, and, if pieces of it change, we would just give you another sheet to -- Out with the old and in with the new.

You know, we're envisioning like a very small binder that you would just bring with you, and I think we would rather you sort of keep it, because then you can put things in there that help you as you go through, but, you know, it's not intended to be very big, and so throw it in your bag with your computer and bring it along, and so, yes, if you have ideas of things that you're like, yes, I'm always referring back to that, and that would be really nice to have, then, you know, that's what we're envisioning putting into this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You can put the National Standards in there, and, ultimately, when we come up with the goalposts and everything, that could go in there, and so comments from the committee? Andy, thoughts?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and, I mean, I like where this is going. You know, when we have facilitated meetings, we often talk to the facilitator about ground rules, right, and so I think there was a lot of comments just about how we interact with one another, and framing those, in terms of ground rules, is kind of a nice reminder between meetings. We don't want a stymie healthy, you know, spirited debate, but we need to be thoughtful in terms of how we interact with one another.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. Any other comments about kind what we did this morning before we go into the sticky dots? All right. I'm going to try to explain the sticky dots, and so, by your name tag, by each person's name tag, you have some sticky dots there, and so what the plan will be is, after you're done putting your sticky dots up, then that will start your lunch, and we will come back here at 1:30.

The red sticky dots, the bigger ones, those sticky dots are for that wall over there, and so more post-its and more sticky dots. Red to the right over there, and so what you're going to do is you can put sticky dots on what -- You're looking at kind of the top post-it, because we, you know, put similar items under each other. If you need to look under there and see what all that topic encompasses, that's great, but then try to put the sticky dots on the exterior large post-it.

You could put all your dots on one topic, or you could put multiple dots on a particular topic, but use all your red ones over there at that wall, and then the little ones, the green ones, we're going to use over here on this wall. We're hoping that you would only use four dots, because we condensed these things down so much, but, if you want to use all six, okay, but we're hoping to just use four over here, and, once again, you can put more than one dot on a particular topic.

A reminder that some of the things off the wall, like on this side, and so they're not on the blue sticky wall, those are things that are in a parking lot, or they're not council decisions, and I don't know that I would put sticky dots on that. I'm looking at John Hadley. Anything else to add here on sticky dots? Okay. He says no. All right. Any questions before we do the sticky dots? All right, and so this is sticky dots, and then take your lunch break, and we'll see everybody back at 1:30. Thank you.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get started here. All right. I hope everybody had a nice long lunch. You can see there, from the agenda, that we're going to dive into black sea bass management measures, Reg Amendment 37, and we will likely be on this all the way until we start public comment this afternoon, and so we will be hard stop and breaking at 3:45, in order to get set up for public comment today. All right, and so, with that, I am going to pass it over to Mike to dive into black sea bass.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Actually, first, before we get into the amendment itself, I'm going to pass to Chip to give an update on discussions about the stock assessment.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, and you all were copied on the email that was sent to NOAA Fisheries in regards to the SEDAR 76 update, where we identified some concerns that were in that assessment, and some upcoming issues that could be associated with it, and so, just to highlight what was included in that letter, it talked about the selectivity for inland and state-water released fish.

There was some -- The selectivity really picks up at age-two for released black sea bass. However, if you're in inland waters, it's very common to be catching very small fish, at about six inches, as reported by some of our Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel members. That size, six inches, could be an age-zero or age-one fish, and so we want the agency to investigate that in a little bit more detail, and see what the impacts are of the selectivity on the outcome of the stock assessment, and recommendations for catch that would come from that, as well as incorporating some of the -- Based on the conversations you all are having here on this regulatory amendment, potentially having this in place for 2026 and 2027.

Those catch levels are much lower than what's projected in the stock assessment model, and so incorporate those values, and probably another significant issue is looking at the revised FES estimates that would be coming out from S&T.

They have been doing a survey, or investigating potential biases, in the way they're estimating effort right now, and they're finalizing that product. It should be available in 2026, and so it would be good to incorporate that, given the overall recreational importance of black sea bass, and so making sure we have good estimates coming in there when you're looking at the removals. The recreational sector is very important in the number of removals, and then inland and state waters, once again, are very important components there.

The other thing that we would like to have the SSC investigate a little bit more is the maximum sustainable yield or the use of a proxy for black sea bass with the estimate of maximum sustainable

yield that came out of the most recent update. That is associated with approximately a 60 percent SPR proxy, which seems pretty high for the life history of that species, and so potentially investigate other proxies for that, and then, finally, have a more thorough review of black sea bass.

We're not certain how this will happen, but we will work with Science Center staff, in order to get a more thorough review. When we're looking at the potential outcomes of this stock assessment, we want to make sure that the review that went into it is justifying the outcome. This is going to be a pretty substantial outcome for the council to deal with, and so we want to make sure that everything is investigated in great detail, making sure we get the best information coming to you all as possible.

We have sent that letter to the National Marine Fisheries Service, and we are expecting a response tomorrow, but so we'll keep you updated on that, but that's where we are as far as the request that came from the last council meeting to get that request into the NOAA Fisheries, and so we've done that, and then we're just going to be waiting on a response from them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think Chip just gave a really good summary on the rationale of why the council is moving forward with Reg 37 at this time, and I would hope that we could capture a lot of that, in some fashion, in the background of the amendment to explain why the council is not acting on the latest SEDAR assessment, but they are, in a way, acting on the latest SEDAR assessment, and so I think, if we could explain that, that would be great, and thank you for the rationale. You built a good record. Thank you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, Chip. Now I'm going to bring up the decision document that you have in your briefing book, and we will go through, and so you have two documents in your briefing book concerning this amendment. The first one is this decision document, which we'll be walking through, so you all can make several decisions on issues like the purpose and needs statements and the various actions that are included here.

For a more comprehensive view at what the draft amendment looks like right now, you also have a copy of the draft amendment in your briefing book, and so, if we need to pull that up, because you want to see something that is included there, but wasn't necessarily included in the decision document, then we can do that.

You also have a couple of additional materials that I pointed out yesterday. Those are decision tools that were developed by the NMFS Southeast Regional Office. Dominique Lazar did a great job of putting those together, and getting those to us, so they can be available to you as you make your decisions today. One is looking at the recreational sector, and the other is looking at the commercial sector, and I'll bring those up and kind of introduce those in a second, when we get down to the action steps, but I just wanted to make sure you're aware of all of the materials that you have available to you.

Coming into this amendment, Reg Amendment 37 is a follow-up to some direction that you all gave that kind of was derived from Amendment 56. At the June meeting, you all paused Amendment 56, amidst some of the concerns that Chip went over with the stock assessment, and

you gave direction for staff to begin a framework amendment, which we've done, and that is Regulatory Amendment 37, You gave some directions on actions and alternatives to include there.

Those are included here, and so the timing that you all were talking about in June, and that we're looking at for this amendment, is for you all to approve this amendment to go out for public comment today, so that we would hold public hearings in between this meeting and the December meeting, and you were hoping to go final, with the final council approval being considered, in December of this year, to hopefully have the resultant catch levels implemented within the 2026 fishing year, and so that's kind of an overview of how we came to be within this amendment.

First, looking at the purpose and need for this amendment, I'll give a moment for you all to take a look at that statement. It lays out -- I think one thing we wanted to stress with that was that this is intended to be a short-term action that's happening on a more immediate timeframe than some of the longer-term actions that would be happening on the timeframe following the changes, the potential changes, to the stock assessment.

Amendment 56 hasn't disappeared. It's been paused, pending the changes to the stock assessment, and, within that amendment, you all would then come back to some of the longer-term issues for black sea bass, but this was intended to almost be a stop the bleeding type of measure, in which there were some changes made to the way that fish are harvested in the short-term, relative to how they have been in recent times, so that there could potentially be some -- At least a reduction of how quickly this stock has been declining, and so I'll pause here, to see if there are any concerns with the language that's stated within the purpose and need, if that is something that is consistent with what you all intend for this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thoughts on this? Are we good here? I'm just looking around the room. Okay. I see heads nodding yes, that it looks like we're okay. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you, and so, next, we're going to be moving down into the actions of the amendment, and what we are looking for, from the staff end, from you all in today's meeting, is for some selection of initial preferred alternatives, if you're prepared to do so, and have those go out with the public comment draft.

One of the big reasons is because -- It has to do with the analytical purposes, and you'll especially see this when we get into the recreational related actions, that a lot of the analysis that have to do with these actions is dependent on multiple things that you select, and so your bag limit and your minimum size limit both have impacts on how long the season would potentially be for the recreational sector, and so having some idea of the preferred alternatives at a given time, the IPT would be able to look into those interactive effects, more so than just looking at them piecemeal in a vacuum separate than each other.

That is something that we would be looking to the council for, if you have any preferred alternatives that you would like to select, any necessary directions to further develop the document, and then, like I said before, considering approval of the draft amendment for public hearings.

Getting down into the actions and alternatives, I'm going to change the order a little bit from what is in the document, just for the sake of being able to kind of digest the information in a -- In I guess a way that we're going from larger, bigger issues to potentially smaller, more detailed Issues, and

so we will still do Action 1 first, discussing the annual catch targets and the accountability measures, but then I'm going to move into a sector-by-sector discussion, and so we'll do Action 1, and then we'll move to the commercial component of Action 4.

That is considering a spawning closure for the commercial sector, and then we will move into the recreational component, the recreational components, of this amendment, because those are going to be a bit more detailed, and there are several moving parts with the recreational, and so we want to kind of save the time for you all to consider the interactive effects of those different measures. I'll make sure I come back to that schedule, but I did want to lay it out beforehand, that we're going to be moving in a little bit of a different order than what the document lays out.

First, Action 1 is looking to establish annual catch targets and revise the accountability measures for South Atlantic black sea bass. Alternative 1 in all these scenarios would be the current measures. We do not currently have any annual catch targets in place for South Atlantic black sea bass.

Alternative 2 would establish sector annual catch targets, and these would be based on 50 percent of the sector landings from the last I believe it was five years, and we have a table included there that shows the commercial landings and the recreational landings, and that's Table 1, the average of that timeframe, and then 50 percent of the average, which is how we derived the sector annual catch targets.

Alternative 2 would establish annual catch targets at each of those levels. Annual catch limits would still remain on the books as they are, and you all had discussed that you wanted to go with annual catch targets so that you didn't have to have discussions about allocation from the transition to FES and CHTS.

You also discussed that, moving forward in the short-term, you would continue to do the monitoring of the recreational landings in the CHTS units, again not wanting to delay the timeframe of this action, in order to accommodate allocation discussions, and so that's why annual catch targets are being set in the way that they are. That was a discussion that was captured in June, and hopefully we've done a pretty good job of capturing that discussion within the amendment as well.

Alternative 2 has these levels here, and, when we get down to the following sub-actions that would basically change the accountability measures so that you are managing the fishery based on the annual catch targets, and so, instead of managing to the annual catch limit, you would be managing to the annual catch target, and we would set up the AMs appropriately, and so I'll pause here to see if there's any discussion concerning Sub-Action 1a, which would be establishing these annual catch targets, if there's any discussion or questions regarding this sub-action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thoughts, or questions? I don't see any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I guess it may be easier to select a preferred as we go through the entire action, go through each of the sub-actions, and so, for each of the sub-actions, the Alternative 2 are connected to each other, okay, and so Sub-Action 1a would establish the recreational and commercial annual catch targets. Coming to Sub-Action 1b, this is addressing the in-season accountability for the commercial sector. Basically, the commercial sector would be closed when

the annual catch target is reached, when the commercial landings reach the commercial annual catch target.

The post-season AM that is currently in place, which does include a payback, but it only includes a payback if you exceed the annual catch limit, which is set a considerable amount higher than the annual catch target. The payback is not getting -- It's not getting changed. The post-season AM is not getting changed. It's only addressing the in-season, which would close -- Which would close the commercial season if commercial landings hit the commercial annual catch target. Was there a question?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I might be jumping ahead, but I'm trying to figure out -- This annual catch target is set for the commercial industry.

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

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm only talking about commercial though. Thank you.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So is there going to be -- Maybe further along, is there going to be like a trip limit imposed, or something like that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, at the last council meeting, it was discussed that that the commercial trip limit wouldn't change. There was communication among council members, as well as with some members of the commercial industry, and the interest at that time was maintain the higher -- Maintain the current trip limit, and there was a preference to maintain the current trip limit and allow the season to end earlier, rather than reduce the trip limit to prolong the season. That was the preference that was expressed in June, and so that was the direction that was given to staff from the June meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm fine with that, because it's -- How about some type of bycatch allowance, because your trip limit fishery is probably going to be caught up by maybe -- Or try to be caught, that's there for a specific group, or something like that, and my thinking is about somebody that is bottom fishing with a bandit reel, who never reaches that, but maybe, if they got twenty-five or fifty pounds, and, instead of having to discard them or something, and I don't know if they're alive or dead, but have some twenty-five-pound, or fifty-pound, bycatch allowance, or something like that, and does that make sense, or is that not -- Totally nobody needs that or wants that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let Mike go first, and then over to you, Kerry, and then Andy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I'm not saying that that couldn't be considered, because that's within the council's purview to discuss and consider whether you all want to bring that on the table, but one thing I do want to point out is that the intent that was expressed for this amendment was that it

would be a more immediate action, with it going into place in the 2026 fishing year, and that's built within the rationale for this amendment, and so, as you begin to add things, especially the more complicated something is, and if it's not already in here, then that may affect the timeline, and so there's the tradeoff of whether you want to continue adding actions to this amendment, versus when you would like this amendment to be completed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey, to that?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Then just strike what I said. I feel like there's enough discussion that's already been had that, if there was any type of issue, somebody would have brought it up, and so I don't want to hold it up. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, then Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: You can go to Andy. I was ready to make a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would just add that, you know, we could certainly follow up with that with Amendment 56. I really feel like, if we're going to start talking about bycatch allowance, we should really be thinking about it more broadly than just black sea bass as well, and so it could be even something that is in Amendment 60 or another amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Back to Kerry for a motion.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I just realized that Mike might want to -- Do you want to talk about the recreational AMs before I do that? I knew you did. Sorry.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. The last component of Action 1, Sub-Action 1c, would be addressing the recreational sector, and so, similar to how 1b addressed the commercial accountability measures, to tie those to the annual catch target, the 1c action would address the recreational accountability measures and tie those to the annual catch target.

For black sea bass, this is one of the species where the agency, where NMFS, announces the season each year. Now, over the last several years, the season has been for the entire fishing year, because the landings have not approached the annual catch limit, but, with a reduction to the number that it's being tied to, which would be the annual catch target being 50 percent of the recent landings, there is more likely the possibility that there would be a change in that, that it wouldn't be the entire length of the fishing year, as it has been previously.

I do also want to point out that there is a different timing of the fishing year for the recreational sector, and that will come into play as we talk about some of the effects of the bag limit and the size limit on the season, but, the recreational sector, the fishing year begins in April, and so April 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>, whereas, for the commercial sector, the fishing year begins January 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through December 31<sup>st</sup>, and so the calendar year, but those are the alternatives under Action 1, with each of the sub-actions, and so, if you all would like to discuss, and potentially select any preferred alternatives, and, like I said, all of the Alternative 2s are tied to that annual catch target, and so those would all kind of go together if you wanted to select those as a package deal.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I move that we adopt -- For Action 1, we adopt, under Sub-Action 1a, Alternative 2, under Sub-Action 1b, Alternative 2, and, under Sub-Action 1c, Alternative 2 as our preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're getting that typed on the screen there. Do we happen to have a second for this motion? Seconded by Charlie. All right. Let me read the motion. **For Action 1, select Alternative 2 under Sub-Action 1a, Alternative 2 under Sub-Action 1b, and Alternative 2 under Sub-Action 1c as preferred.** Okay. Let's see that -- Yes, that's Kerry's motion, and it's been seconded. Discussion on this? I see heads nodding no discussion. All right. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Like I mentioned before, we're going to jump down to Action 4, specifically looking at the commercial sector at this time, and so pardon me for the scrolling, and I'm going to bring up the commercial decision tool, just so you can have it as a reference. If you want to see any particular configuration of this decision tool, then let me know, and we can pull it up onto the screen, but this is the decision tool that I referenced yesterday.

Basically, the way that it's set up, the only action that you have addressing the commercial management measures is the consideration of a spawning season closure, and there are a couple of details to point out with that.

First of all, as it pertains to the tool, if you want to select a month that would be closed, and see the effect that it would have on the number of fishing days, or on the number of projected average landings from the last few years, you would look at the average landings within this bar right here, and you can see the projected number of fishing days.

Now, the projected closure date, and the projected number of fishing days, these are relative to the ACT being put in place, okay, and so these are relative to the commercial ACT. That's the mark that would be set, and so, if you're having a closure, that means you're hitting the commercial ACT within that season. If you had a scenario where there were no in-season closure, then you would likely be some level at or below the commercial ACT, because there would be no in-season closure there.

For example, if you wanted to look at what the scenario would be if January were closed, then you would select thirty-one, and that's the full month of January, and that's the number of days in January, and so that is closed, and you can see that the closure date changed, and the number of fishing days available changed, and January is going to have a huge impact when it comes to the commercial sector, because that is the month, looking down here at this bar, when the majority of landings are caught. That's the highest month of -- That's the highest month of landings for the commercial sector.

The other thing that you can seem, if you want to get an idea of possibly, you know, different projections, to get an idea of the uncertainty surrounding it, there is a three-year average bar, and you can also select a five-year average, if you think that the five-year average from 2019 through 2023, if that would be more representative of what you think would be happening moving forward

for that fishery, and, as you can see, when you toggle that option, it changes the average landings that are there, representing the time period that's shown. I'm putting that to the side, but it's still open, so that we can use it as needed.

Within Action 4, the way that we have it set up is that the commercial -- The commercial seasonal closure is Alternative 2, and you requested alternatives, at the last meeting, of January, February, March, or April, and so the way we have this set up is you would select one or more of the sub-alternatives under Alternative 2 if you want those to be closed for the commercial sector.

One of the things that was noted, from the IPT, was that the spawning season -- Given the biological information that we have on black sea bass, the spawning season -- Peak spawning is between February and May, and so there was a question, from the IPT, on whether you all wanted to consider May, and I know kind of the structure that was set up for this spawning season closure was to have some overlap with the shallow-water grouper closure, and that may have some administrative benefits, but we did want to bring up what we know from the biological studies, as far as the peak spawning season for the stock.

It was stated, within your direction from June, that you were looking at this to be a spawning closure, as opposed to necessarily a timed closure that's intended to control harvest, and so you had kind of set up your rationale as this is a spawning closure, and so I wanted to, I guess, see what you all prefer as alternatives and how you want to set that spawning closure up for the commercial sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so I just wanted to share some conversation I had with a black sea bass pot fisherman, a highliner, in North Carolina, and talking about these closure dates, and I asked him what was the most important months for him to have for harvest, and for the market, and it was May, June, and December, respectively, and talking -- That's in North Carolina.

Talking with Amy, she has pot fishermen that, you know, January is vitally important, and so it varies by region, but, in general, May, June, December, and January are really important times for the commercial pot fishery, which is the vast majority of the commercial landings. May, June, December, and January are really important months for the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then how are we going to pick the closure here? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so, when we set these sub-alternatives up at our last meeting for Action 4, we separated them individually, with the intent that we could potentially have more than one, and so, based on that information that we just talked about, and understanding the peak spawn, although, yes, it can go into May, the peak, peak spawn is February and March, and I think we should be considering looking at Sub-Alternative 2b and 2c. I do think it would be advantageous for us to talk a little bit about that, and then plug them into the decision tool, to see what they really do look like though,

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Do the importance of the months to the rec fishery differ from the commercial fishery, or are they generally the same?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, do you know?

MR. HULL: Well, when the fish are really available are those months, and so they're available to the recreational sector, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to rack my brain here, but we did discuss this briefly during the Snapper Grouper AP meeting, and, if I am not mistaken, Cameron Sebastian specifically spoke about, by the time March rolls around, it's when their trips really do take off, and it would be really helpful to look at that overall for-hire data, either SEFHIER and/or headboat, and Mike just put his hand up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So, within the recreational -- This is the recreational decision tool, and we can at least see the last three years, the last five years, for the recreational landings, and, within that, you can see that the highest months for recreational Landings would be May and June, and, looking at the five-year average, that seems to be reflected there as well, and so May and June would be the highest landings.

Now, this is looking at throughout the region, and so it's a broader brush than maybe some specific regional effects, but May and June would be the higher one, but one of the things to note, as you're weighing your alternatives here, and it does -- I point this out because it affects how we need to write the rationale for this closure, and is the intent of the closure to be a spawning protection closure, in which you're protecting spawning fish, or is it meant to be a harvest control type of closure, in which you are controlling the harvest of the fish? What you determine from that, that determines the rationale that we're using to support the action that you take.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to try to touch on that, but I'll touch on the recreational catch. I think it's important to note that they're always important, and I think the data also reflects some of the high effort that's going to start with the shallow-water grouper season opening, right, but I do want to go to Amy's comment and mention that we do really need to look at some of this headboat data, and the SEFHIER data, because the impacts to these, and let's call them off-season, or winter season, closures could be disproportionate to the headboat community and some of the charterboat community, versus the overall recreational community.

Now, as the rationale for the spawning season closure, you know, I do look at this as -- I look at it as a little bit of both, but the benefit of trying to close it, you know, for the benefit of the stock for the spawning season, but I do agree that we need to look at multiple months here, because it seems silly to just close one month in the middle of a prolonged spawning season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't think we can have any other discussion until we determine what we're doing a closure for. I think that's the first discussion, because, in my mind, when you have a spawning season closure, that should be at the same time for everyone, because what's the point of having a spawning season closure if both sectors aren't involved, but, if it is used to control effort, then you use that to tailor it to the specific needs of that sector, and so I think that's discussion number one. I wish I remembered June, and what I read for why we put this in in June, but, for the life of me, I can't remember.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can you remind me what the fishing year is?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The commercial fishing year is the calendar year, January through December. The recreational fishing year is from April through March, and that comes into play -- I wanted to kind of address the commercial first, because then we would address the recreational closure right afterwards, but, that way, you all would establish what you would like to do concerning this closure.

To one of the points that Kerry discussed in June, one of the reasons it seemed, at least from reading the discussion as to why it was a spawning closure, is because black sea bass are one of the stocks that is experiencing recruitment failure, and so there was some discussion, rationale, of at least protect the spawners, and the potential of that bringing about some level of improvement to the recruitment. That has really declined, and that's been one of the things that has really lowered the stock status within the more recent years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have Andy, Charlie, Jimmy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So Mike just made one of my points about, you know, protecting spawners, and so I think that's important, and I appreciate Kerry kind of centering us with regard to the goals of this. The other complication here is because of the shift in the fishing years between the two sectors. Under most scenarios with the recreational decision tool, you're going to hit the annual catch target and close before you even get into that January through April timeframe, and so it's going to be closed anyway, right, or the January through March timeframe, and so you're protecting spawners potentially during that time, because you've bumped up against your catch target.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was helpful. Thank you. Charlie, then Jimmy. I think you all were going towards that as well.

MR. PHILLIPS: That was where I was going.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just for clarification, are you just preventing harvest, or are you going to prevent fishing in areas where there is, you know, substantial black sea bass? It makes a big difference in terms of protecting the spawning stock, if you're still -- Unless, by prohibiting harvest, you're confident that there will be much less fishing in that area. If they're still fishing, and letting them go, it would disrupt spawning as much as anything.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So one of the -- One of the, I guess, discussion points that's within the amendment -- Like what's being discussed right now is prevention of harvest, and so it would be the landing of the fish. There would still be discarding potentially that would happen, but, at least from an empirical standpoint, there are at least three examples that we have from stock assessments of stocks within the shallow-water grouper closure where it's a harvest restriction, and not a fishing restriction, on those stocks.

For every single one, beginning with the first year of the shallow-water grouper closure, and this would be -- I think it's gag, red grouper, and maybe scamp, and that might be the other one, but, for every single one of those, the overall removals, both the landings and the discards for those species, go down the first year of that closure implementation in 2010, and so, while there would still likely be a level of discarding, and a level of removals, that is occurring, at least the empirical evidence would suggest that it's not at the same level that would have been occurring without that closure in place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: To Clay's point, for me, the whole purpose of this is to leave biomass of bass in the water, so that we can have potentially more spawn, and maybe some of it will drift back and fill in where the fish no longer exist, and so, whether you have, you know, fishing effort -- I think your point is you're going to have discard mortality, which is, you know, going to affect the biomass, but just the fact that the season is closed I think is enough to increase the biomass, rather than close the total fishing effort in an area. They may be fishing for something else, but, with the shallow-water grouper closure we have, and some of the other things implemented, I think that we'll get somewhere with this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so it sounds like we're just saying harvest closure. Okay. All right, and so then back to these alternatives here, and so I'm going to bring us back to what Kerry was suggesting, is what is the purpose of this, and it sounds like it's partly spawning, and maybe partly to reduce harvest, and then you also heard how the recreational fishing here, depending on which months we pick, et cetera, there's just not going to be a lot of open time period, and so you're probably not going to make it to these preferred months, and I'm pretty sure we cannot change the fishing year in this document, and so that's just another --

It can only be done in a plan amendment, and so we can't change the recreational fishing year to solve that conundrum there, and so thoughts on the months for commercial? Would someone like to throw out some ideas? It seemed like, when we were starting this discussion, that maybe we were thinking 2b And 2c, which is February and March. Jimmy, do you have some thoughts?

MR. HULL: **Yes, and I would make a motion for February and March, but I would like to see it plugged into the decision guide here.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike is working on plugging it in.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So it's plugged in now, and here I'll unplug it, just so that you can see the change, and so this is commercial, and so, in the absence of any spawning closure, then you would be looking at a projected closure date of March 30, eighty-eight fishing days, starting from January 1 through that date. If there is a closure during February and March, then the projected closure

date would be July 18, with 139 fishing days, and this number does subtract out the closed dates within those closed months.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A real quick caveat, and so that's based on a five-year average, and so I expect the season would be considerably longer under a three-year year average, because of continuing declines, and we typically don't use even multiyear averages. We use actual landings, and a combination of projected landings from recent years, to determine the commercial closure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, based on that, Jimmy, would you still like to make that motion for February and March?

MR. HULL: **Yes.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have a motion by Jimmy, and seconded by Kerry, and we'll get that on the board here/ While we're typing, go ahead, Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Just real quick, while you're typing that, you can change the fishing year through a framework. Just letting you know that it says you can adjust fishing seasons or years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Be thinking about that while we're typing up this motion. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that though, we just had a conversation about doing anything to this document will slow it down, and I'm just wondering if including this -- If this has been scoped.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I'm looking at Rick. Do you have thoughts? This has already been scoped without the change in the fishing year. Do you think that that would slow this document down, the fact that it didn't already go out? Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Not necessarily about it was scoped already, and I think you could add something after scoping. I don't think that's not allowed, but I do think, by adding anything, it does impact the timing of this amendment. If you add changing the fishing year, we have to come up with alternatives, and it could impact the analysis in the document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Folks, be thinking about whether or not that's worth it, and so the motion was to select Sub-Alternative 2b, February, and Sub-Alternative 2c, March, under Action 4 as preferred, and just this is for the commercial. All right, and so we have a motion and a second. Any more discussion on this? Go ahead, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: This is more a question, and why would we -- What's the reason for not including April? Just looking at how the spawning, peak spawning, is February to May, and April doesn't seem to impact North Carolina or South Carolina, and so, anyway, I was just wondering about adding April, and it's a question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I had the same question.

MR. HULL: I think it would be good, and let's add it. I'm good with that. It's more protection for the spawning biomass.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so Jimmy is amending that motion to add the month of April. Kerry, as the seconder, are you okay with adding --

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm not sure yet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Confer over there. While they're conferring, we're adding it to the decision tool. This is with the three-year average.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It lowers the number of fishing days, because there was no -- Here. Take a look. There was no in-season closure that would have been projected from closing in February and March. Therefore, if you close in April as well, there would still be no in-season closure, and the number of fishing days is decreased by thirty, the number of days in April, and that's why it decreases. It's not leading to a shorter -- It's not leading to a closure happening earlier, and it's you're accounting for the fact that you are overtly closing the fishery during that month by your decision.

Noting the five-year average, generally the five-year average is higher than the three-year average, because landings for black sea bass have been going down, and so the five-year average would project a closure that would happen -- In the case of February through April, it would project a closure to occur on October 6. The three-year average, the lower number, would project no in-season closure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Based on what I've seen from South Carolina, April would be detrimental. South Carolina is actually, if you look at the data, taking a big hit with the months we've chosen, and April is adding insult to injury, and so I'm not comfortable with April being added to the motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: This is where we need to be careful, in terms of drawing too many conclusions on the projections, and so I just quickly looked at our landings for this year, and we're at a little over 46,000 pounds, and the catch target is 48,557, and so we're in September, and I would expect we would hit that catch target if it was in place this year, right, and so, even though our projections are saying we would get to the end of the year, the reality is we wouldn't have. Now, we didn't have a two-month closure in place, or a three-month closure in place, and so just kind of keep that in mind, that these are our best estimates of what we think might happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so there are the months, one more time, and so you've heard from Kerry that it might not be good to close April. Jimmy, do you have some thoughts about whether you want to add April as a closed month or not, and then I have Charlie in the queue behind you.

MR. HULL: Well, I'm here to compromise and just try to facilitate, to get the best we can, and try to make everybody happy, and there's -- You know, it's really hard to do, but we do have to make

some tough decisions, and this is speaking from a guy whose state no longer has any sea bass to harvest, but I'm just trying to get people to talk about it, and come up with a good solution, but we definitely need to protect the biomass when we can, so that the stock doesn't continue to disappear, but we don't want to unnecessarily harm fishermen that are just struggling to survive, and so, I mean, I get it. I can take April out, you know, if that's what -- If it's a no-go for you in South Carolina, then it's a no-go, or you can just vote against it when the time comes, and then we don't do anything, but I think we've got to do something, and I'm just trying to find compromise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie, then Trish.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and, you know, ideally, these stocks are going to start rebuilding. This is some serious cuts into, you know, harvest, and, right now, it says the projection, which is, to me, always fuzzy, because you never know what fishermen are going to do, and fish for that matter, and, if we can keep it open, so we've got the bycatch that Dewey was talking about through the end of the year, while those snapper grouper guys are hook-and-lining vermilion and stuff, and they're not discarding fish, we may be better off to just leave it at two months, and kind of hope we're in the right place. That's my gut feeling.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that eliminating fishing is going to help here, and I just wanted to -- I heard you say that, because I think that the issue might be recruitment, or some other thing, and so we are kind of moving the chess pieces here relative to what months we're going to fish in, even though it might not be a tremendous help, and so I've got Trish, and then Kerry.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just really just asking the question, because I thought process was just what -- You know, according to the document, that's the peak spawning, and then I was also thinking it was overlaying with the regular spawning closure of January through April, and that would -- If we were talking about -- I was thinking more about protecting spawners, that that made sense, and, I mean, if you wanted to pull April out, I would support -- I would support either motion, but that was my thought process, that there would be less chance of discarding and stuff during that January through April season, and it would just be overall helpful, but I can support either one, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I just want to be clear that, in my mind, what I'm trying to preserve here is we have this group of pot fishermen, and it's very small, and they've been through a lot. It's a clean fishery otherwise, and they are reliant on black sea bass, and I might be misspeaking, but the way I view it is they are reliant on black sea bass in a way that the hook-and-line guys are not, and so, in my mind, what I am trying to do is balance both, obviously, the need of the species, but look out for these pot fishermen. They're very well regulated, and a lot of them are using ropeless gear, you know, all of it, and so I just want you to know that's where my thought process is going.

We do have the added thing of the fish matter to the North Carolina guys in a different time than they matter to the South Carolina guys, and whether -- Another option would be thinking about them in different months, but then it gets very convoluted, and just remember, if this is a spawning season closure, we need it to line up with the rec spawning season closure, in theory, because we always have, and getting into March and April is when those guys have their spring break trips,

and, you know, the charter and headboat guys are making their spring break money, and so there's a lot of factors at play.

If we are literally, and we still never clearly said it, but, if this is literally a spawning season closure, then the only discussion is about when these species spawn, but, if this is an extended season closure and the other, then we're balancing a lot more things, and I'm still confused about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what's the pleasure of the committee here? Is it just February and March, or is it February March and April? Okay, and so I see heads nodding, from some people, with just February and March. If you want something different, you need to speak up right now/ Okay. Can you go back to that motion?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just listening to some of the discussion, and especially some of the comments that Kerry just made, you all can, you know, make the decision, and you can build your record whichever way you decide to do, if you're going to go spawning closure or if you're going to go that you're balancing spawning with harvest.

If the intent is to do recreational tied to the commercial, then you may consider either pausing the motion to have a recreational discussion, and do both at the same time, so that you're in alignment with both of the sectors, or, if you want to do it in this way of pick one, and then pick the other, then you can do that in that fashion as well, but I did want to bring that up, since the point was just made of potentially having it timed at the same time for both sectors.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's pause the discussion on this motion, and let's talk about recreational, because you heard a suggestion from Kerry that we should line up these closures. We can, and we don't have to. We could add more months to recreational, or whatever we want to do here, and so could we please have a discussion about which months should be closed for recreational, and then we'll come back to the commercial motion, and so thoughts on the recreational closed months? Don't all jump at once. Judy, then Tom.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Well, I'm thinking, and so, January, that's a good month to close for us, which I'm talking about because of during the time of the year and everything. January and February, and probably March would be okay too, because we have windy conditions, but I don't know about Tom though. I don't know what your thoughts are about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you, Judy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is where seeing like SEFHIER and headboat data would be helpful, right, and we do have to remind ourselves though that, given these huge reductions in catch, that the recreational season is likely going to be closed this time anyway, and so the recreational community -- All aspects are going to take a large hit, no matter what.

I think a lot about this conversation we're having is whether this is a reduction in effort or this is a spawning season closure, and I think, if we're going to have a closed season, we should be asking when we close the season, and when is it going to be most beneficial to the stock to close it, and, obviously, we would like to think that that would be during a spawning season closure, because a bunch of our conversation, as has just been said, is this fishery is a recruitment problem, and not

necessarily a fishing effort problem, and what can we do to potentially increase recruitment, and maybe that's leaving them alone when they're spawning, right?

I will say I think, no matter what we do here, that we need to align the seasons together, whether it's four months or two months or one month, and I think that's paramount here, from a spawning season closure, and I don't think any of these months are going to be great for the community, headboat, for-hire, or recreational.

The thing about black sea bass is, when people fish for them in March, that's because they're there, right, and they're easier to catch. I think that, knowing from my experience, like Judy said, March is a tough month to go fishing. While those days you can get out are pretty great, and important, you still don't have that many of them, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike, and then Judy.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, and I just wanted to bring up the recreational decision tool. Andy has kind of talked about it in terms of what it looks like from the fishing year perspective, if there's a closure, and this is under a scenario of a seven-fish bag limit, and so this is the current bag limit, and the closure would happen in September, before the spawning season would occur, and this is one of those places where it's very difficult to try to organize one action versus another, because they all affect each other.

In the recreational context, you have the potential selection of a spawning closure, but you also have, on the table, a reduction in your bag limit. Now, if you change your bag limit, that changes your projected closure date, and it changes the potential impact that you would have on the stock, because you would actually have some level of closure from that spawning season closure, and so I just wanted to point that out, that there's interplay between what you're going to select for your bag limit, what you're going to select for your size limit, along with this spawning closure, from the recreational perspective, because we have those different measures being talked about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have Judy, then Charlie.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I think they should coincide. The commercial and the recreational should coincide at the same time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Judy, Charlie, and then Jimmy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think they should coincide too, and I just don't think this is probably the vehicle to do it, because it's highly likely going to slow us down, and I expect there's going to be a good bit of decision about changing thirteen-inch down to eleven, which is also going to shorten their fishing year, and so, unless we change the fishing year, which I kind of heard was probably not -- I'm not going to say not feasible, but probably not practical for doing a quick timeframe, it doesn't matter what we do a recreational closure, but I would do it in the next amendment, and not this one, and I would just set our bag limit, and let them set their size limit, hopefully maybe at eleven inches, so that's all the same, and then worry about this as we go along. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and then, the discussion on whether we call the closure months a spawning closure or a harvest reduction, it's a spawning closure. We are having a massive amount of harvest reduction by going to the ACT, and so, I mean, we are getting a huge reduction in harvest already, and possibly, you know, being closed before we even go into the spawning closure, and so I think we're doing the right things in response to this status of this stock though, but I would call this a spawning closure and not a harvest reduction closure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. I like that thought, and so we've had a number of thoughts here that the recreational closure might not matter unless we change the fishing year, but, if we're calling this a spawning closure, then we need to pick the same months for commercial and rec and pick what months we think are best relative to spawning, and so, with that in mind, what are we thinking for commercial and recreational, because it sounds like we want to line those up, and so what are the thoughts? We had a motion for commercial that was February and March, and do we want to stay with that, or do we want to do February, March, and April? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I think just February and March will work, and then, if you look at the information that we've received, the highest Months of harvest for recreational sector, averaged out, were May and June, and that was -- Those two months were also really important to the commercial sector, and so that lines up, and it seems that the only -- As Tom said, you know, the headboats, and seeing the charter boat information, to take into account their needs too, but, you know, it's -- At that time of year, probably -- What I've heard, up in your area, is that's the only fish out there for them to catch in the dead of winter, and so, you know, like you said, it's going to greatly affect them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Jimmy is absolutely right that it will impact the fishing community in my area, particularly the headboats but the status of the stock, and the cuts we're doing, I think are going to make that impact no matter what, right? Now, what I am hearing in these requests to look at further data -- I'm starting to think that that might be what we need to do in the next plan, in the next full amendment, correct, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, based on this discussion, it seems like we're honing-in on February and March for both commercial and recreational, and I'm looking around the table, to see if that's where we are, I some thumbs-up, and heads nodding, and so, with that, I'm going to come back to this motion, and so, technically, we could do two motions, one for commercial and one for rec, or we could add them both into this motion, and I don't know what your preference is. Two motions, or one motion? Okay, and so then would someone like to -- **Jimmy is the motion maker. Are you good if we add in the recreational months here?**

MR. HULL: **Absolutely.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. The seconder is Kerry. Are you good with that? All right, and so we're going to edit this, and so standby. **All right, and so, to read the motion, we are at select Sub-Alternative 2b, February commercial, Sub-Alternative 2c, March commercial, Sub-Alternative 3b, February recreational, Sub-Alternative 3c, March recreational, under Action 4 that we're now calling spawning closure, as preferred.** All right, and so we have a motion, and we have a second. We've had a lot of good discussion about our rationale on this.

Any more discussion on this one? **Any objection?** All right. **The motion carries.** Amy, go ahead.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Prior to moving on to the next action, just real quick, I think it would be advantageous, under Alternatives 2 and 3, to add the word “spawning” in front of “seasonal closure”, please.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're going to add some direction to staff. Thank you for bringing that up. While he's typing that, I'm just assuming that we don't want to change the recreational fishing year, because it might slow this down. We're going to wait on that one until the next Amendment, and I see heads nodding yes, that we're waiting on changing the recreational fishing year until the next amendment on this. Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Now we're going to go back up to Action 2, and then Action 3, and these are recreational management measures. Action 2 is looking at the bag limit, and Action 3 is looking at the minimum size limit, and so, now that you kind of have your context set of where the spawning closure would occur, then we can kind of look at the options as far as bag limit and minimum size limit, so you all can set what you would want the recreational season to look like, and optimize it as you are -- As you intend to do, and so, possibly because of the interactive effects between these two things, it may be cleanest for you all to look at each of the actions, and the alternatives under each of them, and then kind of construct what you would be considering both the bag limit and the minimum size limit.

Right now, the bag limit is seven fish per person per day. We did note, because there is a notable state water portion of the fishery, that state water bag limits are as shown on the screen. Most of the states are seven fish, and Georgia is fifteen fish per day. Most of those fish would be under the minimum size limit as well though, and so that is something to keep in mind as we are looking at this, that there would just be an impact from the state water potential landings, or certainly the state water catch.

As you are considering the current bag limit, you have seen information, and it's included in the amendment as well, but we did an analysis of basically about how many fish per person are being caught on these recreational trips, and over 60 percent of the recreational angler trips that harvested black sea bass harvested one or fewer black sea bass per person, okay, and as you -- Just noting the fewer than one black sea bass per person would be a scenario where you have say six anglers on a charter, and you caught five black sea bass for the trip, and so that would be -- It's averaged out per angler on that type of trip.

Next, looking at the minimum size limit, your alternatives that you are considering there, right now, the minimum size limit for the recreational sector is thirteen inches total length. The commercial minimum size limit is eleven inches, and so you all have discussed a reduction to the recreational minimum size limit. We have alternatives included of twelve inches total length, as well as eleven inches, and that would make it equal to the commercial sector.

As this affects some of the discussion points that you all have brought up, in general, if you decrease your bag limit, then you are more likely to have discards within a fishery, because there would be, theoretically, continued fishing after a bag limit is caught, and so you would have to discard the fish above the bag limit.

That has not generally been the case for black sea bass, because the bag limit has been so much higher than the typical catch on a recreational trip, but, if you lower the bag limit, then you reduce that margin.

The factor that has been a bit more contributory to the discards for black sea bass has been the minimum size limit. Most of the fish that are discarded are undersized fish, and so, in general, as you reduce a minimum size limit, you would be more likely to have harvested fish, but you would be less likely to have discarded fish, and so there are tradeoffs within these things, and these are two actions that are potentially -- Depending on which way you go, it could have effects that are working in different directions, but just laying out the information there, because that will affect if you all want to see some of these options laid out within the decision tool.

We can toggle between different bag limits, different size limits, and one thing that may be helpful in selecting which route you want to go is to say what do you want to optimize, and do you want to optimize anglers being able to catch and keep more fish, or do you want to optimize having some -- Having the longest season, the longest open season, possible, and so, as you lay out what you want to optimize, then we can kind of hone-in on what the options would be within the decision tool, and we can use that to help look at what the alternatives would be to set up that scenario.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let's start with minimum size. I feel like that that's going to be an important discussion first, and so it sounds like -- I heard Charlie say that he was thinking that we should reduce the minimum size. When we were playing with the decision tool, I feel like, if we reduce the minimum size, we're going to be bringing in black sea bass hand over fist, and so then you're just going to catch it super quick, and so I feel like there's tradeoffs, like we're saying here, and so let's start in this minimum size discussion. Do we want to reduce the minimum size limit for recreational? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: When it comes to the recreational catch, I mean, we've had a lot of discussion here regarding wanting to prioritize access for our recreational fishermen, and I think sea bass is an access issue, more than anything. I don't really feel that I can even really weigh-in on what I want the minimum size limit -- I would love it to be lower, to reduce discards, but I don't feel that I can adequately make a statement here regarding it until I see it plugged in and how that's going to impact overall yearly access to it. I mean, I think we all know, before we go down the discussion of bag limit, the bag limit is probably not going to have much impact.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and we're pulling up the decision tool. I saw Robert, and then somebody else. Charlie.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I was just going to ask, because, in my mind, I was thinking, well, if you reduce the size limit, and reduce the bag limit, you're really cutting down on, ultimately, discards, assuming people stop fishing when they get there, but I was -- This is not a fishery that I spend much time, and so I'm just curious if you could educate me a little more on why you don't think the bag limit change is going to help.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, given the data that we've seen, fishermen aren't catching anywhere near the limit, right, and, I mean, I can -- I just use my experience from other fisheries I've dealt with on the state side of things, and bluefish was a great example. You know, we had this fifteen-fish

bag limit, coast-wide, and we had to drop it to three in order to get any reductions, because no one was keeping that many, right, and I think this is a different scenario, which what we've seen is -- I mean, the quota is that 60 percent are not catching, what, more than one, right, and so, again, I would have to see the data, but that was my point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Charlie, and then Judy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I was here when we made it thirteen inches, and I think you were too, and it was after we had already made this decision, and the train was well down the track, that I think Science Center, or SSC, or somebody let us know that, had we lowered it to eleven, or some lower number, our discards would have been much lower, because it's hard to get a thirteen-inch fish, and there are an awful lot of discards in trying to get a thirteen-inch fish, and I don't care what your bag limit is, if it's seven, if it's five, if it's two, and you're still throwing away a lot of fish in trying to get thirteen inches, and so I would -- I think we really should go to eleven. It will save on discards, and hopefully they won't keep fishing, or they'll go target something else when they get their bag limit, but I really feel like we need to make eleven inches the number. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Judy, and then Jimmy, and then we're going to go to the decision tool. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm with Charlie. I think we should go to eleven, or look at it on the decision tool. Go to eleven, and then drop the bag limit, but try the eleven first at seven, but then drop the bag -- Try it at another lower bag limit, just to see, so we can take a look at it.

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

MR. HULL: I agree with that too, and I would like to see it on the decision tool, but just as angler behavior -- Most anglers fish to catch their limit, and they're usually pretty satisfied with that, and they either stop fishing, or fish some other way, in the upper water column for vermilion, or something different, and so I think that it could be beneficial to go to eleven and drop the bag limit, and they'll reach their limit quicker, with less discards, and hopefully they fish for something else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. One more person, and then we'll use the decision tool. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I agree, in theory, with what everybody is saying here, to reduce the bag limit, and reduce the size limit to decrease discards, again, but I want to see it in the decision tool, because I do think we need to prioritize access here, but I do want to state -- North Carolina has probably the most -- I'm not going to use the term "robust", but we have the majority of the -- You know, us and South Carolina have the majority of the black sea bass fishery, and my experience with this, in recent years, is their range has really contracted, and I'm not catching them in the wide range of places I used to.

Most of my fishing in the summer, you know, usually starting around May 1, with the shallow-water grouper opening, I'm not catching large numbers, and I'm also not really targeting them, and I just -- I catch a few eleven or twelve-inch fish., and I catch some, you know, legal fish. Where the bag limits are a bigger source of -- Where the bag limit matters is those who target them in the

fall and the winter, right, when these fish are more concentrated, and they are the only game in town, and usually. if I fish for them in January, February, or March, I'm going to get close to catching the limits. It's the only time of the year I do it. However, that being said, we're likely going to be closed that time of year anyway.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Now we're going to the decision tool.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and, kind of consistent with what's been, you know, pointed out about the decision too, this is certainly something to think of as more relative, to see the effects, and I definitely think, as more approximate, because the determination on a season is going to be made relative to the most recent landings year for that season and the catch rates related to that season.

In the scenario that's set up right here, we have a February and March closure, harvest closure, in place, the current bag limit, and a thirteen-inch size limit. Altering that minimum size limit down to twelve inches, or, excuse me, eleven inches, and so you see the shortening from thirteen inches, with approximately 168 fishing days, and this is -- Just for a frame, we're going with the three-year average with this comparison, and, going down to the eleven-inch total length would be forty-one fishing days, expecting a closure date in May. Remember the fishing year begins in April, and so that would be April 1 through May 12. That would be the open period of time in this scenario.

Shifting the bag limit, and I'll initially -- I'll just go from the highest to the lowest, and so, going to a four-fish bag limit, that would adjust the projected fishing days to forty-seven, and the closure date to May 18. Adjusting it down further, to a three-fish bag limit, May 20, forty-nine fishing days. To a two-fish bag limit, May 26, and fifty-five fishing days. At a one-fish bag limit, it's seventy-three fishing days, and June 13. One and thirteen would have no in-season closure. The only closure that would be in place would be the spawning season closure at that time, in February and March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me go back to hands, now that we've seen the decision tool. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: This is exactly what I was getting at, and it's what I was expecting, and I would also remind everybody, particularly in North and South Carolina, that we have a lot of these fish inshore, and a lot of them are ten and eleven inches long, and you're going to see a huge increase in this catch from the accessible aspect of these fish. These are the ones caught on rock jetties, and the bridges, and the ports, and all these other places.

They're going to get picked up with MRIP, and I wouldn't be shocked if we got closed really, really fast, right, and so I am going to still emphasize that I think we need to prioritize access here, versus -- I mean, it is what it is, and I don't think we're ever going to really get rid of discards in this fishery. This is a really tough challenge for us, because it's many juvenile fishes that are caught inshore, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So, based on that, Tom, and thinking about the whole access, is -- How do I interpret that comment from you? Is it keep it at thirteen inches and go to a one-fish bag? Can you help with what your ideas are for the size limit and the bag limit?

MR. ROLLER: Well, I would love to see thirteen and increase the bag limit upwards, right, like two, three, four, just to see what that looks like. Could we go back down again, so we can look at the projected closure date again?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just so that's verbally on the record, with a four-fish bag limit and a thirteen-inch total length minimum size limit, that would be a projected closure date of October 31, 213 fishing days. Changing the bag limit down to three fish would have a November 24 projected closure, at 237 fishing days. Lowering the bag limit to two fish, a January 9 projected closure, with 283 fishing days, and a one-fish bag limit would have no projected in-season closure, and so the full 306 fishing days, with the accounting for the February and March spawning closure, would be the projection.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tom, thoughts?

MR. ROLLER: So I look to the committee for this, to what everyone else wants to say, but I would be inclined to have a bag limit greater than one, and maybe three, and I think that might be the best compromise here, which gets us through most of the fall, and not all of it, and I would love to hear what fishermen think, big picture, about having it at one and having it open year-round, but I just think people would be really upset with a one-fish bag limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You're also suggesting keeping the minimum size limit at thirteen?

MR. ROLLER: Given what we've seen here, I'm not so sure that, dropping it, we can accomplish our goals here. Our access is just going to get hit too hard.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Al; right. Gary, and then Charlie, then Jimmy, then Judy.

MR. BORLAND: I agree with Tom. I think we've got to really hone-in on the two-fish bag limit, and a thirteen-inch size limit, to give us optimum days and a little bit of catch, right, and, I mean, that's dropping from seven to two, and I think seven to one -- I almost feel like you just close it completely at that point, but that's my vote.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we've had a vote for thirteen inches. A three-fish bag limit at thirteen inches, and a two-fish bag limit, and I'm going to go back to my list of hands. I've got Charlie, Jimmy, Judy, Amy.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I see -- I totally understand Tom wanting to have it open, but we have talked about the severity of discards for so long, and I think that's exactly what this tool is showing us. We are going to be having so many discards trying to get to that thirteen-inch fish, just so we get to access, and it's not that access isn't important.

It is, but I just -- I strongly feel this is -- It's too much discards, and maybe we should look at twelve inches, and, to me, that would be a compromise, and just see what we've got, but I hate knowing that, if we pass this with a thirteen-inch size limit, we are going to continue throwing away fish just for the sake of saying we can catch two fish, one fish, three fish, whatever. I just feel like we are doing a disservice to the resource.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to go back to Tom to respond to that, and then I'm going to go back to my hands.

MR. ROLLER: Charlie in theory, I completely and utterly agree with you, but this fishery is very, very different, and this is what I've spoken to before on the record. If I remember correctly, and I'll look to Mike on this, federal waters catches of sea bass tend to have less discards, right, and isn't it a higher proportion of legal fish to discards?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't know that I would necessarily say it's high, but there is a significant number of discards. Sometimes they're half, sometimes more than half, of the discards within a given year are from state waters.

MR. ROLLER: That's what -- It's very, very high. The people that -- My experience with the folks that are catching these fish, and discarding them, are people who are fishing. They're not fishing for black sea bass. They are going fishing, at the jetties and the piers and the closest ARs, and they are catching four to ten-inch sea bass and dogfish and spottail pinfish and whatever they can catch.

Whether or not this fishery is open, whether or not the size limit is thirteen inches or eleven inches, they are going to go fishing, and they are going to discard them, and so maybe we can have some impact on discards, but I think that those discards in general are going to exist no matter what we do. I mean, this just simply isn't a grouper fishery offshore. It is an access fishery for people, and I think most of those -- That was my conundrum here, in all these discussions, is I am not sure what we can do to reduce discards in this particular fishery, because it's so different.

MS. MCCAWLEY: 10-4. All right. I'm going to go back to my list of hands. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: It's a good discussion, and I'm back and forth on the size limit, and, you know, then I look at what's up there now into the decision tool, and you get 283 days at thirteen inches and two fish, which, you know, I think that catching a couple of thirteen-inch fish, you know, offshore is certainly doable. Where you're talking all the discarding is, it's probably never doable. There's no thirteen-inch fish inshore, and so, you know, it's a tough one, and I don't know really the answer, and that's why we're talking, but I'm back and forth on it, and so let's keep going.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: So maybe I just want to ask a question, if I can. We don't control the inshore fish, right? We don't have anything to do with those, do we, and does that have any impact on our catch?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, because it still counts against the quota. Right, Andy? Okay.

MS. HELMEY: For the inshore fish, for the state fish and the federal fish?

MR. STRELCHECK: It's all a single population of fish, and so those fish contribute to the overall population, regardless where they're caught.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you. All right then, and, well, why don't we try -- Do you want to try putting in twelve inches?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So just talking through -- Kind of similar to what we did for eleven and thirteen, and so here is seven fish at twelve inches. Kind of the baseline we're talking is June 4, sixty-four fishing days. Adjusting that to four, June 14, seventy-four fishing days. A three-fish bag limit is June 19, seventy-nine fishing days. Two fish is June 28, eighty-eight fishing days, and one fish is August 22, 143 fishing days.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I've got more hands, and so I have, in the queue, Amy, Tom, Kerry, Charlie. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. First and foremost, staff, thank you very much for building these tools, because they are demonstrating exactly what we need them to demonstrate, and so, from my perspective, I can get behind a reduced recreational bag limit of two fish. That's giving a significant opportunity for fishermen to still be able to go out and to catch fish, minus the spawning season closure.

When you start talking about the size limit, from a resource perspective, lowering that size limit doesn't protect the stock any further. Certainly it has a positive effect, an unquantified positive effect, on the reduced discards, but then I go back to why we asked the Science Center to prepare some assessments specifically looking at that recreational discards, which is accounting for more than 60 percent of the removals, and I think some of that information coming back to us will be helpful in the future, but I'm okay with the two fish. I think that leaving the size limit, again, is right where we need to be.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So you're saying, just so I make sure, bag at two and size at thirteen? Okay. All right. Over to Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Again, and I feel like I didn't thank staff enough for this. Thanks for pointing that out, Amy. This decision tool is great, and I just felt guilty, when you said that, and I didn't say something, but this is exactly how we need to do -- To look at these decisions, and, I mean, I'm okay with two. I would ask if people would consider three, as that still gets us to the end of November, and I would ask how important the month of December is. I think, as long as it's higher than one, I think I'm good, but I would consider three, just for conversation points, but I would reiterate that I don't see how we can reasonably go under thirteen and keep the season open.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I have you down for three, or a possible two, at a thirteen-inch size limit, and so I'm going to go back to Amy to speak to that point, since he asked Amy a question, and I have three more people in the queue. Go ahead, Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Tom, remember that we are not adjusting the fishing calendar year for the recreational sector in this amendment, and so, at this point January 9 is the projected closure, and so there is a potential that that date is a little off, and so that could eliminate all of January fishing, in the for-hire fleet specifically, come January. Just something for us to be thinking about in the back of our minds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: First, I want to ask if we can make all of this Bob Beal's problem and have it not be ours. I just wanted to make sure you were paying attention over there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, you have to start with a fruit plate and then --

MS. MARHEFKA: I can do better than that. No, but my real question, although that is so appealing, by real question is, when the AP meets in October, they're going to look at our preferred in this version of the document, and will they also have access to this tool, so that they can understand all the inputs that we came up with to make these decisions, because this conversation is so good, and so detailed, that there's no way, without this too, I I feel like they can understand our conclusions.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and we can -- We can use the same tool, and make it available in that discussion as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Does North Carolina mimic the federal regulations, or can they set their own, because, if they can set their own, they can set it for access, and then the guys that are actually offshore fishing can keep those eleven-inch fish, and not have so many discards, and, if you're going to have discards inshore no matter what, then I don't have a problem with what North Carolina or South Carolina sets their state limit size at, and so maybe that might be part of the answer to the question, and just -- I don't know what North Carolina does or doesn't do, per se.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to let Trish explain that, and then I'm going to go back to my hands.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, we will mimic the federal water zone for the black sea bass. I mean, there is an -- I guess there is an option to do something different, but I think we would probably have long discussions, and probably throw it -- You know, discuss it with our commission, and so the short answer is we would go ahead and do what the feds do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I was going to ask a similar question to Charlie, because I'm struggling a little bit, and Charlie mentioned it with balancing access, but it almost kind of seems like we're -- Even if you put, you know, the size limit up, we're still dealing with the discards, and so it -- You know, aside from the size limit in state waters, it also seems -- Is there any discussion of a spawning closure similar, or is that going to also apply to North Carolina, and what does that potential spawning closure do? How does that back into this analysis?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It doesn't come into play, because the season would close before you got to the spawning closure, based on the -- Right now, because the fishing year wouldn't change, and so, based on when the fishing year starts for recreational, the spawning closure that we just passed was February and March, and so you don't even get that far. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: One additional thing, and this is something that states, you know, will control within their own state waters, but it's been brought up, in a couple of the previous presentations

that you've gotten, is that there is a potential difference in the discard mortality. One of the reasons why you all passed a circle hook measure in federal waters is because that would decrease hooking mortality related to fish, helping there to be better survival for discarded fish.

That is not necessarily in place in state waters, and a lot of these, especially when you get a small, you know, five-inch black sea bass caught on a J-hook, that is likely going to cause a lot more damage than a circle hook would be to a fourteen-inch black sea bass, and so there's going to be a difference in the mortality that you're seeing from fish when you're talking about small fish, with a different type of gear, inside of the state waters, versus those that are further offshore.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to Amy, and then I would like some sort of motion on this, and so, Amy, thoughts?

MS. DUKES: Thank you. Actually, I just wanted to answer Charlie's question from South Carolina's perspective, and so, in South Carolina, it would remain that you could keep seven black sea bass in state water, and the size limit would be mimicked as well, and so, right now, it's thirteen inches, and, if this council were to go to eleven, then it would be seven fish at eleven inches.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's because of their general assembly, and so can you explain that just a little bit more, give a little bit more information about why that's the case?

MS. DUKES: Certainly, and it's something that I've actually discussed during the state agency updates, and there was a regulation change last year, S219, that says that any snapper grouper species is not subject to a season in state waters, but it does follow the regulations with regards to size limits, unless the size -- It's actually based on the 2024 and 2025 rules and regs that was printed, and then it would stay in play unless the size limit became less restrictive, and so what we're talking about potentially here, with the change in size limit, would be less restrictive.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would someone like to make a motion? Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to make a motion to select, under Action 2, Alternative 3 as our preferred action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you including both actions, because he's typing it under the size limit. I'm just trying to make sure.

MS. DUKES: **If I can, Madam Chair, I would. I would like to do it in one motion, and so, under Action 2, the preferred alternative would be Alternative 3, the two-fish-per-person bag limit, and, under Action 3, it would be the preferred action Alternative 1, no action.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. **Let me read the motion. Select Alternative 3, which is two fish, under Action 2, the bag limit action, and Alternative 1, no action, under Action 3, the size limit action, as preferred.** All right, and so it's two fish at a thirteen-inch size limit. Okay. Under discussion. Well, first, do we have a second? Seconded by Gary. Under discussion. We've had a bunch of good discussion so far, and so Jimmy, Judy, Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I was just going to say, for when we send this out, it's helpful to have the projected closure dates for some of these decisions in there, so people understand why we're making these decisions. I mean, it's like -- Particularly as we discussed it, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. 10-4. Thank you. Great point. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I think it's a reasonable compromise, the motion, and I'll support it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Yes, and I support it, too. I believe it's a reasonable compromise, also.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more discussion? All right. Any objection to this motion? Okay, and so any abstentions, other than Charlie? All right. The motion carries with one abstention. All right. Let's take -- Can we take a ten-minute break, biological break, and we're near the end of the document, and so there's light at the end of the tunnel, but a bathroom break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Come on back to the table.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so the only items left regarding this amendment are the timing, just reminding you of what we're looking at as far as timing, and so, at this meeting, and it's still paused. I keep forgetting to do that. Thank you for the reminder. Thank you, and so you all have gone through and selected preferred alternatives, and the only thing left to do today would be a motion to approve this document for public hearings.

We would then conduct the public hearings in between now and December, and you all would have consideration of approval for formal review in December. That would kind of give the possibility for this, the actions within this amendment, to go into place in 2026, and so, with that, I will, I guess, turn it back to the chair, to see if there are any -- If there's any discussion on the timeline or anyone who wants to make a motion related to public hearings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. **No further discussion, from my point of view, and I would like to go ahead and see if you would entertain a motion to approve this amendment for public hearings, please.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MS. DUKES: It's a regulatory amendment. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have a motion by Amy, and seconded by Tom. Under Discussion. Does everybody understand the timeline here, and we've talked about pushing other things to the next amendment, in order to not slow this down. Okay. All right. Any more discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Before we sign off, I do want to make sure it's acknowledged -- Like there was a lot of praise from the council for the decision tool, and it is a wonderful tool, and that was not me. That was not council staff. That was Dominique Lazar and the Southeast Regional Office, and so, yes, absolutely, and they do a great job with that, and I wanted to make sure that credit was given in the appropriate place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Dominique. Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: I forget when we talk about this, now or during the workplan, but I might want to have a little bit of a discussion about what kind of public hearings. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MS. MARHEFKA: Is now okay?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I'm sorry, because some people aren't going to like what I have to say, but this is -- I think that the magnitude of this is fairly large, and I think the impacts are big, and I think it's complicated. I'm a person who really is a fan of, when it comes to public hearings, especially for things that have a large impact, that they should be in-person, with all respect to what is best for staff, and your time, and certainly it's not a hill I want to die on, but, if there's a potential to have in-person public hearings, that just would be my personal choice.

MS. MCCAWLEY: How many? I mean, one per state, and, I mean, what are you -- Can you elaborate a little bit more? So like, if you're thinking in-person, are you also thinking a webinar one, and so can you elaborate more?

MS. MARHEFKA: You put me on the spot. Yes, and, I mean, if you did one per state, and then still had -- But still had an option for like a webinar, and, I mean, it used to be we always used to do like two per state, you know, to cover things, but I recognize that times are different, and we don't need to necessarily do that, because we have webinars now, but, you know, one in northern South Carolina, one somewhere in the middle in North Carolina, and maybe even Florida and Georgia could be somewhere in the north Florida/south Georgia region, and then a webinar. Again, that's just my pie-in-the-sky idea. If someone is like that's just not practical, and we can't afford it, I'll shut up

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to staff first, and then I'll go to Dewey.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So I definitely hear the desire there, and I just wanted to lay out kind of the meetings that staff are going to be working on in between now and the December meeting, and so the SSC meeting will be occurring here in Charleston. The Snapper Grouper AP meeting will be happening in October as well, and then, in November, we also have the first set of the Lines of Communication meetings, and those will all -- Those will be in-person in Georgia, and so kind of what we have initially spit-balled as an idea, potentially, would be to have kind of a listening station format, in which staff may not be there in-person, and like I could be signed on and brought in via webinar, if there are council members in the states that would host these webinars.

I can provide you with a recorded presentation, and then be present virtually to address any questions, and, that way, you are there, if you want that physical presence for stakeholders to have someone to bring their comments to, and then that would be a way that they could do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: These would need to occur between this council meeting and the next council meeting, or were staff thinking that they would occur in early 2026?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It would be between this council meeting and the next council meeting, just to make sure this amendment is still on track for final approval in December.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Is it going to be a type of video presentation that you put out beforehand, like you all done before, and that -- To me, they are very informative, fifteen minutes long or something, like you all explaining -- Because I think a lot of people are able to watch that, and it can help them get an understanding, whether they agree or disagree, but to get an understanding, and it seems to be very helpful, being able to do that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and we can definitely do that. I absolutely have a preference to be able to do the recorded presentations, and make sure that the information that's being presented is the same everywhere, and we can do that in a similar format to what we did for scoping, where, when we send out the amendment, send out the materials, we also post the video, and that would be the same presentation that people would see when they come to the -- You know, if we do what I proposed, kind of those listening station meetings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, based on what you heard from staff, do you have thoughts about listening stations or a webinar or hybrid or in-person? Just more thoughts on this?

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I love the idea of this listening station, and staff not having to come, and that seems like a great compromise, but I don't want to speak for other council members, because that -- I'm curious what other people think, because I can't be at all of them, right, and so, for other states, what do other council members think? Maybe it's not that important for this one, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know either, and let's see what others think. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I like this idea of the hybrid approach, with the listening stations as well, and I just don't want then perhaps the momentum of this regulatory amendment to slow down because of in-person public hearings in each of the states. Perhaps, you know, as you indicated, the Snapper Grouper AP meeting is here, and could a public hearing be incorporated into that timeframe when they're here, from a South Carolina perspective? I'm just asking, and I'm not even sure if that's available, or I know it has happened in the past, but it's probably been quite some time since a public hearing was on top of an AP meeting.

MS. BROUWER: I think we've done that in the past. I don't see -- Right now, off the top of my head, that wouldn't be a problem. We would, you know, have to make sure the public understands that the public hearing is separate from the AP meeting, because we also have comment periods

for the advisory panel meeting itself, and so we would just have to be careful to make sure it's not confusing for stakeholders, but it's certainly something we can discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Trish, and then we can also think about it, and we could come back to this in Full Council, and do you want to do that, or do you want to go ahead, Trish? Either one.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just looking at -- So we're thinking, what, October, or is it November? I was just going to say I've got -- I've been tagged for federal jury duty from September 29 through October 17, and so federal, and so that's one problem I've got.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Lets go to Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I kind of like the idea of the listening stations, and similar, just because of what Mike has laid out. You know, we've got red drum stuff mixed in there, and I've got a board meeting, and so our time window gets whittled down, and, with Georgia being the first state in this for the Lines of Communication, I think that's really going to be difficult, with holidays and everything else, to coordinate something in-person, and so I kind of like the idea of at least seeing how all that runs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I'll be at that November Lines of Communication too, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Is there a process for people to submit written comments in connection with that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Then those written comments are addressed at one of the listening stations, or how do we respond to those?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So the written comments would be provided to you at the council meeting. They would be provided within the -- They're going to be available online, as they're submitted, but then we'll, you know, make sure we especially draw your attention to those in the briefing materials ahead of the council meeting, and so you're welcome to -- Like it's open format, and so you're welcome to view the comments as they come in during the comment period when that gets published, but we'll provide, you know, kind of this is the link, and here's a summary of the comments, and we'll do that at the December council meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I'll leave it to staff's discretion, and for us to think about it a little bit more and to come back to Full Council, but, from a standpoint of an in-person public hearing, it's more, in my opinion, prevalent to be doing that at least once in South Carolina and North Carolina, and perhaps with the listening stations in the other states.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Real quick, just putting it out there, it would help us a great deal if the state agencies were to provide a location, because, I mean, that's -- We're trying to make it as easy as we can on our staff, and so, if we can rely on you all providing the location, you know, we can make sure staff is ready to do the Q&A, and to provide the presentation and that sort of thing, but, if we have to go and find locations, that takes a little while .

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, between now and Full Council, think about this a little bit more, and, that way, we can be ready, thinking about how many in North Carolina and South Carolina, and just listening stations in the other two states, webinar, et cetera. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to express support for what Amy said, you know, a listening station in Georgia and Florida, because the magnitude of this is going to be very, very large in North and South Carolina, and I want to reiterate how big that's going to be, but also remember, I mean, this is just for the southeast section of North Carolina, and so, if we had one meeting somewhere in the southeast, I think it would be probably beneficial, whether it was Morehead or wherever, and so - - Wilmington or Morehead, and I think you're going to cover a lot of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We'll come back to this discussion in Full Council. All right, and so we don't think that we can do any other topics in our remaining time, and so I believe we're on a break until we start public comment this afternoon, and so this will give us time to let staff set up public comment, and public comment starts at 4:00.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on September 17, 2025.)

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the North Charleston Marriott, North Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, September 18, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: This morning, we only have a little bit of time left in Snapper Grouper this morning, and then we're going to move on to other committees, and so we are in Snapper Grouper Amendment 61, which is the evaluation of the fishery management unit, and so the plan would be to go through this, look at the topics for the fall AP meeting, if there's any other business, and then we're also going to go back to the MSE, to talk a little bit about how we can bring in some of those ideas from our innovation discussion yesterday morning into the MSE, and so we'll spend a little bit of time going back to the MSE, and so, with that, I think we are on Amendment 61, and I'm going to turn it over to John Hadley.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you, and good morning, everyone, and so, as mentioned, we're going to discuss Amendment 61, and this amendment looks at the sort of evaluation of species within the snapper grouper fishery management unit and whether or not some of those species need to be removed from federal conservation and management, and so what that really means, kind of at a very high level, could be removal from the FMP altogether, or potentially designated as ecosystem component species.

With that, just to kind of orient everyone on the, you know, what we'll go over in the document and the end decision point, the goal here is to go over some background information, remind everyone of the discussion in June, and there was some requested information, and so address those information requests, in regard to -- Particularly in regard to the states' ability to manage a species, once it's removed from federal conservation and management, and then, also, there were some questions regarding the ability to implement a permit requirement for ecosystem component species, and so we'll go over that.

There's some additional background information in here that we'll quickly go over regarding the council's previous -- The South Atlantic Council's previous actions in looking at removing species from the fishery management unit, or designating ecosystem component species, and there's a look, a little bit of a deeper dive, into what ecosystem component species means, kind of the definition of it, and then also how other councils have addressed ecosystem component species.

So, really, the goal of this discussion is to go over a table, at the very end, and come up with a bulleted list of what items that you would like -- What topics you would like to send out to scoping for this amendment, and, assuming the conversation goes well, that that would end with a motion of approval for to send the amendment out to scoping, and so any questions on that before I get underway?

All right. I will get going here, and so, you know, as a little bit of background information, and just kind of bringing everybody up to speed on where we stand on Amendment 61, this amendment -- In this amendment, the council, or the committee and council, has identified seventeen species within the snapper grouper fishery management unit for further investigation on whether or not these species need federal conservation and management.

I'll quickly go over the list of seventeen species, and I'll kind of refer to them as the seventeen, or the seventeen species, from here on out, but the council has identified misty grouper, margate, sailor's choice, tomtate, white grunt, bar jack, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, scup, whitebone porgy, banded rudderfish, blackfin snapper, cubera snapper, queen snapper, Atlantic spadefish, and sand tilefish, and so that's what comprises that list of seventeen species that you've identified for a more in-depth look at whether or not these need to remain in the fishery management unit for the snapper grouper fishery.

Another item of importance is that the composition, the overall composition, of the fishery management unit really may affect some of the council's other measures, either that you've hit pause on or you're actively developing, but, you know, the overall composition of the management unit may affect Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, which covers recreational permitting and an education requirement, the for-hire reporting improvement amendment, for the snapper grouper component of that, the unassessed species catch levels amendment, recreational aggregate bag limits, and then also the snapper grouper management strategy evaluation and long-term

management measures. Really, that composition of the FMU could affect, and plays into, sort of the affected environment, if you will, of those various actions.

Moving along, as a summary of the discussion in June, you -- Well, I'll take a step back. The information, a great deal of information, was compiled on each one of these species to start to evaluate whether these species are in need of federal conservation and management, and each one of you took an online survey, that sort of captured this information, to gather your feedback ahead of time, so we didn't have to go through that at the council table, and then that those -- The results of that were presented in aggregate at the June meeting.

The council decided that all seventeen of those species should be considered for either designation as ecosystem components or removal of the from the FMU through the amendment. The committee -- Several committee members noted that they do not want most of this group of species to be completely unregulated, but also recognized that the need for conservation and management of these species may not rise to the same levels as others within the fishery management unit.

Some council members noted that some state level regulations for these species, particularly in North Carolina and South Carolina, are currently dependent on federal regulations, and then there was some additional information requests regarding directing staff to investigate whether a federal permit could be required to commercially harvest ecosystem component, or unmanaged, species in federal waters, and the committee requested that the state agencies provide council members information about how removal of federal regulations for the seventeen species, evaluated for ecosystem component designation or removal, total removal, from the fishery management unit may affect the states' abilities to manage these species, should they decide to continue to do so, or want to continue to do so.

With that, I kind of went over the objectives for this meeting, but, again, we're going to go -- We're going to go through a bit of that information, address some of the information requests, and, you know, kind of be thinking, towards the end, what items do you want to send out for scoping, and so that's the list will build at the very end.

Looking at some information on the species being considered, if you look at Table 1, this includes all seventeen species being considered, as well as their sector ACLs, I should say, commercial and recreational ACLs, and then their total ACLs. Up top here, Atlantic spadefish and bar jack have their own separate annual catch limits. The other species lie within complexes within the snapper grouper fisheries.

Within this table, if it's a blue-shaded species, or sort of that peach-color-shaded species, that falls under the species that you're currently considering removing from the FMU, or adding as ecosystem component species, and the addition here are the gray species, and those are the species that will remain in the complex, and so, no, they're not currently being considered, but they were included for context on how those different complexes are made up and what they're comprised of

Moving down to Figure 1, this is sort of a visual representation of what's in Table 1, and so this is a -- These are various charts, looking at the different species within each complex, the deepwater complex, the other jacks complex, other snappers complex, and kind of how those species that are being considered for removal relate to the species that would remain.

Again, the species in gray would remain within the complex, and then the species that have some sort of color behind them would be the ones that would be removed, and so, for example, looking at the other snappers complex, if cubera snapper was removed from the FMU, or designated as an ecosystem component, the other snappers complex would be recalculated, and it would only include lane snapper and gray snapper, and so that's a little refresher on some of the species that were considered and some of the background information.

Now we'll jump into the some of the council's previous actions, and so, you know, this is not the first time the South Atlantic Council has taken action to remove species from the Snapper Grouper FMP or designate ecosystem component species. Through the Comprehensive Annual Catch Limit Amendment, and so Amendment 25 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, the council removed thirteen species from the FMP. The list is there, and I won't read it to you, and the council looked at different criteria for how they would set this up for which species would qualify for removal.

In the end, the council selected criteria that included species with 95 percent or greater landings from state waters, or species covered by the Florida marine life species rule, or if their species had no record landings at all, and that's sort of the measures that were that were evaluated and applied to the thirteen species you see above.

In this amendment, the council also designated six species as ecosystem components, and so they decided to keep them within the within the FMP, but sort of remove them from federal conservation and management, and, in doing so, the council had considered removing these species altogether, but changed course after receiving public comment and support of designating those species as ecosystem components, instead of removing them.

When the council considered how to, or which species would fall under ecosystem component, or would be designated ecosystem components, they looked at various landings categories and so less than or equal to 1,000 pounds, 2,500 pounds, 5,000 pounds or 10,000 pounds, sort of different bins, if you will, and species that met three of the National Standard 1 criteria for ecosystem component species at the time.

In the end, the council decided that it was preferable to select species that met three of the four NS 1 criteria for ecosystem component species, and you can see the six that were added to that list, or seven rather, and it's been revised since then, but so those are the species that met those criteria for ecosystem component, for an ecosystem component designation.

The council also looked at removing blue runner from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management plan in Amendment 27, and the council did so noting that the majority of landings of blue runner were in from waters off of Florida, and adequate management was already in place from the state of Florida.

The council -- When the council was considering removing blue runner, they considered different alternatives, including keeping blue runner in the in the fishery management plan, removing blue runner altogether, which was the council preferred, but they also looked at different measures, such as retaining blue runner in the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, but allowing commercial harvest and sale for vessels that also had other permits, such as the Spanish mackerel permit, and potentially retaining blue runner in the Snapper Grouper FMP, but exempting it from

the snapper grouper permit requirement, and so essentially the snapper grouper commercial permit requirements.

Finally, in Amendment 35, the council -- This is the most recent amendment that the council removed species from the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and, in doing so, the council removed black snapper, dog snapper, mahogany snapper, and schoolmaster from the FMP.

It was noticed that the four species, the harvest of the four species, was very low from federal waters and state waters, other than off the State of Florida. Also noted -- The council also noted that species could be, or already were, adequately managed by the State of Florida, and the stated objective of the action was to create consistent regulatory environment for subject species and ensure that only species requiring federal management are included in the Snapper Grouper FMP.

I'm going to run through, and this is addressing one of the information requests from June, and I'm going to run through this, and I'm going to take a pause for any questions. I also want to certainly allow the different state agency representatives to chime-in on any areas that I may have missed, or may not have been clear on, but what we're going to cover now are state regulations and the ability of states to manage species that are removed from federal management.

I'll start off, and, again, this is a request from the June meeting, and I want to thank all the state agency representatives for providing this information. We reached out to them and asked for information on how existing state authority may be impacted if a species is removed from federal management, and also how that authority may be impacted if species are designated as ecosystem components, and so they remain within the FMP, but some -- Well, management measures would be removed from them.

I'm going to start from north, going from north to south, starting with the State of North Carolina. Should the species be removed from federal management, it was noted that the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Director would lose proclamation authority provided by the North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission.

That allows for compliance with management of federal and interjurisdictional species, and so, should this happen, and if continued management of the species was desired, the commission, and the division, would then need to begin the rulemaking process to implement state management of those species completely removed from federal management. The rulemaking process takes approximately two years for a rule to become effective, and that timeline may be further extended if legislative review is required.

Staying with North Carolina, but moving over to the question of what would happen if a species is designated as ecosystem component, and whether or not that additional measures could be added, or could be included for that species, it's uncertain whether the director would have proclamation authority to implement additional regulations beyond what is federally required if the species remains within the federal FMP as an ecosystem component.

One way to address this would be that the Marine Fisheries Commission could bolster authority to amend the North Carolina fishery management plan for interjurisdictional fisheries to include additional management measures and articulate the scope of the director's proclamation authority.

Moving down to South Carolina, looking at the scenario if a species is removed from federal management, the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources does not have pre-existing authority to manage species completely removed from federal management, and so, if state management is desired for the species, SC DNR would need to coordinate efforts with members of the state's legislature to introduce a bill. That bill would include draft language to create fishing regulations, and, after introduced, it would proceed through committee reviews and discussions in both the House of Representatives and Senate. If favorably passed those two chambers, it would be sent to the governor's office for approval and signed into law.

Looking at ecosystem component designations, SC DNR does not have the ability to implement regulations for a species designated as an ecosystem component species, and so the rulemaking process previously outlined would apply to this scenario.

Moving south to Georgia, again looking at removal of the species from federal management, it would not affect the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' ability to manage those species. None of the seventeen proposed species are currently regulated in state waters, and Georgia does not necessarily adopt federal measures by proxy, and so there could be regulations that are more stringent than federal regulations, if there was a desire to do so. Looking at ecosystem component species designation, Georgia could implement regulations, if there was a desire to do so, and, again, the previously mentioned details would apply.

Last, but certainly not least, moving south to Florida, if a species is removed from federal management, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, FWC, has the authority to set regulations for species in adjacent federal waters of Florida in the absence of a federal fishery management plan, and this is outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act. FWC has exhibited this and set regulations for a number of species, including blackfin tuna, stone crab, permit, African pompano, tripletail, and many other marine life species.

Looking at if a species is designated as ecosystem component, if allowed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission has the ability to set more stringent regulations in adjacent federal waters of Florida in the absence of other applicable federal regulations, and so, with that, I want to take a pause. I'm happy to answer any questions, and I also welcome any clarifications from the state agencies on the state-specific regulations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. Just to add a little bit more to Florida, as was mentioned earlier in the document, if something is going to be removed from the fishery management unit, or from an FMP, then FWC can go ahead and start the rulemaking for state waters, federal waters, and get it ready, so it's like a seamless transition, and so that's how it had worked in the past to make sure that the species that were removed from council management were not without regulations for any period of time, and so just this is something we've done before. I'm looking at other states, to see if you want to clarify anything or if people have questions about what all the states could do. All right. I don't see any hands. Back to you, John.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. Now I'm going to switch gears a little bit and discuss ecosystem component species and what designation of that sort of entails. I'll start off with the federal definition of an ecosystem component species, and so they're defined as stocks that a council, or the Secretary, has determined do not require conservation and management, but desire to list in an FMP, in order to achieve management objectives.

You know, that conservation and management piece is important. You know, we can -- That's something that will come up over and over again in the council -- You know, questions that will be asked of the council as this amendment develops, but the whole concept here, if the council decides that, you know, these species do not necessarily need federal conservation management anymore, they can remain in the fishery management plan, in the fishery management unit, under the ecosystem component designation, but anything that could be sort of considered management would be removed from those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, John, does this mean that -- So, if something is designated as ecosystem component, is it still technically under federal management, meaning that, based on the way that the Magnuson is worded, a state agency could only set restrictions in state waters, and they would not be allowed to extend their regulations into federal waters, because it's still sort of under federal management, and that's my confusion.

MR. HADLEY: That's a great question. I may ask for some clarification from the agency on that. I'm personally a little unclear on whether or not that could take place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That is a good question, and so a state -- The Magnuson Act allows -- So let me back up. EC species would still be in the FMP, and it would depend whether there were any regulations at all that the council would want implemented for those EC species, and then the Magnuson Act says that a state may regulate a fishing vessel, for example, in federal waters if the vessel is registered to your state and there is no fishery management plan or other applicable federal regulations for that fishery, or the state's laws and regulations are consistent with the fishery management plan and the applicable federal fishing regulations.

So I would think that, even if there were some regulations potentially that were put in for an EC species, if it was consistent, and we would have to determine what is consistent, with the state's regulations, then I think you could regulate your fishing vessel, you know, your state-registered fishing vessels, in federal waters, and we can look into this further, but I think there's -- You know, there's two approaches. Either there's no regulations, and you can go ahead and regulate, for example, Florida vessels in federal waters, or there are some regulations, or maybe even not some regulations, but they're still in the FMP, and you could still regulate your fishing vessels, and so I think it's possible, yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. All right. Back to you, John. Wait. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: When Monica says a state-registered vessel, does that mean you have a commercial -- You have a -- Your vessel is documented, or not documented, or state registered, where you have a state commercial fishing license from that state?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought it --

MR. HEMILRIGHT: There's two different things there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and, well, I think there's actually another piece of the Magnuson that says something about if you're going to land in that state, but I'm going to turn it to Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, Dewey, the act says the fishing vessel is registered under the laws of that state, and so, essentially, what it means is, off North Carolina, if these -- You know, depending on the regulations, whether they were consistent or not or whatever, the state could regulate North-Carolina-registered vessels in federal waters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and isn't it a vessel registration for that state, and not necessarily a commercial permit for that state, but a vessel registration in that particular state, or I thought that, in a different part of the Magnuson, it said that or you intend to land in that particular state.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I'll look into that part further.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I'm recalling the pompano lawsuit. All right. Dewey, you good?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Yes.

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

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so I'll move -- Moving on to how a council can designate species as ecosystem components, it's specified in the National Standard general guidelines that councils may choose to identify stocks within their FMPs as ecosystem component species. If a council determines that the stocks do not require conservation and management, and again that's coming up, and I did want to highlight that, based on the considerations and factors in paragraph (c)(1), which you will -- You know, I can jump to that, and it's in an appendix, but you've already started that process.

Ecosystem component species can be identified at the species or stock level and may be grouped into complexes, and I did want to highlight that as well, because that came up in the discussion in June, and so, consistent with National Standard Guideline 9, and other sections of the MSA, management measures can be adapted, or adopted rather, in order to collect, for example, data on ecosystem component species, minimize bycatch or bycatch mortality of ecosystem component species, protect the associated role of that species in the ecosystem, and/or address other ecosystem issues.

That last little bit there, you know, that's something to think about, in that the council could start building rationale for why you may want to designate one species or another potentially complex species as ecosystem components, sort of what would be the goal of that, and could it maybe fall under some of those items there.

Moving down, I'm going to provide a few examples of ecosystem component species and associated measures from this council, as well as other councils. I will say many of the examples from other councils are really geared towards forage species, protecting forage species, in that role for those councils' managed species, but I'll start with the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

The Mid-Atlantic completed an unmanaged forage omnibus amendment that designated sixteen species, or species groups, as ecosystem component species, and the measures that were included and applied to those ecosystem component species include an aggregate possession limit, and so a 1,700-pound possession limit for all ecosystem component species combined, a permit requirement, where, in order to harvest, commercially harvest, those species, that all commercial vessels or operators would need to be issued a permit from the National Marine Fisheries Service.

I kind of want to use this as a case study, and maybe come back to it, because it comes back to the permit discussion, and it's sort of a blanket permit requirement, and so there's several different permit options there that would comply, and could comply, with this ecosystem component designation.

There are also transit provisions and record keeping and reporting requirements related to those vessels or operators, vessel operators or seafood dealers, landing and selling the designated ecosystem component species, and so that was the Mid-Atlantic.

Moving over to the Pacific Fishery Management Council, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, through their Comprehensive Ecosystem Based Amendment 1, designated forage species, several forage species, as ecosystem components, and they applied general -- The general measures included a retention limit, where there was a prohibition on landing just ecosystem component species without any other species onboard. There was a trip limit implemented of ten metric tons, an annual limit, where a vessel -- An annual vessel limit of thirty metric tons and a processing limitation.

Additionally, there were gear-specific measures that were implemented, and so, in this case, trawl-specific measures, where there was a trip limit implemented of one metric ton, for all ecosystem species combined, and an annual limit of forty metric tons.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council classified several squid species as ecosystem components within their fishery management -- Several of their fishery management plans, and, in doing so, they added additional measures that included a recordkeeping and reporting requirement, and so a recordkeeping and reporting requirement related to catching, discarding, or production of the ecosystem component squid species, and then a retention limit, where the maximum retainable limit of the ecosystem component squid species was not to exceed 20 percent of total landings.

Then, last, but certainly not least, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, as mentioned before, has designated several species as ecosystem components within the Snapper Grouper FMP, and, really, there are no associated regulations with these species in the ecosystem component species listing, but the listing does prioritize the species for continued data collection, and it may help with future ecosystem modeling or ecosystem-based fishery management efforts.

From here, I'm going to provide one more bit of information, and then we'll jump into the committee action, and this relates to the permit requirement and how a commercial permit may apply, or a general permit may apply, to ecosystem component species or unmanaged species, and so, at the June meeting, the committee indicated an interest in determining whether a federal permit could be required to commercially harvest ecosystem component or unmanaged species from federal waters.

You know, addressing that latter point first, if a species is completely removed from a federal fishery management plan, a federal permit cannot be considered, since it's no longer under federal management at all, and so, you know, the permit requirement couldn't apply in that scenario. It's totally removed from the fishery management plan.

If it is kept in the fishery management plan, but included as an ecosystem component species, or designated as an ecosystem component species, again, you have -- In that case, the council would have determined that this species is no longer in need of conservation and management. However, the council could develop -- With detailed rationale, the council could develop a permit requirement, and this would be a sort of a general permit requirement, since the National Standard Guidelines mentions that councils can adopt measures aimed at data collection.

Efforts to gather data and monitor landings are certainly enhanced by a permit requirement, and a lot of those reporting requirements are tied to a permit. Thus, it appears that a permit requirement may be an appropriate measure for ecosystem component species.

In the snapper grouper fishery, sort of a mitigating factor is the limited entry nature of the commercial permit for snapper grouper, and so, if the council really wanted to go down the path of implementing a permit requirement in relation to ecosystem component species, you may need to look at having a broader permit requirement, and so, thereby, you know, addressing that data collection component of it, but perhaps not requiring a limited entry permit, and so, in that scenario, you know, I'll give an example.

You could look at the three major finfish FMPs. Any one of those permits could perhaps apply to these ecosystem component species, since there are open access permits included in some of your other FMPs, and so, with that, I'll pause for a second, to ask if there are any clarifying questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I have some questions too, but Monica has her hand up.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: John, for the Mid-Atlantic, on their forage species FMP, you have listed, for a permit requirement, that all commercial vessels and operators that catch or possess EC species be issued a commercial vessel and operator permit from the Fisheries Service, and so they didn't specify a new permit, and it was like, if you have a commercial permit, any kind of commercial permit from the Fisheries Service, you can possess and harvest these species?

MR. HADLEY: My understanding is yes, from what I've read, and that is a general commercial permit requirement, and so it's not specific to one FMP. It could be under any of the FMPs, or, well, essentially any commercial permit issued by the agency, really.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: My other question is I was just reminded about the report that we looked at at the June meeting that came from the Mid-Atlantic, this really nice report that was for all -- It looks like it's an annual report on unmanaged commercial landings, and so it gets into, you know, what were the top species, with like the highest landings, kind of what were the trends over time, and there's a nice table indicating -- Summing that, and then, by species, how much landings there

were, and so it's almost kind of like a tracking format to look at everything that's kind of trending within the Mid-Atlantic that's being harvested commercially.

I also think about, you know, yesterday when we were in the groups, talking about innovation, we were talking about that maybe there's some species that either are in an FMP, or not in an FMP, and I think Charlie brought it up, that maybe commercial harvest could, or would, start on these other species, and I know people have concerns about that.

I guess I was just wondering, in thinking about the permit requirement, and part of, to me, the permit requirement is you're going to continue getting this data, but maybe there's a way that, in the South Atlantic, we could get one of these reports for these unmanaged commercial species, and so I guess I'm just trying to put out there that how can we get a report like this, that tells us some of the same information, because then we can track it, and some of the concerns that I think some of us had wouldn't be concerns anymore, because we're annually tracking it. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and that's the report I used to sort of point out that we're seeing more red porgy up there, right, and so there's multiple uses, right, and not just sort of what these species we already know are out there, and we can also see changes from species from other areas. I think the permit -- I love the idea of keeping ecosystem, but you can harvest them if you have any permit, because that also speaks to our portfolio fishing concept, and so it gets at many things.

It allows us to getting the report -- The permit also means that I assume you're reporting somewhere. All commercial permits report somewhere, and so you are then getting the data about the species they're catching, because those permits is -- Well, I guess my question is so, if I only report on the coastal, the vessel logbook for snapper grouper, and if those species aren't on there anymore, and so that's the question.

Would the species that become ecosystem components remain on the logbook? Chip is nodding affirmatively. Now he's changing his mind, and so that would be a question, right? If we remove species into the ecosystem component, will they stay on the -- I call it the snapper grouper logbook, but that's not technically the right name for it. It's coastal something, and shoot. I had one more thing.

At some point, I'm just curious, and like, if some council, ten or fifteen years down the road, noticed that a fishery was developing for something we took out, like scup, nothing precludes it from then saying we're going to have a management plan for the species, right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it just needs to meet the criteria, but, yes, you can bring it back, I think, as a fishery develops, but I think that comes back to why I would love to have this report, because then we can see not only is the fishery developing, but was this just like a one-time blip, like some commercial fisherman got on a whole bunch of species X, versus there's like a trend upward of certain species being harvested commercially that we might want to consider bringing into federal management, or asking a state to manage, et cetera, because I feel like there's two components here.

Just because you remove it from federal management -- You're hearing about how some states have the ability to then manage in state and federal waters, which is what we've definitely done in Florida, and so, when John is reading the various language, I guess I would say that -- You know,

it says not in need of conservation and management, and I would just harp on not in need of federal conservation and management, because a state could extend their regulations into federal waters, and Florida has definitely done that for a number of species.

I mean, think stone crab, and both councils had a very robust FMP for stone crab, and then, ultimately, it was removed, and we extended the regulations in state and federal waters. You did hear, from Monica, that there would be some limitations on the vessels that are fishing on those particular species, what the state could regulate. That vessel would have to be registered in your state, or that vessel is intending to land in your state, but I come back to I really wish that we could ask that we could have one of these reports every year, because I think that that helps our comfort level, if we are going to remove these species. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, and I'm happy to like -- I don't know, and is it a letter, or is it a motion? I'm happy to do that, because I agree with you. I would just like to make the point that I think that some sort of permit requirement for these species in the report go hand-in-hand. I don't think you can have one or the other, but, if staff wants to sort of tell us what you think, and is this the moment to say we want this report, or should we bring that up later, but I'm happy to take whatever action needs to be taken.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, John.

MR. HADLEY: So, kind of conferring with others here, I think that that's something we could certainly do, as staff, and it would be helpful to have a motion, just so it's captured adequately, but, yes, and that's something in, you know, timing, and it sounds like an annual report, and, you know, that sort of feedback would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, would you like to make that motion?

MS. MARHEFKA: Sure. **I move that we request to receive an annual report of -- Was it unmanaged species? Of unmanaged species, and, in parentheses, see the Mid-Atlantic Council's report, annually from this point forward.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Seconded by Jimmy, and under discussion. Jimmy, and then Tom.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Kerry, for digging into this a little bit further, because there are species that we're looking at that concern me, that I would like to know, you know, what's going to happen in the future, and requiring a commercial permit, which requires reporting, and then we can get this information, and, I mean, like banded rudderfish is something that pops first in my mind, and, you know, you can really catch a lot of them, and so I think we're heading down the right way with that.

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

MR. ROLLER: So just some clarification here. I assume this motion is going to be in regards for fish that are ecosystem component species, or no?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, right now, it would just be -- So, if you look at the Mid-Atlantic report, it's for anything that's unmanaged. I don't know if the Mid-Atlantic classifies their ecosystem

component as unmanaged, and so Dewey is saying no, and it's just for species that have no -- I guess they're not in a federal FMP, and so you're just tracking them, and so, in other words, if these seventeen species came out of the fishery management unit, then they would go on this list, and be tracked in this report, because that would meet the definition of unmanaged.

MR. ROLLER: Okay, and so this motion is in regards to these seventeen fish, just to be clear, or is it anything co-occurring within our -- That's what I'm trying to understand, like what would be included on this thing, and what is the -- I'm going to need clarification on this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so a couple of things. We haven't made the decisions about the seventeen species, and so, since we don't know what our decisions are yet, we can't say. If they are completely removed from the fishery management unit, and then the states are managing, then, yes, they would be included in this report, because they would be considered unmanaged federal species. Does that help?

MR. ROLLER: That does clarify it for me. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going back to my list of names. Next, I had Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I just need some more clarification. I mean, I'm all good for always collecting more information to help us, and I'm sorry. If I saw the Mid-Atlantic report, I don't remember it, but okay. I was just kind of wondering, you know, what's the data we're looking at? Are we looking at just commercial landings? Are we looking at recreational landings? Is there abundance data? I was just wondering, because I was just sort of thinking, at least with North Carolina, and North Carolina's at least trip ticket program, that we have a lot of unclassified groups in our codes, like, you know, of porgy and snapper.

We actually have something that we call a Heinz 57, which is grunts and jolts, and, anyway, I just -- I guess I was starting to get into the details, which maybe I don't need to do, but I just -- Is there data out there to collect, I guess? How much data is out there to collect?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and Kerry is going to send it to you. Okay. John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: You should have all just received the report again. It clearly defines exactly what it includes and the data that it uses. In the context of this, and so I'm quoting, but, in the context of this report, unmanaged landings refer to landings only in locations where the species is not managed at the state or federal level with a possession limit, size limit, seasonal closure, and/or limited access, and so I would say with -- In the case of their ecosystem species, there's a possession limit, and they're probably not included in here, based on my read.

Spanish mackerel off of New Jersey would not be included, because they're covered under our jurisdiction, even though that is off of New Jersey. They say, for example, the white perch landings in this report are only from locations where white perch are not managed. Some states have white perch management regulations, and some states don't, and then they summarize the various filters, which are used to exclude landing in locations where each species are landed, and so landings of species by the Mid-Atlantic, New England, South Atlantic Councils, ASMFC, and HMS are filtered out, and the data are from the Catch Accounting and Monitoring System.

It includes data from state-only permitted dealers in Maine through North Carolina, as well as all dealers and vessels with commercial permits from GARFO, regardless of the location of landings, and so a GARFO-permitted guy who caught let's say a -- Well, a red porgy outside of our jurisdiction, or maybe who caught a ribbonfish off of North Carolina, would be reporting that, you know, and so yes, and then somebody who caught a red porgy in New Jersey, in state waters, or state-reported, or had a GARFO permit, that is showing up in there, and so, there's some, you know, fairly unusual species in here.

You know, things like ribbonfish show up a lot, sugar kelp, john dories, but then there's the things that show up, and potentially increasing, are some of our species, like Kerry pointed out, with the red porgy, groupers, grouper species, and knobbed porgy showed up quite often, surprisingly enough, but there's mantis shrimps and conger eels, and so there's a lot of things, but it does seem like they're just trying to capture the things that are being landed by fishermen covered under their permits and folks in their jurisdiction that aren't otherwise managed by anything else.

The whole intent is just to see is there -- Are there developing issues within the region that are happening, and it's interesting, because it comments on -- They look at like a four or five-year window of what's on the top, and it seems like it shifts from year to year, because, you know, things are like popping up, but they're not making a five-year consistency, although some of the snappers and groupers are some of the ones that are showing up year after year, and hitting that five-year consistent window, and so you can look at that, but I think this answers most of your questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so I guess I would have another question. I guess we could ask for it to be whatever we want, meaning it's not covering -- It sounds like, back to Tom's question, if the seventeen species come out, and they get state managed, they wouldn't be covered in this report, because they have state management, but, since this is our report, that we're asking to be prepared, I think we could ask for the seventeen species, if they get state management, that we still want to look at some of these landings. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I also mentioned that it's commercial only, and it's not recreational, but I would consider that would be sort of separate, or a companion, because you would want to see the state landings, I think, of the things covered by ecosystem component species, because I believe that's something else the, you know, Mid-Atlantic readily looks at with the ecosystem component units that they have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, but, if you completely took it out of the fishery management unit, and one of those conditions of taking it out was that the states are going to manage, then you could still say we now want to track these species that we removed, even though we've asked the states to manage them. Okay. I've got a bunch of other hands. Sonny, then Monica, then John Hadley, Trish, and Amy.

MR. GWIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to -- John hit it pretty good on there, hit the nail on the head on that, but, also, it's a great tool in the toolbox. You know, you see all these unmanaged species, and you get a snapshot of what's going on, and so it helps out for the future and what's going on in the ocean.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Sonny. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I encourage you, when you see this amendment again at the next meeting, and even your discussions around here, and it sounds like you're going toward the direction that I'm going to suggest that you think about, and that is what are your ecosystem management objectives, and so, when the National Standard Guidelines talk about ecosystem component species, they obviously say, well, you've determined they don't need conservation and management, but then you want to keep them in the FMP, as ecosystem component species, to, quote, achieve ecosystem management objectives.

I think it would help you all, as you're further refining this, to what are your, you know, ecosystem component management objectives, and what are your objectives for these kind of species, and I think, if you were able to define those, or, you know, have some resolution of them, I think it would probably help you going forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I guess one of my questions is, if it's ecosystem component, and maybe this is a council discussion, you know, that would occur at a future meeting, then they're removed from that quota from that complex, I believe. Monica is nodding yes, and then they're removed, because, when we're saying their ecosystem component, we're basically just tracking them for other purposes, but they're not in a quota, or a complex quota, anymore, like those pie charts we saw earlier. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Right, and the guidelines talk about maybe you want to -- You've talked about collecting data, and maybe it's to minimize bycatch, or protect the associated role of EC species in the ecosystem, which is what I see some of these examples that John gave to you for prey species or forage species, or to address other kinds of ecosystem issues, and so I think it's pretty broad in what you consider to be your objective, or an ecosystem issue, but it might be helpful, going forward, to kind of have some goal posts, a little bit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that sounds good, and so, Kerry, was it to that point, and then, also, I'm wondering -- **On this motion here, I'm wondering if it needs to say unmanaged species and ecosystem component species, and so just putting that out there, because we don't** -- We don't know what we're going to do here with these species in this amendment, and so, Kerry, to that point, and then I'm going to go back to my list of names.

MS. MARHEFKA: **Just, as a motion maker, I support that change, and I guess, Monica, you just said about collecting data.** In my mind, the data is already being collected. It's just a matter of getting a report on it. In my mind, when I made this motion, it wasn't asking for anything extra. As I said, it's already on the logbooks. All we want is a report on what's already being collected.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's a great point.

MR. HADLEY: I just had a quick clarifying point. I would think that this would cover the EEZ, and so federal waters, and that would help kind of filter which species would sort of make the report, and wouldn't make the report, and I didn't know if that's the committee's intent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: People are -- Just to put on the record what's happening, people are nodding and saying that they were hoping it was state waters as well, and so it sounds like they're not intending that it's only federal waters. Okay. All right. Amy, over to you.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and Kerry kind of got to my point, which was, if you have a federal logbook, and you are reporting -- You're reporting all species, and that is going to be the same at the dealer level for the trip tickets and things, and so that's why I was going to support state waters.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Is it possible to have this state by state, and my reason for asking that is, I mean, stuff -- The environment changes, the fishery changes, and all these other things, and I don't -- I just think we need to get a clear and accurate snapshot of what continues to go on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I love that, but you might have some confidentiality issues when you start breaking it down further, and so I think that we could provide that type of direction, but just know that some of these species might only be landed, you know, one dealer, one fisherman, off of one state, and so that's why I think that some of these are lumped together, is because of confidentiality.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I hear that all the time, and that's fine. I don't want nothing confidential to upset the apple cart, and that would be great. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: One way around that, if it does become something that is a real impediment, is we could provide something that's just like the top species by state. I think that would be okay, if we're not actually giving specifics. That may work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're putting that direction to staff for both of those things up there. All right. Any more discussion on this motion about receiving this report annually? All right. **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.**

Then we need to dive back into the document here. Remember what we're doing today, and it's not like we need to figure out exactly which path we're going. We're trying to make sure everything is in this document, and clear, so that it can go out to scoping, and so just keep that in mind as we're looking through here.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and so now we'll move into the committee action, and I'll briefly go over this table. Forgive me. It split up a little bit, and I'll hopefully try to put it all on one page with the formatting. Got to love it. Anyway, and so, the committee action here, the idea is to take some of this information, bring it all together, and we're going to go, you know, briefly through a list of potential measures.

At the end of this discussion, the idea is to kind of bullet point out which one of these measures you want to include in the amendment, keep in the amendment for scoping, and so I'll briefly go over those, and a lot of these come from either the council's previous discussion, or perhaps some of the other actions of other councils in relation to ecosystem component species, and so, you know, certainly there will be a no action measure. That's always an option for the council to select.

Another potential measure would be removing the species from the snapper grouper fishery management unit altogether, and so sort of removing it from the FMP, total removal from federal management, and removal from the FMP altogether. Also, the council could designate these species as ecosystem components, and there are several other measures within that that would fall under this ecosystem component designation, and so you could look at do not implement possession limits, or other measures, and so just a simple ecosystem component designation. This is similar to what is currently in place for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and those five species that are in there right now.

Additionally, you can implement an aggregate trip limit. You know, this is, again, a measure that other councils have selected in relation to some of those forage species, but, again, a lot of these -  
- Any sort of aggregate limit would need to be fairly high since, again, you know, if you decided that these species are ecosystem components, and they don't need conservation and management, you would be looking at a fairly high trip or possession limit.

Under the ecosystem component designation, you can implement a reporting requirement, and also implement a permit requirement, and, last, but not least, you know, we certainly welcome any other measures you would want to put in this amendment and send out for scoping, and so, with that, you know, I put a placeholder down here. The idea is to build up this list of measures to include for scoping, and then approve the amendment for scoping, and there's a draft motion for you there at the very end.

MS. MCCAWLEY: First off, I think we want all of those things scoped, but I'll look to the committee, and, just so I understand, when we're picking these different things, could you pick some of the seventeen species to do one thing with and other species to do something else with? We're not saying that all seventeen have to go in the same category, and is that possible, to like mix and match here?

MR. HADLEY: Absolutely. Absolutely. The council could say, you know, we want X species to be totally removed from the FMP, and we're going to keep the other sixteen in the FMP, but designate them as ecosystem components, and so that could be -- A sort of mix-and-match option is certainly available.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Could you try to make that clear during scoping, if the public is asking questions about it, that it's not like they have to choose the same thing for all seventeen species? Okay. Anything -- Any other components? I thought I saw a hand go up for scoping. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Maybe John can talk a little bit more through this, and I'm seeing 3d as problematic, right, and so we're saying implement a new permit requirement. I think maintaining a permit requirement might be an issue, but implementing a new permit requirement seems to be very overly burdensome, and contrary to our deregulatory mandates.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think I'm looking at John. I think we can change that to "retain". I think that was our intent, but let me look around the table here. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, to that, I agree with that, and, to that, I have some questions about 3c, in the same vein.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, just that, again, implementing -- I don't see us -- Retaining whatever reporting requirements are already in place, and then I am curious about -- In the comments, it goes on to discuss the discard logbook, and not the overall collection of catch, and so I was trying to understand why that was isolated in the comment, and sort of how the discard portion would play into this. If someone just has permit -- Right now, the way I understand the discard logbooks work for the snapper grouper fishery is like 20 percent are chosen however many years, or every year, but --

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

MS. MARHEFKA: Right. Correct. I do believe it's not great, but would the idea be that, if you had any kind of permit -- If we allowed anyone with any permit to fish on these ecosystem species, like we just discussed, then would they have to be added to the pool from which the discard logbook -- It just gets very complicated for me, and I think just maintain whatever requirements we already have would be more appropriate.

MR. HADLEY: So, in relation to that, I think "retain" -- We can certainly change that wording when this goes out to scoping. I think, in relation to the discard logbook, it depends on the permit specifically, what permit would fall under that. As mentioned, and, you know, this can be a discussion at a future meeting, but the limited entry nature of the snapper grouper permit is fairly narrow compared to say the dolphin wahoo commercial permit, which is open access.

There may be different requirements, depending on what permit the committee and the council specify may be applicable to these ecosystem component species, and sort of the council's ability to require just the commercial snapper grouper permit, which is a little bit more narrow, kind of in the conservation and management realm, whereas, if conservation and management is removed from the species, then you may need to broaden that permit requirement, if that makes sense, but point taken, and I understand, if it's sent out to scoping, to look -- You know, it seems like the intent here is to keep the existing requirements.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're fixing that up. I saw a number of hands. I have Trish, then Dewey, then Amy.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just looking at through this and thinking about the 3b in our discussion of the aggregate stuff the other day. I don't know, and would this be a place -- Do you want -- I just wanted to throw out -- Would a twenty-fish aggregate for all the species we're discussing be appropriate, because, just looking at the aggregate paper, the majority of those are in the twenty-fish aggregate, and so I didn't know if that would be one to throw out for scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess I would look to John Hadley. Do we need to get that specific, or, as you explained, the aggregates -- Are you going to explain about the existing twenty-fish aggregate?

MR. HADLEY: I think we could explain that, and then, at this point, I think the exact specification of how restrictive an aggregate could be needs a little bit more feedback, and, you know, we will

provide that to the council, and so, from a scoping perspective, I think it would be -- It would be scoped at a higher level, and say some sort of retention limit would be implemented, you know, a very nonspecific measure, such as a retention limit on these ecosystem component species, if that's okay with the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Back to the list. Dewey, you're next.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: We're focusing on here on commercial landings, and why are we asking the same of what the recs are catching, or what shows up or doesn't show up, when we look at this, or is this oriented just to commercial? I mean, these fish are caught by both, probably, and I'm just wondering if it shows up, or how it shows up, and we see how it shows up a little bit here in the commercial, and I'm just curious about is there anything out there to show what, you know, both sectors are catching.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, MRIP, and we know the problems with that, and I would assume that these are rare-event species, and I think -- So I know you weren't at the last meeting. I think that we looked at all this, and so we all took a survey, and we looked at the existing MRIP landings for all these different species before making some decisions about which species to include in this document, and so we can probably get you access to that, but it's MRIP.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I understand that, and we can put like five asterisks by that, and stuff, and I just -- I just hadn't seen that, or done my homework, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just got a little confused, in my head, when we were having the conversation, and going back to the continue the reporting requirements, and continue the permit requirements, and those are going to be for all Fisheries Service permits, and is that correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we need to figure that out right now, and so just I think that part of that could be debated. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. and Trish kind of brought up what I was going to get to, and I'm going to rehash some of it, because I was having a conversation with Dewey here, and I missed a little bit of the conversation, but, you know, I look at I look at 3b, and, you know, we had talked about this a little bit. I guess, while we don't need to be prescriptive here, I think we need to have some idea of what can be allowed under an ecosystem component species, right, because, yes, it can be large, and not very restrictive, and all the examples we have from the other councils tend to be pretty large, more industrial, or potentially industrial, targeted species, right, and so you have these really, really broad things.

I mean, if they're not -- You know, if they're not in need of conservation and management, does that mean we can only do like a 250-pound recreational limit? Can we do a ten or twenty-fish aggregate, because, you know, most of our conversations here regarding the snapper grouper complex are to look at it holistically, and I have a lot of concern, because, when I look at the past decisions by this council to remove fish from the FMU, I can look at about every single one of those fish and say I understand why you did that, and I understand why you did that.

This complex, I struggle with most of them, just because they are commonly caught, and they are commonly retained, and I am always going to be concerned if people are going to be able to target coexisting species within in this complex, and potentially raising discards of other species, and so I guess I'm just curious how restrictive we can be on an aggregate trip limit, particularly recreational, and I do agree with Dewey here. I think, if we're going to be tracking landings, we do need to see the recreational side of it as well, even if it's 99 percent PSEs, with five asterisks behind it.

MR. HADLEY: Those are great points, and that's You know, I've kind of noted it as additional information to bring back to the committee, because -- You know, this is a little bit of my thought pattern, and how I understand it in my mind, you know, that, what applies as conservation and management, there's a little bit of interpretation there, and so a little bit of a gray area. You know, is it twenty fish is conservation and management, and twenty-one fish is not? I don't know. That's an example, but, you know, I think that's the sort of guidance we can provide to the committee, as this as this develops, on, you know, what the line on what can be -- What is considered conservation and management and then, you know, what is still a possession limit of some sort that falls under ecosystem component.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got lots of hands going up. To that point, Tom, and then Andy, then Monica.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you, and I think that's the sort of clarification I'm going to need for this, and I think that would be important, to get some of that at scoping, and kind of on that -- Just to reiterate this, is I understand that like Florida has more capabilities, and also, you know, existing mechanisms, in order to have some sort of management for managed species, because I'm just going to say these are common species, and some of them are common species in North Carolina, and it will be an extraordinary lift for us to put regulations on any single one of these. I mean, I've dealt personally with doing this for one unregulated species in North Carolina, and I'm currently trying to do it with another, and it has been very, very, very difficult, even for popular targeted species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I hear you. I just think that this is important, to get some of these species out of the main fishery management unit. We're never going to have a stock assessment on it. Landings, MRIP landings, weather, and all the warts on MRIP landings, indicate that these landings are like very, very low, and almost nil, and so I just -- I feel like that's the broader committee discussion about this document, is how to how to do it, and what to do here. Okay. I'm going to go back to my list of hands. I've got Andy, Monica, Charlie, Trish.

MR. STRELCHECK: Some really good points. Certainly it comes down to what we view as in need of conservation and management. I think, Tom, to your point, there's no decisions that have been made about whether we're removing all seventeen of these species, or some subset of those, right, and I think that's going to be a key discussion and consideration.

What I would be concerned with is removing species that could be targeted, or are commonly caught with other co-occurring species, right, and so trying to figure out that balance and determining kind of species, one, that we're just not going to have the science to support management, and we're not going to have the monitoring to support management, but also

determining where we have the need to still conserve some of these species, because they co-occur with other important snapper grouper species in the complex, is going to be, I think, an important conversation.

I've already been discussing it with my team, and feel like there are some species we've identified in the subset of seventeen that probably shouldn't be pulled out of the FMP, but, you know, we need to, I think, go out to scoping, and get some more input from stakeholders, and then decide, based on the regulatory environment and other factors, what species would get pulled out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, Tom, I mean, there's guidance on what -- The kinds of things you should consider for determining whether a species is in need of conservation and management, and that's in the National Standard Guidelines, and John has included that as an Appendix 1, the evaluation criteria. It's not -- You can consider other things, but there are at least ten factors that you ought to go through for each species, to determine whether you think it's appropriate for conservation and management, and so I think that will help your decisions as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Monica. Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm just sitting here listening to this, and letting the wheels spin, and, if we were to set up another aggregate, you know, trip limit, whether it be high, whether it be low, more permitting, or it fits in other permitting, I think we should be cognizant that we don't want the cure to be worse than the sickness, and, you know, we know what we've got now, and it's semi-working. Can it be worked better? Sure. Do we need to take some stuff out and scoping? Sure, but this is getting really complicated, more complicated than what we've already got.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I appreciate that. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just kind of going to add to what had been said before, by Tom and Andy, that I'm all for leaving all the species in for this, for scoping, to hear what the public has to say. There's several species that North Carolina is concerned about. I had a discussion, with several DMF staff, about several species, and so we'll hit that when we get results from scoping, but I just -- I'm kind of wondering if we're maybe fixing something that's not necessarily broke, but, anyway, thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Charlie, thank you for that. You know, I think you well articulated what I've been thinking here, and is my concern here, is it's not perfect, but what we have right now isn't too broken, and it's getting more and more complicated by the minute, and, yes, I agree with you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we have a good list here of items for scoping. Anything else that we need to add? Okay. Would someone like to make this draft motion here to approve this Amendment 61 for scoping? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: **I move to approve Snapper Grouper Amendment 61 for scoping.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Amy. Any more discussion on this? All right.

MR. HADLEY: Thank you for that, and, you know, through this discussion, I've been taking notes on items that we need to bring back for further discussion, and, you know, I think, for the December meeting, you'll have scoping comments, and so you'll have public feedback, and you'll have AP comments on this, and so I've kind of made a note to myself to bring back the discussion on which species you want to keep in the amendment, and which species you may not, if that's kind of the intent, because it seems like that's the direction that the discussion is going, and if that's part of the further development of this amendment.

For clarification, this amendment is going to go out for scoping. You've approved it for scoping. It's also going to get -- You're going to get feedback from your advisory panel on it, and so, in December -- I'm just trying to get an idea of what further discussions you want to have in December, and make sure that that's adequate to your -- Or, you know, it meets the expectations of the discussion, and so it seems like part of that is you'll be receiving the scoping comments, and you'll have the AP comments sort of in hand, and it appears that you may want to have a discussion on those seventeen species.

We had -- I know we had an in-depth discussion in June. I didn't want to revisit that, since I know, you know, council members, and committee members, spent a great deal of time looking over that, but it sounds like that may -- You may want to rehash that discussion a little bit after this meeting. This is looking forward to December.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, yes, absolutely, we need to have that discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a question, maybe for Monica, and so, if we remove a species from federal -- From an FMP, and not ecosystem either, and just totally remove it, but a state decides that they do want to manage it, and they extend their management into federal waters -- I heard earlier, you had -- From the Magnuson Act, that, if the vessel had to be registered to that state for them to have to abide by that management, and so, if they were from another state, they wouldn't. They could be off of say Florida, from another state, and they're not registered in that state, and they would have absolutely no regulations on these, the species that we remove from federal management.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, the state would not be able to regulate, to apply those regulations to that out-of-state vessel, if it were.

MR. HULL: So that answer is so that's true, and so an out-of-state vessel could just fish totally unregulated on these species that we removed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, but I -- Once again, that's why I asked Monica. I think, also, if you land in that state, and so let's say that you're a North Carolina vessel, and you fish off of Florida, and you land those fish in Florida, the Florida regulations apply there, and so it's, I think, not just vessels registered to Florida, and it's also if someone lands it in that state, that those regs apply. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I'm not certain of that, but I'm happy to look into that and get back with you. You know, there have been some cases where someone harvested in federal waters. I'm thinking of a mackerel case in Florida, where they harvested in federal waters, and then were -- The state requirements were applied to them when they land, and, in that case, I think that the court found that, no -- You know, there was a jurisdiction issue, and so -- But I'm happy -- That's an old case, and so I'm happy to look into that further.

MR. HULL: Well, that' would be fine, but it's just you start sitting here thinking about different scenarios, and there's maybe unintended consequences, looking at some of those that are listed too, by removing from these complexes, where it had caused early closures of the complex, and, like Charlie said, there's a lot here to consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree. I'm just going to remind us of our innovative discussion, that we said we would do hard things, consider hard things, and we would try to think outside the box, removing these species, because we're never going to have assessments on them, and thinking about other ways to accomplish our goals, so that this helps us on other fronts. It's exactly what we talked about yesterday morning. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Madam Chair, I think we need to put a box and a light bulb at each council member, so we can remember to think outside the box. That way, it will remind us. Instead of us having to hear, it we'll see it right in front of us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry is going to have a sign made.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm serious. That has -- Like once we come up with all these things, and the guideposts and everything, and it will be here in the room, and we'll find a way, during the discussions of this committee, you know, to keep reminding each other that this is what we said we were going to do. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say that this is for scoping, and so let's just move on, and we'll -- We can have these discussions after we hear about scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think we're done with this document. I appreciate the discussion, and I think, next up, we're going to talk about the topics for the fall AP meeting, and then we can take a break, and we'll talk a little bit more about the MSE, and then we'll be done with this committee, unless we have other business.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right, and so, within the overview section of your agenda overview for the Snapper Grouper Committee, you have a draft list of topics to be discussed at the October Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting. We've had some discussion along the lines of these topics.

I know one that was brought up was related to Amendment 60. This item you directed to be more of an update on what's been developed thus far, but not really getting into the specific actions and

alternatives until April, but you see the list that is there on the screen, and I'll turn it back to you to, I guess, discuss what you would like to have included within that meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know where it's going to land, or what we're going to call it yet, but, presuming we decide to continue to take up this mantle of this sale wording in the language, I would like that added, please.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're capturing that. Anything else for the AP? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Under blueline tilefish, even though it's early, I would like to ask about what people's thoughts are on increasing the bag limit. I mean not the bag limit, but the trip limit to 400 pounds, from 300 to 400, if anybody has any thoughts on that, please.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We captured that. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Just a comment on Kerry's the bullet point for snapper grouper management -- Wait a second. Commercial trip limits for sale, and as it pertains to the definition of the end of a trip, because that was the idea, is how does it pertain to -- How do we designate when a trip ends.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're adding that. Anything else? Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: With you all initiating an abbreviated framework amendment for blueline tilefish, that's another item that we can include here, since that's happening in between the council meetings as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. We got that on there. We'll also see this list in Full Council, in the committee report, in case we've forgotten something, or you think about something else, or we have a discussion. This is a lot. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Under potential topics, golden tilefish, what would they be potentially discussing there?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That was along the lines of if there was any follow-up from the golden tilefish update that that was given earlier in this meeting, and so, if there isn't anything for the AP to discuss, and, actually, we can take blueline off the other topics, because it kind of has its own bullets at this point, and so, if there's nothing for them to discuss for golden tilefish, we can remove that one as well, but Chip might have something.

DR. COLLIER: They just haven't been updated on the discrepancy from the original stock assessment, and so it might be good just to let them know what's happening with it, and when they can expect catch levels coming for golden tilefish.

MR. ROLLER: Awesome. Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: They may have already discussed this, and I think they might have, was the headboat vessel limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What about the recreational aggregate bag limit? What would be the update on that, and also on the headboat vessel limit? I feel like they've discussed that in the past, at length, and that's how we got our information about what to do, and so I don't know that we need -- Until we have, you know, an actual document for them to look at, I don't know that we need to get that, because they're the ones that gave us the idea of do this per six paying passengers. Recreational aggregate, what's that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think possibly just updating them on the progress of that discussion, as you all received a report concerning the ideas of an aggregate bag limit, and some preliminary analysis, and so I think that discussion, as well as the headboat vessel limit, just updating them on the progress that's being made from the council end, but there's not a direct ask of the AP, and so we don't need to expect a full discussion on those topics.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Got it. Okay. Anything else? All right. Thank you, Mike. Let's take a ten-minute break, and we'll come back, and we'll look at the MSE one more time, not to rehash everything we've already done, but to think about how our discussions about innovation could fit into the MSE, and if we need to add or remove things. Thanks, everybody.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going. Come on back to the table. All right, and so, going back to the list of scenarios that was in the PowerPoint, and then we'll back up to the performance objectives, and so, just looking back at this list, and so we've already marked off a number of these items, but, on the spatial management, we heard a public comment not to include this, and so let's talk about this a little bit more.

I guess that the question that Chip was posing to me was do we look at spatial management if the MSE is working on these aggregates, or some of these other options, and can't reach the management objectives? Is that when you would look at spatial management, et cetera, and so we're looking for a discussion on that, and, Chip, do you want to add more to that?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, just to clarify, the other day, you all talked about having a regional component for developing the aggregate. That would remain in there. This is a potential spatial closure, or a seasonal closure, if you're not meeting your management objectives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't want to include it, but I know I'm in the minority, and so I'm looking for discussion here. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and, I mean, we're at odds on this, because I do think it's important to leave it in, and so I think it's going to come down to how we all feel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we need to leave it in the toolbox, at least for now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Similar. I mean, this is, obviously, just an analysis to inform us going forward, and I think it's helpful to have comparative results with this option and other options we're considering.

DR. COLLIER: So what we're hearing, or at least what I'm hearing in this discussion, is consider spatial management over seasonal management, because what we're trying to do is we're going to be putting out a survey, or the University of Florida is going to be putting out a survey, and it's going to be based on the discussions here at the table, and which would you all prefer, a spatial management or a seasonal management, and then we can potentially talk about some other components in there, depending on which one is the preferred method for the recreational fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So you, I think, asked us to narrow this down to three items, and is that correct, and so we've chosen aggregate bag limits, and we've chosen the mandatory retention, or stopping, and so is it possible just to include both seasonal and spatial management as options?

DR. COLLIER: Seasonal is much easier to model. Spatial is going to be a little bit more difficult, because of some of the things that were brought up in that dolphin MSE, which is the movement of the fish, or the viscosity of the fish, and then thinking about the size of the closed areas, the connectiveness of the closed areas, different components of that, and so seasonal would be a little bit easier, or you could do a crude spatial closure, based on X percent, and the fish are equally distributed throughout the area, throughout the areas in that region.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So is it a workload issue, in terms of why you're asking us to narrow it? Okay. We've eliminated, obviously, four items on the list, which I think are -- Some of them are even harder to analyze than some of the things we're considering. I mean, my perspective is keep as many options on the table, and try to give us as much information as possible with the MSE. We could certainly prioritize then spatial management to be kind of the fourth item, if we wanted to consider seasonal management before that, but just throwing that out there for consideration.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn, then Dewey.

DR. BELCHER: I guess the only thing that concerns me about the idea of a mandatory retention/mandatory stopping is the enforcement aspects of that. I understand trying to see what the behavior does, but, if enforcement is going to be a problem, is it something that again drops in priority in the standpoint of what we focus on?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm in favor of keeping the spatial, and also the seasonal, aspect in to look at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Robert, we're trying to get you unmuted, and you're next, and then after you is Trish. All right. You're unmuted.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Hi, everyone. I would just reiterate that spatial and seasonal closures is probably lowest on my list. I get the comments, and, you know, evaluating them, but I would like to focus our efforts on some of these other items that the council has deemed as more appropriate for management measures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I kind of have similar thoughts as Carolyn, as far as the mandatory stopping. I just -- I'm not saying throw it out. I guess, again, it's a toolbox, but I just kind of wonder what the reality of it is going to be if we start using it in real life, and I have to say I think I have to support having spatial management in. I mean, it says right there that it's the most promising in the previous MSE, and so why throw out something that has most promise, and so I feel, at this point, that needs to stay in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: The mandatory stopping, and so this is something that we're testing in the EFP. It is possible to do it, and so I'll just put that out there, and so I thought I saw it as a viable option. Because, ultimately, you're trying to change angler behavior to get rid of discards, and so I feel like it's viable. It is working in the EFP. Charlie, then Amy, then Carolyn.

MR. PHILLIPS: Well, kind of back to Andy's point to Chip, do we have to stop at three, and, if we want four, do we need to prioritize them, and, if we did, I would probably do the mandatory retention and stopping fourth, after the others that we think you either can model easily or has a lot of problems.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm not in favor of putting mandatory stopping behind spatial management. Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair, and I tend to agree that I think we should push these four scenarios forward. I also agree that that spatial management needs to stay in there, as it does indicate that it's the most promising. I also want to go back to Carolyn's comment. You're absolutely right about law enforcement, and enforcement of all of these, really. Even with a seasonal closure, or an aggregate bag limit, we're going to have to have those as being issues with all of them, really.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I get a lot of heartburn when we start talking about, you know, mandatory stopping. It's going to be difficult when you talk about, you know, spatial management, and if that's a rotating closure, you know, advising people of that, getting people to understand it, let alone will they follow it, and I think we get -- You know, kind of to our conversation yesterday, we get wrapped around the axle, and the why these won't work, and I think we need to stay away from that and prioritize the ones that we think are going to be most acceptable to the general public, and achieve our goals, and I think we've heard a lot of pushback on closures, whether it's, you know, spatial or seasonal, and so I think, for now, we ought to dedicate our resources to seeing --

Even though I get it, that spatial closure shows the most promise, and, well, so does just closing fishing altogether, from a biomass, and, you know, that just doesn't achieve our goals, and so I think this exercise should go through the ones that we know less about, the aggregate bag limits, mandatory retention, mandatory stopping.

I think those need to be, you know, at the top in priority here, and, if we have capacity, then we can look at the others, and, if we find that our first four don't work, or don't meet our goals, then we can go back and look further at, you know, spatial management measures, but I think this exercise should be focused on those other items.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Robert. I have Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: So, Jessica, can you provide some more detail as to how that's working for you guys with the mandatory stopping and retention, because I just -- I don't have an idea, in my head, how that works. Like, what's the effective tool that you know that they're doing it, other than law enforcement, somehow -- I mean, I think about even with what we deal with trawl times, you know, and there was a long-time discussion about limiting trawl times, and that never flew, and so is there -- Can you provide more detail as to why that you think that's viable, or what your experience is with it being viable?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we're have a detailed report about that at the December meeting, but, yes, we're also meeting every single boat at the dock, and talking to the anglers in-depth about the experience, and we have data coming in via an app, and so yes, and you just heard, earlier this week about Haley Stephen's trip in the EFP, and how they ended the trip two hours early, came back to the dock, because, in the EFP, they're required to stop fishing, and there's a couple of different choke points that requires them to change their behavior, and she was describing how basically, yes, they were able to stop fishing two hours early, and came on back to the dock, and the people were satisfied, and so, yes, but we'll have a detailed explanation of all this at the next meeting. I have Tom, then Trish, then Jimmy, then Clay.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to voice support for keeping more of these in to analyze, if possible, particularly before the four. I understand that people have heartburn regarding spatial and seasonal management, given previous comments. However, I think it's important to know, when we have these conversations of pretty large management changes, when we have a larger variety of things that we're talking about, I think our more moderate positions make a lot more sense, and so, when we take some of those out, I don't think --- I don't think we're really analyzing the possibilities enough.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just want to say I support, if we can do it, let's do all four. I hate to eliminate something that shows the most promise. I hate to eliminate something that may be worth trying anyway, the retention and stopping, so I would just support all four.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Technically, we looked at the spatial management in the last MSE. I feel like it's already been modeled, and I'm just putting that out there. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you. I support the four that we're talking about, and, as to the spatial, I mean, it does show the most promise in the previous MSE, but it needs to be, for lack of a better -- Maybe if it's the way we're -- If it's massaged. I mean, it needs to be thought of how can we massage this, to not be so, you know, so bad for the stakeholders, but the -- So I support the four for the MSE that we're talking about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay, then Andy.

DR. PORCH: I'll follow-up on Jimmy's comment, because I agree with that, and we -- I would first say spatial and temporal management isn't mutually exclusive, and so I would kind of wrap them up into one. Certainly, we shouldn't eliminate something we know will work, because we don't find it palatable.

Yes, a lot of people oppose it now, but that was the same thing with hunting, once upon a time, and we've gotten to the point now where the technology is so good for recreational fishing that, I mean, we can catch the last fish. I mean, it's just gotten, you know, off the rails, and so we need to look forward, and our population is growing. You can imagine there will be more and more, and so I wouldn't exclude that option. It wouldn't make sense.

I do agree with Jimmy, though. What we need to do is maybe refine what we're looking at. One of the things, again, that I think is worth exploring is having year-round open zones, and, yes, there's some enforcement issues wrapped up in that, but I think we could work our way around it, but some balance of closed areas, but then areas that you're allowed to harvest all year long, and look at scenarios like that to see if we can find something where you actually increase fishing opportunity and increase economic opportunity. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think several people have said this well, and so my thought is partly why spatial management performs so well is these large, broad-based, kind of generalized areas, right? I don't think any of us are thinking along those lines in terms of how we would manage some of these fisheries and resources.

To the extent that the MSE workgroup could refine some of those analyses to think about our goals of access, reducing discards, you know, providing fishing opportunities, reducing the economic impacts of some of these decisions, I think that will help, and it could also show maybe that there's less promise, or that there's some pretty substantial tradeoffs, depending on the size and design of the spatial areas. I recognize there will be limitations on how they can model that, but I think that would be very worthwhile, and would be a nice next step in the process of taking the initial MSE and moving it forward with the second step in the MSE.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Andy, maybe you can help me understand a little bit, and, when the spatial closures were modeled in the last MSE, that showed the most promise, and I assume that that

modeling was based on the then existing fisheries management approaches of, you know, seasons, size limits, bag limits, dead discards, all that stuff. Is that accurate?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'll look to Chip in terms of the details, but, you know, in terms of the spatial areas, they were broad kind of inshore and offshore areas, large in regional scale, right, and so that accounts for, obviously, kind of existing data, but the scope and scale of them is, I think, very different, even than things we've considered in Amendment 59, right, and so not all spatial areas are created equal, and that, in my view, is what we're talking about here, is that, if we're going to do this well, and do this right, and address the concerns from an economic standpoint, an access standpoint, how do we design those in a way that could be more palatable, and more in line, with comparing to some of these other options that we want away from the MSE results.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right, and I guess what I'm thinking is, you know, what really is, or was, the utility of spatial management reviews with the prior -- The current rules that we have in place, and the rest of these things we're talking about, the mandatory retention, mandatory stopping, aggregate bag limits, I think is going to create a significant shift in angler behavior, and impacts in the fisheries, and so like I just -- I feel like we need to be focused on that.

This exercise is trying to explore those other ideas. To Jessica's point, we already have some information that suggests that spatial closures could be a useful tool, but I think the point of this exercise is we didn't find that to be, or a lot of us didn't find that to be, an appropriate measure, and so we're exploring alternatives to that, and I think, you know, down the road, my question would be, if we modeled these other four, and we found they didn't quite get there, and then is it appropriate to maybe talk about, you know, augmenting, or adding, some of those things, but I -- You know, my hope was that, through this process, we would explore these other alternatives, or options, that we hadn't fully understood.

It seems like we understand some of the utility of spatial closures, size limits, and other, but we don't know enough about aggregate bag limits, mandatory retention, and so I -- You know, just kind of reiterating that I think the focus needs to be on these other new, innovative tools that we know less about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I've got another person in the queue, and then I think we've had a good discussion on this, and then I think this is a tie-in nicely with the performance objective slide that we need to go back to, but so I think that Robert is saying kind of the same thing that Chip was bringing up in the beginning, that, in this new MSE, or rerun MSE, or modified MSE, that the spatial management would come into play if some of the objectives couldn't be reached, and then you would consider area closures.

Not necessarily exactly like it was looked at in the last MSE, but you would consider something maybe like what Clay and Andy are talking about, where it would meet some objectives, and meet some of these economic objectives, and I think that's what is being said here, but I'm not 100 percent sure, and I still don't agree with it, but that's what I think is being said, is that spatial management in this new MSE would be looked at differently. Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Yes, and if I could follow-up there. I mean, I have a hard time, because, you know, we got some public comment yesterday and I think we've been through this, and the way it was previously proposed is pretty difficult to wrestle with, but, going through the modeling here, and that's kind of -- You know, Jess, you just said it, going to the goals and objectives.

I'm almost hesitant to limit the management scenarios for the MSE, right, because then the outcomes are restrained by that, and maybe there's something we hadn't thought about that what I want to do is get to the goals, and then try to back into what this actually looks like, and I just see -- That's why I struggle with it, and I'm not trying to fully pull spatial closures, or that type of stuff, out, but I think that should be, you know, the very last resort, and we should give the MSE the ability to try and work through this without that on the table at first, to figure out if we can get to our goals and objectives without closures, by modifying fishermen behavior, and I think we would achieve the best result if we went down that path.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and, I mean, I think we can try to get to some of these goals that you're talking about, or the objectives. However, if we're not clear on if -- Let's say, a three fish aggregate, with a certain suite of species, is not palatable either, and then what do we do as the modeling team? We need to be ready to set up the model to analyze all these different scenarios that could come into play, and you need to do that at the beginning, and so that's what we're talking about here, is trying to set up this model so it's prepared to give you the answers that you may need in the future.

I know it's very difficult to envision all the different directions that this could go, but I think we need to be prepared, and have this model prepared, to analyze all those different contingencies, and so, I mean, I just -- What I worry about, when I was looking at that aggregate bag limit, is there are some -- If we focus mainly on snapper and grouper in the aggregate, it's going to be a very low number, maybe four fish, and is that worth it for people to go offshore?

I don't know, but that is a concern that was coming to me as I was analyzing that aggregate data, and so is it palatable to say we're going to have maybe 10 percent of the offshore areas closed, in order to get to a six or seven-fish aggregate, or something along those lines? You know, there's tradeoffs between those, and we can't do that as the technical team.

I feel like that needs to come from the council providing some guidance, and what we're really trying to do, in some of these aspects, is also be prepared to send a survey out to the public, to get some information from them as well, making sure that, you know, we tweak as far as we can, get comments on the worst-case scenario, even though it might not be something that you all want to do, and it's still good to get the comments on those and include them in there.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: You know, Chip, I think that was a good kind of overview, and that's the answer that I'm looking for, right, is what is the actual result of looking at that aggregate bag limit, and if it's two fish per person, does that work? Is there a boat limit element to that, or do we need

to layer these on, but my concern is that I don't want to take the easy path. I don't want to just, you know, we go through this, and, oh, spatial closures continues to be the best, but we haven't really put the effort into really working with the model, to really refine these other options and find, you know, a workable solution there, but I get it, and so that's all I got.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so back to Chip. I mean, it sounds like you can kind of back into multiple scenarios, like putting in the aggregate and running it on a couple different -- You know, like five or less, or four or less, or three or less, and see how it performs, and so you can do that, right?

DR. COLLIER: I believe we can do that, yes. The question we have, as a group, is how much time -- You know, thinking of spatial closures, and thinking of different scenarios for seasons, that takes time to put those models, or scenarios into the model, and be prepared to analyze them, and get you some of the feedback that you all need, and so we want to make sure that we are being judicious with our time, trying to make sure that we can get everything that's needed. This is kind of in a -- It is in a crunched timeframe, in order to get everything done, and so we're trying to get as much feedback from you all now to prevent delays in the future.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I was going to switch to performance objectives, but go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't see any of these that we choose weighted over the other, and so I think you have to look at all aspects of this, how it works, and it might not work, or whatever, and so I just -- All these are equally, and none of them is weighted over the other of how this could work, and so you've got to keep it in there to do the analysis, and for us to come back, and also to send out to the public, to see what they have to say about these scenarios and different things, because somehow there might be 5 percent of one, 20 percent of the other, 30 percent, or all together, that might work, that that's applicable enough to meet our objectives for this fishery to continue, and all the other things, you know, and so I just think you -- All of it is the same, and none of it is weighted. You have to do the analysis, and this is not thinking of the previous stuff that was in Amendment 59, and this is looking at different things and adding more ingredients into the sausage. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Trish.

**MS. MURPHEY: In the interest in trying to speed this up, I thought I would go ahead and make a motion, if that's okay, especially since it does say likely three scenarios, and it doesn't say have to be three scenarios. I would like to make the motion that the MSE group consider the aggregate bag limits, the mandatory retention and stopping, the seasonal management, and that was the third one, right, the seasonal? Yes, and then the spatial management.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom, are you seconding? Okay. Motion by Trish, and seconded by Tom, and we're getting it on the board there. Just seeking a clarification, and so the spatial management that you're talking about here is kind of like what Clay and Andy are talking about, where you might have rotating areas, and you would have some areas open, and I see people nodding yes, but you, as the motion maker -- I'm trying to -- Okay

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

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Just trying to clarify there. All right. Okay. We've had a bunch of discussion on this, and I'm just -- I want to give people maybe that haven't spoken, or that want to say something before we vote on this. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I was ready to vote, but the -- You brought up -- You added to the definition of how they would analyze the spatial management, and I think that, you know, you would want to direct them to exclude the total EEZ, maybe as an option, something like that, which would -- Maybe they would evaluate much smaller spaces, or shifting, whatever else that comes out of it, but exclude the entire EEZ off a certain area as being a non-viable option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so --

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, as we do this, so spatial management -- Just one thought, right, and if you -- Mandatory stopping, I have a question. If we had mandatory stopping, could people then go into state waters and fish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess that's something you need to tell the model, and so, in the EFP, no. They need to come back to the dock after they're done reef fish fishing, and so -- But I don't know if we're doing this like the EFPs are set up.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Well, I assume -- I would assume we did, and that's one of the points I wanted to make about spatial management in federal waters, just talking about black sea bass and other -- You know, I don't know how we model or account for, okay, and so, you know, if we didn't go with the mandatory stopping model, or aggregate bag limit, or something that required people to stop fishing, do we just then, okay, you're done, and you close, or move some stuff around in federal waters, but we're just pushing people to state.

The only other comment I would have is, again, you know, I'm okay with this motion, but I really think that that spatial management should be viewed as kind of an overlay, or an additive, to these other approaches, as needed, to try and reach goals, but I really want to focus the core on making sure these first three, you know, get a full shake, or the first two.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I also saw mandatory stopping as mandatory stopping for reef fish, and you could go fish for something else, and that's how the EFP is worded, and so just trying to clarify that. Any more discussion on this motion? All right. **Let's see a show of hands of those in favor of motion.** Robert, are you for or against?

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I would have liked to have seen spatial management be in a phase two, and so I'm going to be against this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. **I think that we have ten in favor and one against. No abstentions, and the motion carries. Just clarifying the record, it was eleven in favor.**

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so we talked about, or the group, or the committee, had talked about, potentially changing from looking at rebuilding overfished stocks to maybe considering preventing overfishing. Maybe that is a metric that the group would like to consider. We still have short-term landings in there, long-term landings, the discard fraction, and then did they want -- Did you all want to include additional objectives in there, and so, if we're trying to maximize access, do we want to maximize the number of angler days, the number of trips?

Do we want to look into some of the economic proxies, looking at some kind of revenue-based index, based on some of the trip multipliers for the species? Do we want to make sure it's equitable distribution of reductions for the states, for the sectors? Please don't say we want all of these. That will get extremely complex. We would like you to narrow it down some, and it's welcome to hear some discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thoughts on these. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Well, I think the first bullet point is definitely very, very important, and it's a kind of a no-brainer. Successfully rebuilds overfished stocks and rebuilding timeframe or avoiding overfishing status. I mean, that's what we're here to do, and so that would be number one in my category.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a real quick question. For the economic proxy, and this gets really complicated, because this is just the recreational sector, obviously, right, that this is modeling, but, within the recreational sector, there's the distinct difference between a private fisherman and a headboat fishery, or for-hire, and so I'm wondering how that fleshes out when you look at the economics of it all, and then I have one to remove, once Chip answers.

DR. COLLIER: Well, I've been training to be a social scientist, and not an economist, and so I would have to call on John Hadley for those discussions. He knows much more about these economic proxies and how they potentially could get used.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry, and I know you can't see. We're waiting for John Hadley to respond to that question. Stand by, please.

MR. HADLEY: That's a great question. I would have to give it some more thought, on how this may apply for the recreational sector. For the multipliers, they're based on mode, and I have to do some more digging, but I want to say that we may have to either come up with, or at least find, some multipliers for the headboat sector, and so it may be a little bit of a challenge to include.

They're very important, but it may be a challenge to include them, just depending on what kind of existing data there is on the economic side, and so it would -- We have to look into a little bit more, as far as how robust, or how broad, that measure would be and what information would be available to plug into the MSE. I hope that helps answer that question and addressed the comment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. I appreciate it. To that, I think, to the extent you can, it's really important, because I think that we all can recognize that different measures may have different economic effects on the subsector, and then I would suggest, since we need to remove things, possibly removing short-term landings would be one that I think that I would rather, if we're focusing on landings, long-term. The long game feels more important to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Wait, and which one did you just say?

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Short-term landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Short-term landings. Okay. Thank you. Go ahead, Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: To Kerry's point, I was kind of looking at short-term landings, and also looking at long-term landings, and access for recreational anglers, and wondering if -- We talked a lot about the words "maximize access", and then we ended up at "optimize", and I'm wondering if optimizing landings isn't the goalpost we should be looking at here, which I think also gets down to minimizing discards, but I wanted to put that up for the group for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I still think it's optimize access for recreational anglers, and I think that that was one of our goals yesterday. I think it's been kind of one of our goals. I see some heads nodding, and so it seems like that one is important, and then it seems like we need to pick which landings we want to be used in the MSE, and so it seems like we're leaning towards use the long-term landings.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: If I could follow-up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Just thinking through it, right, access doesn't necessarily mean landings, and it doesn't get to the discards issue, and so, you know, rotating closures without, you know, an aggregate bag limit, or something else, for example, could just push people around to have access to fish, but we're not getting to what I think fishermen really want and what we need to get to to change behavior, which is converting these catches to landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So let me try to interpret it relative to what you just said to these objectives, and so then I think you're also saying that some kind of output about discards is important as well, like how the different objectives affect discards. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and where I'm struggling is I feel like long-term landings, discard fraction, access, all are interrelated, right, and so depending on -- If you optimize access, you might increase discards, which then reduces landings, or, if you limit access, you're going to increase landings, and potentially reduce discards, and so I feel like all three of those have to be in there. I guess, if we're looking to eliminate another one, I feel like distributional equity is something that we are going to consider as an outcome of this, and not necessarily something that's critical for the MSE results to be provided to us.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: You know, what I'm hearing -- Even when you just repeated it, Andy, I still think something about -- Not necessarily short-term or long-term, but some focus on landings is appropriate here. I'm not sure if the long-term kind of wraps that up, but that's where I see, you know, the disconnect. We're not just trying to get access for recreational anglers, and we're also trying to create access that leads to landings in a sustainable way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, and so I was just having a side conversation with Chip to figure out if this was too many, because we're definitely talking about the interconnectedness of these things, and so he said, no, it's not too many, but he's concerned with the economic proxy one, because of the data, but I'm going to let him speak to that particular one.

DR. COLLIER: Whenever John is saying that, in a very less abrupt tone than I speak usually, when he's saying we're going to have to look into that, for estimates for headboats, I think that is going to be a scientific study, economic study, in order to develop estimates, and I just don't know that we have that in the timeframe for this MSE.

MR. HADLEY: I'm thinking -- Kind of thinking through the comment earlier, I mean, there are revenue estimates for the headboat sector. It's just I'm not sure if there are economic multipliers, and I think that's what's kind of implied through this bullet point, and so, if that helps, and there is data on it. There are revenue estimates, but the multiplier side is what is maybe a little bit more tricky.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and let's use it after the MSE. Okay, and so we're reluctantly crossing out the economic proxy one, and so, based on that, since we just had a motion on the last items, can I get a motion to include the successfully rebuilds overfished stocks, long-term landings, discard fraction, and access for recreational anglers in the MSE? Can we -- Since we just had a motion on the other, can we get a motion on these performance objectives? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would be happy to make the motion, if staff can print it out and get it compiled.

DR. COLLIER: So, when John was saying that there are revenue estimates, there would be revenue estimates for the headboat component of the recreational sector. However, we don't have revenue estimates for the private recreational sector, and so, when we're looking at trying to put everything together, you know, there's just some different data sources that we wouldn't be able to match.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So you can't see it on another screen, and Chip is starting to type up the motion, and so stand by. Okay. I have hands, Charlie and Amy, and, Robert, you're unmuted, and we're getting a lot of feedback from your microphone.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As far as the economic proxy is concerned, we're going to know the answer to that from public comment. They're going to tell us if it works or not. I don't know that we need to do that kind of work for staff, because the public is going to tell us, and it will be pretty clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Amy.

MS. DUKES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Chip, I'm hoping that you can help me out a little bit here. I'm struggling with the performance objectives, and the difference between the short-term landings and the long-term landings, and how the long-term is going to potentially differ from then the short-term. In my mind, I'm thinking short-term, the last three years, may be more representative of what we're catching now, and then the ten years a little bit out of it, but can you help me there, please?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and so the short-term would be looking at -- It's basically going to be looking at, you know, as you implement this, how quickly, or how does that impact the fishery, and so, sometimes when you implement certain things, it's going to have a reduction, but the reward could be coming at the end, but maybe it doesn't come at the end. You just don't know how it's changing, if you're just looking at the long term.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I think I'm struggling with that a little bit, and, if we direct the MSE to only use long-term landings, are we missing out on, you know, something there, and should it just be landings, or is that not possible?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to let Chip answer.

DR. COLLIER: I don't think that one's a big deal to have both of them in there. That's an easy output of these MSEs, and then just figuring out how to get this displayed to you all in a fashion that, when you're evaluating against six or seven different objectives, it does become visually difficult to understand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Chip can maybe clarify, but like you showed us, the other day, the maximum retention, or full retention scenario, and so short term is going to say that landings are going to go through the roof, right, and, long-term, it means landings are going to be far lower than maybe even current levels, and so that's where I see the differences, in terms of looking at those two, but I agree. I think, if it's an output that's easily generated, keep both in.

DR. COLLIER: I was just going to incorporate short-term landings in there, and so what we have in the motion is successful rebuilding, short-term and long-term landings, discard fraction, and then angular access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Would someone like to make this motion? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I would be happy to, but I do have more discussion. It's a question to Chip, and so, since this MSE is devoted to primarily the private recreational sector, and we have the headboat in that sector, is there a way to take the headboat out of it in these analysis, to exclude the headboat, just as you've excluded the commercial sector out of these analysis and the results, because the

headboat is not -- They're not the problem, as I see it, as far as discards that we're trying to eliminate and manage this fishery to that. Is there a way to take the headboat out of it, the analysis, totally?

DR. COLLIER: So I would say keep the headboat in, and look at the potential impacts to headboat, so you would understand how it is, just making sure that we have them separated out into their own component of the analysis maybe.

MR. HULL: Okay. Thanks.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: **Madam Chair, I'll make this motion.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I will read the motion. MSE use performance objectives: successful rebuild, short-term landings, long-term landings, discard fraction, and angular access. Motion by Robert. Do we have a second? Seconded by Jimmy. Do we have -- We've had good discussion on this, and I'm excited that people are excited about the MSE. Any more discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion carries.** So we have one more thing --

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: Madam Chair?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead Robert.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I'm sorry, and I meant to jump in before we finished the last motion, but I just wanted to give a little color. As drafted, and I think Jimmy hit on it, but I wanted to see if we could clarify, in the prior motion, that the spatial closures -- That we would not include large spatial closures, and I think Jimmy talked through that, but it didn't get into the motion, and I'm just curious if that's something we should clarify.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chip is going to type it in direction to staff underneath the motion, so we don't have to modify that motion. We had a good discussion on it.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I'm good with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. One more topic that we're going to try to cover quickly, because we're already over the Snapper Grouper time, and so we need to talk about the species for the aggregate, and so I'm going to turn it over to Chip, and I'm going to try to facilitate a more expeditious discussion on the species component, because we are over the committee's time.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. The committee was starting to narrow down which species to include in this, and so we had originally had all the assessed species, and then we noticed that some of them were done down in south Florida, and so maybe pull those out. Some of them are deepwater species, and so maybe pull those out, and this leaves us with a suite of species that are commonly associated with red snapper.

You know, that was one of the big issues of why we're developing this MSE, trying to reduce impacts when people are red snapper fishing, but I can also see black sea bass coming along, and needing some of the similar information, and so we revised this suite. The other thing that I mentioned was maybe including another species that may be caught more often, and retained more

often, and I had a list of basically two that was included in there, lane snapper and white grunt, and maybe including white grunt in there.

I know Jessica doesn't like the idea of having white grunt, but that would be one of the species that could be added if you want to increase the bag limit, essentially making sure that it's a desirable fish. When we're looking at white grunt, about 50 percent of the fish are retained, and so that's indicating that it is desirable by many of the anglers, the recreational anglers that is, and that would be one reason to include it, just in case you want to get to something like a five or a higher aggregate bag limit, and include white grunt. Otherwise, it's likely to be a very low aggregate bag limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I could get onboard with that. I guess my question is -- I'm trying to picture how this is going to work in the MSE, and, since you just removed the Florida species, and maybe it's too complex to try to look at the aggregate bag limit regional differences, but, since the largest portion of private anglers are off of Florida, et cetera, I'm just concerned about the performance of the MSE when we took out like hogfish, mutton, yellowtail, but I could get onboard with that keep list at the top, if you want to add white grunt, so we can get a more accurate bag limit, but I would just love it if we could look at this regionally, but maybe we can't do that, but I see hands going up. I see Carolyn, Charlie, Jimmy, Andy.

DR. BELCHER: Just because white grunt is one of those species that we're talking about, and we don't know what we're going to do as far as removal, and so that was the only question I had, because of whether or not it would stay on the -- Well, you know the details of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Charlie.

MR. PHILLIPS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm thinking about what my guys catch, which is going to be pretty close to what they catch off of north Florida. We catch a lot of the jack complex too, and I would probably be inclined to add that to the list, and I can't think of anything else that we just know is going to be part of the box, but I know the jack complex, almaco and stuff, would be part of the box.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: I agree with Charlie on that, and I can think of one other that we would want to add, would be lane snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Jessica, I was just going to suggest, based on your, you know, preliminary data from the aggregate bag limit work, right, is there, you know, something you could look at between now and tomorrow, and, if there's any species you feel like are excluded, or -- Well, you narrowed the bag limit down from fifteen to ten, and I assume that's there some information available to look at what are some of the most common species, and I agree with Chip. I think the species like white grunt is a good example of something to consider. It's commonly retained when it is caught, but your point is also well taken about differences in terms of species composition up and down the coast.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go back to the list of hands, Chip, I'm assuming we can't look at regional bag limits, and make two different sets of bag limits, so that there's a component for Florida and then a component for north of Florida, and is that too complex for the MSE?

DR. COLLIER: So, right now, we have three different regions in the MSE, basically south of Cape Canaveral, and so when we were talking about it, and maybe we could add in those other species, like yellowtail snapper and mutton snapper south, and, that way, we can make sure that we're getting all the areas, but that -- I'll have to talk to the technical team on that. That is going to add a layer of complexity, but I think we can do the aggregate bag limit, and then having different aggregates along the coast might be doable as well. It's Merry Christmas, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, so, if you wouldn't mind, Chip, can you try to get an answer and come back to us at Full Council, and, likewise, Andy's question about the EFP, and we will try to come back, because, for example, I think gray snapper would be on our list, and it's not even up there, but I think gray snapper would be on the list for species that we would want analyzed off of Florida, and so, yes, we'll come back with that as well, and so I don't think we can finalize this list right at this moment, since Chip needs to go back, and we need to go back as well, but I'm going to go back to my hands list. I had Amy, and then Clay.

MS. DUKES: Thanks, Madam Chair. You hit on the species that I was most curious about, which was the gray snapper, and that goes back to the aggregate analysis that Chip provided to us yesterday. I'm assuming that a lot of that gray snapper was probably to the southern part of the region, but I appreciate you bringing that one up. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Back to the hands. I have Clay, and then Robert.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to remind folks this is a simulation environment, right, and so we don't necessarily have to have twenty different species in there. You want to keep it simple. You only need a handful, you know, four or five species, and, basically, it's, you know, a grouper-like, a grunt-like, something like that. You're not really getting the level of precision you might think when you just add a whole bunch of different species in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Don't burst our bubble now. Robert, and then we'll go back to Amy, and I'm going to try to wrap this up, because clearly we need a little bit more information before we make decisions, and so there's some items that need to come back to Full Council, and so, unfortunately, we can't finalize it at this moment, but Robert and then Amy.

MR. SPOTTSWOOD: I think, if Chip can get us the direction on what the opportunities are to look at this on a regional basis, and then we can get the appropriate input. You know, for Florida, and just to reiterate, right, most of the dead discards, right -- The closure that was proposed was off of Florida to get to that, and so I think, for Florida, at least, if we don't include, and, Jessica, I don't think yellowtail snapper and gray snapper should go in that.

I don't think -- I don't think that there's a high likelihood of catching those species with red snapper off of where we're fishing down south. I think those are much more up on the reef, and don't have the dead discard issues, but I think if we don't leave mutton snapper, gag grouper, and black grouper, at least for my area, in, I don't think we're going to achieve the goals we're looking for here of getting folks out, catch their fish, and go home.

You know, they're going to -- We're going to have a lot of dead discards while folks are potentially hunting those species, and so I do think the regional look at this would yield better results for us, more of a rifle shot rather than a shotgun approach, and get us some more specific data, and then, again, for Florida, because of the other inputs we have, the State Reef Fish Survey and EFPs, I think we can probably get a better look at it. To my comment the day before yesterday about, you know, selfishly, you know, suggesting this, but, at the same time, Florida was also the state that was proposed to have the big closure to address these, to some extent, and there's certainly a reason to focus on Florida in this exercise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would also add that I don't know that we need hogfish, and I didn't hear you say hogfish. I think it could come out, because it's speared, et cetera, and so you're not having a lot of discard mortality via hook-and-line, but I'm going to go to Amy, and then, once again, I'm going to try to wrap up this discussion, because we are over time on the committee, and we are getting behind, and then we can talk about it more when we come back with this additional information at Full Council. Okay, and so Amy is yielding.

I appreciate this discussion. We have a little bit of work to do before we get to Full Council, and we'll come back to this list, and so I appreciate folks having this discussion, and I appreciate Trish giving us a little bit of extra time. Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Then I'm going to adjourn the Snapper Grouper Committee and pass it back to our chair.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 18, 2025.)

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Certified By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcribed By  
Amanda Thomas  
October 10, 2025

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4	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	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	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

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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	web 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	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	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	web Robert Spottswood Jr.	FL		At-Large
15	Snapper Grouper	✓ Andy Strelcheck	FL	NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region	NOAA Fisheries

Sonny Gwina

Monica Smit-Brunello

Chris Schieble

Rick DeVictor

Clay Porch

Kathy Knowlton

Kristen Foss

Walter Bublay

Delaney Farrell

SG Thurs  
9/18

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
**COUNCIL STAFF**

**Executive Director** ✓

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September 2025

## Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 07:02 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

302-385-691

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/16/2025 07:36 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Angers

Jeff

Aukeman

trip

Bajema

Jordan

Baker

Scott

Barbieri

Luiz

Barger

Jeff

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Black

Karlisa

Bogdan

Jennifer

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Brantley

William

Brouwer

Myra

Brown

Hunter

Buntin

Jesse

Bunting

Matthew

Burky Lechwar

Heather

Byrd

Julia

Carrigan

Abby

Cermak

Bridget

Clinton

Haley

Corbett

Ellie

Cox

Jack

Crosson

Scott

Curtis	Judd
Dancy	Kiley
Darden	Tanya
Davis	Conor
DeVictor	Rick
Degan	Jacqui
Delaney	Glenn
DiJohnson	Alex
Diagne	Assane
Dingle	Julie
Dover	Miles
Dukes	Amy
Dunn	Russell
Ealahan	Maranda
Emory	Meaghan
Evans	Joseph
Farrell	Delaney
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Froeschke	John
Gentner	BRAD
Gialanella	Tiffany
Gloeckner	David
Gomez	Josalyn
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Harrell	Ryan
Hart	Hannah
Haymans	Doug
Helies	Frank
Helmey	Judy
Herrick	Daniel
Hiers	Homer
Hildreth	Delaine
Hollensead	Lisa

Hordyk	Adrian
Huber	Jeanette
Hudson	Joseph
Hudson	Joseph
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Juliano	Jocelyn
Kalinowsky	Chris
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kellison	Todd
Keppler	Blaik
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leach	Scott
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
Lind	M
Locke	Charles
Lorenzen	Kai
M Dobbs	Jeffrey
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	00Kerry
McClair	Genine
McCoy	Sherylanne
McGill	Maria
McManus	Brian
McWaters	Mark
Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Meyers	S
Mikaljian	Amanda
Monk	Melissa
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Nejjari	Amber
Newman	Thomas
O'Donnell	Kelli
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily

Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Perkinson	Matt
Phillips	Charlie
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reed	John
Rindone	Ryan
Robbins	Megan
Rule	Erica
SCHLICK	CJ
Salmon	Brandi
Saurman	Emma
Schmidtke	Michael
Seeley	Matthew
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Simmons	Carrie
Smillie	Nick
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Leah
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Turley	Brendan
Vecchio	Julie
Waldo	Jennifer
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Wiegand	Christina
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Wilms	Olivia
Wilms	Sean
Withers	Meg

Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
gwin	sonny
marinko	Jeff
moss	david
oden	jeff
peters	sophonda
poholek	ariel
roller	tom
sandorf	scott
sinkus	Wiley
thomas	suz
vara	mary
vincent	matthew
zales	bob
Alexander	Nathan
Alexander	Sheila
Bradshaw	Christopher
Bruning	Jake
Carruthers	Tom
Cerny-Chipman	Elizabeth
Clinton	Haley
Cody	Richard
Downes	Athena
Dyar	Ben
Dyar	Ben
Foor	Brandon
Gannon	Megan
Guyas	Martha
Hallas	Sara
Harmon	Jake
Hatcher	Dale
Hooten	Jackson
Horton	Chris
Ingram	Jamal
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
Masi	Michelle
Peterson	Cassidy
Puglise	Kimberly
Reding	Brandon
Reynolds	Kris
Reynolds	Kris
Rivera Garcia	Liajay

Rudershausen

Sedberry

Spratt

Tidball

Warren

lee

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riley

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George

Paige

Victoria

Camilla

Jennifer

o

Rick

September 2025

## Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 07:13 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

302-385-691

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/17/2025 07:53 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Anker

Shari

Bailey

Adam

Baker

Scott

Barbieri

Luiz

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bell

Mel

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Black

Karlisa

Bogdan

Jennifer

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Bradshaw

Christopher

Brantley

William

Brouwer

Myra

Buntin

Jesse

Bunting

Matthew

Burky Lechwar

Heather

Byrd

Julia

Carrigan

Abby

Cermak

Bridget

Clinton

Haley

Corbett

Ellie

Cox

Jack

Curtis

Judd

Dancy

Kiley

Darden	Tanya
DeVictor	Rick
Degan	Jacqui
Dover	Miles
Dukes	Amy
Ealahan	Maranda
Enright	Nicole
Evans	Joseph
Farrell	Delaney
Flowers	Henry
Foss	Kristin
Gentner	BRAD
Gentry	Lauren
Gialanella	Tiffany
Gloeckner	David
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gore	Karla
Gravitz	michael
Gravitz	Michael
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hallas	Sara
Haymans	Doug
Helmey	Judy
Herrick	Daniel
Hildreth	Delaine
Hilton	Kurt
Horton	Chris
Huber	Jeanette
Hudson	Joseph
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Juliano	Jocelyn
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keppler	Blaik
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
LEWIS	SAVANNAH

Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leach	Scott
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
Locke	Charles
Lorenzen	Kai
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	00Kerry
Martin	Drew
McClair	Genine
McCoy	Sherylanne
McWaters	Mark
Merck	Nicole
Moir	James
Monk	Melissa
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Package-Ward	Christina
Perkinson	Matt
Phillips	Charlie
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reynolds	Kris
Robbins	Megan
SCHLICK	CJ
Salmon	Brandi
Saurman	Emma
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smillie	Nick
Smith	Leah
Smith	John
Spanik	Kevin
Spratt	Paige
Spurgin	Kali
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ

Tidball	Victoria
Vecchio	Julie
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Wiegand	Christina
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
gwin	sonny
marinko	Jeff
moss	david
peters	sophonda
poholek	ariel
riley	Rick
roller	tom
sandorf	scott
sinkus	Wiley
thomas	suz
vara	mary
vincent	matthew
Alexander	Sheila
Alexander	Nathan
Angers	Jeff
Aukeman	trip
Bajema	Jordan
Barger	Jeff
Brown	Hunter
Bruning	Jake
Carruthers	Tom
Cerny-Chipman	Elizabeth
Clinton	Haley
Cody	Richard
Crosson	Scott
Davis	Conor
Delaney	Glenn
DiJohnson	Alex
Diagne	Assane

Dingle	Julie
Downes	Athena
Dunn	Russell
Dyar	Ben
Dyar	Ben
Emory	Meaghan
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Finch	Margaret
Floyd	Brad
Foor	Brandon
Franco	Dawn
Froeschke	John
Gannon	Megan
Gomez	Josalyn
Guyas	Martha
Harmon	Jake
Harrell	Ryan
Hart	Hannah
Hatcher	Dale
Helies	Frank
Hiers	Homer
Hollensead	Lisa
Hooten	Jackson
Hordyk	Adrian
Ingram	Jamal
Kalinowsky	Chris
Kellison	Todd
Lind	M
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
M Dobbs	Jeffrey
Masi	Michelle
McGirl	Maria
McManus	Brian
Mehta	Nikhil
Meyers	S
Mikaljian	Amanda
Nejjari	Amber
O'Donnell	Kelli
Owens	Marina
Peterson	Cassidy
Puglise	Kimberly
Reding	Brandon
Reed	John
Reynolds	Kris

Rindone  
Rivera Garcia  
Rudershausen  
Rule  
Salmeron  
Schmidtke  
Sedberry  
Seeley  
Simmons  
Smit-Brunello  
Solinger  
Turley  
Waldo  
Walsh  
Warren  
Wilms  
Wilms  
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Ryan  
Liajay  
P  
Erica  
Selena  
Michael  
George  
Matthew  
Carrie  
Monica  
Laura  
Brendan  
Jennifer  
Mick  
Camilla  
Olivia  
Sean  
Jennifer  
o  
jeff  
bob

September 2025

## Attendee Report: Council Meeting

Report Generated:

09/22/2025 07:15 AM EDT

**Webinar ID**

302-385-691

**Actual Start Date/Time**

09/18/2025 07:39 AM EDT

## Staff Details

**Attended**

Yes

**Interest Rating**

Not applicable for staff

## Attendee Details

**Last Name**

**First Name**

Addis

Dustin

Aines

Alex

Barile

Peter

Barrows

Katline

Beal

Bob

Bell

Mel

Bernier

Quinn

Bianchi

Alan

Bogdan

Jennifer

Boots

Benjamin

Borland

Gary

Bradshaw

Christopher

Brantley

William

Brouwer

Myra

Brunson

Jeff

Buntin

Jesse

Bunting

Matthew

Burky Lechwar

Heather

Byrd

Julia

Carrigan

Abby

Cermak

Bridget

Coleman

Heather

Corbett

Ellie

Cox

Jack

Curtis

Judd

Darden

Tanya

DeVictor

Rick

Degan

Jacqui

Delaney

Glenn

Dingle

Julie

Dover	Miles
Dukes	Amy
Dyar	Ben
Ealahan	Maranda
Emory	Meaghan
Enright	Nicole
Farrell	Delaney
Foss	Kristin
Gannon	Megan
Gentner	BRAD
Gentry	Lauren
Gloeckner	David
Gore	Karla
Gravitz	michael
Griffin	Aimee
Griner	Tim
HEMILRIGHT	DEWEY
Hadley	John
Hallas	Sara
Helmey	Judy
Hildreth	Delaine
Hooten	Jackson
Huber	Jeanette
Hudson	Joseph
Hull	Jimmy
Iberle	Allie
Iverson	Kim
Juliano	Jocelyn
Klasnick	01Kelly
Klibansky	Lara
Knowlton	Kathy
Kolmos	Kevin
Larkin	Michael
Lazarre	Dominique
Leavel	Lillie Callaway
Levy	Mara
M Dobbs	Jeffrey
Mackesey	Brendan
Marhefka	00Kerry
Masi	Michelle
McClair	Genine
McCoy	Sherylanne
McWaters	Mark
Meehan	Sean

Mehta	Nikhil
Merck	Nicole
Merrifield	Jeanna
Merrifield	Mike
Muffley	Brandon
Murphey	Trish
Neer	Julie
Newman	Thomas
Oliver	Ashley
Ott	Emily
Owens	Marina
Package-Ward	Christina
Phillips	Charlie
Puglise	Kimberly
Ramsay	Chloe
Records	David
Reynolds	Kris
Rindone	Ryan
Robbins	Megan
SCHLICK	CJ
Salmon	Brandi
Schmidtke	Michael
Seeley	Matthew
Seward	McLean
Silvas	Rachael
Smart	Tracey
Smillie	Nick
Solinger	Laura
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Stephen	Jessica
Stephens	Haley
Stephenson	Sarah
Sweetman	CJ
Thompson	Laurilee
Vecchio	Julie
Waldo	Jennifer
Walsh	Jason
Walter	John
Wamer	David
White	Geoff
Whitmer	Morgan
Wilber	Pace
Williams	Erik

Willis	Michelle
Wilms	Olivia
Withers	Meg
Zapf	Daniel
colby	barrett
collier	chip
gwin	sonny
lee	Jennifer
marinko	Jeff
moss	david
peters	sophonda
poholek	ariel
riley	Rick
roller	tom
sandorf	scott
sinkus	Wiley
spottswood	00Robert
stone	pat
thomas	suz
vara	mary
zales	bob
Alexander	Sheila
Alexander	Nathan
Angers	Jeff
Anker	Shari
Aukeman	trip
Bailey	Adam
Bajema	Jordan
Baker	Scott
Barbieri	Luiz
Barger	Jeff
Black	Karlisa
Brown	Hunter
Bruning	Jake
Carruthers	Tom
Cerny-Chipman	Elizabeth
Clinton	Haley
Clinton	Haley
Cody	Richard
Crosson	Scott
Crowe	Stacie
Dancy	Kiley
Davis	Conor
DiJohnson	Alex

Diagne	Assane
Downes	Athena
Dunn	Russell
Dyar	Ben
Evans	Joseph
Fields-Rivera	Kayla
Finch	Margaret
Flowers	Henry
Floyd	Brad
Foor	Brandon
Franco	Dawn
Froeschke	John
Gialanella	Tiffany
Gomez	Josalyn
Gooding	Elizabeth
Gravitz	Michael
Gray	Alisha
Guyas	Martha
Harmon	Jake
Harrell	Ryan
Hart	Hannah
Hatcher	Dale
Haymans	Doug
Helies	Frank
Herrick	Daniel
Hiers	Homer
Hilton	Kurt
Hollensead	Lisa
Hordyk	Adrian
Horton	Chris
Huber	Jeanette
Ingram	Jamal
Kalinowsky	Chris
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kellison	Todd
Keppler	Blaik
LEWIS	SAVANNAH
Leach	Scott
Lind	M
Lloyd	Shannon
Locke	Charles
Lopez-Mercer	Maria
Lorenzen	Kai
Martin	Drew

McGill	Maria
McManus	Brian
Meyers	S
Mikalian	Amanda
Moir	James
Monk	Melissa
Nejjari	Amber
O'Donnell	Kelli
Perkinson	Matt
Peterson	Cassidy
Reding	Brandon
Reed	John
Reynolds	Kris
Rivera Garcia	Liajay
Rudershausen	P
Rule	Erica
Salmeron	Selena
Saurman	Emma
Sedberry	George
Simmons	Carrie
Smit-Brunello	Monica
Smith	Leah
Smith	John
Spratt	Paige
Stemle	Adam
Tidball	Victoria
Turley	Brendan
Walia	Matt
Walsh	Mick
Warren	Camilla
Wiegand	Christina
Wilms	Sean
o	o
oden	jeff
vincent	matthew