

**OVERVIEW OF EFP REQUEST  
WESTIN JEKYLL ISLAND  
JEKYLL ISLAND, GA**

**MARCH 5, 2018**

MR. PHILLIPS: This presentation is not going to be for the council debate at this time. It's just going to be for the presentation and some questions strictly for clarification, and we will debate the merits of the EFP at the council a little bit later. That said, Chip, if you're ready.

DR. COLLIER: It's Rick that is going to be giving the presentation. I am just driving it. Rick, we're ready when you are.

MR. PEARSON: My name is Rick Pearson, and I'm with the Highly Migratory Species Management Division. I want to thank the council for allowing us to give this presentation today. Many of you will recall that we discussed this same exempted fishing permit on March 9 of last year, and so it's already been a year since we discussed it last. I am going to provide an update on that EFP.

The original EFP application was received November 6, 2016. The purpose of the EFP was to evaluate pelagic longline catch and bycatch rates within the East Florida Coast Longline Closed Area and to compare those with rates from the open area. Essentially, the question that was being asked was are the catch rates still different between the closed area and the open area, given differences in stock status and gear usage, and circle hooks are now required. When it was closed, it was j-hooks. Also potential environmental changes and to use that information to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing area closure at meeting current conservation and management goals.

The original EFP requested authorizing six vessels with up to six backup vessels if one of the vessels broke down and was not able to perform its number of sets. All of these vessels are associated with Dayboat Seafood, LLC, out of Fort Pierce, Florida. The project was requested for twelve months and, pending annual review, NMFS would consider reauthorization for two additional twelve-month periods. All fish legally caught and otherwise authorized for retention and sale could be sold.

When we received that initial application in November of 2016, as we're required to do, we determined that the EFP application warranted additional consideration and an opportunity for public comment. We released a draft environmental assessment on January 13 of 2017, and the comment period closed on March 29 of 2017. We presented the EFP and the environmental assessment findings to the South Atlantic Council on March 9, and we also conducted a public webinar on March 27 of last year.

We analyzed three alternatives, the no action alternative, which would not approve an EFP, an alternative which included a smaller area, and an alternative which included a larger area that incorporated the hundred-fathom contour.

We received well over 500 comments on the draft EA and the EFP application. The vast majority of them were opposed to the issuance of the EFP. Those opposed to the EFP expressed

concerns about bycatch, primarily of undersized swordfish, billfish, dusky sharks, white sharks, and sea turtles. Comments in support were in favor of collecting current catch information from the area, increasing our domestic swordfish landings, of which we're landing less than 50 percent of the internationally-recommended swordfish quota, and also obtaining information on electronic logbooks to facilitate real-time reporting. This is just a very, very brief summary of some of the comments that we received on the draft environmental assessment.

We considered all of those comments, and we determined that the EFP was warranted, and the initial exempted fishing permit was issued to Dr. David Kerstetter on August 11, 2017. That EFP could be renewed based upon annual review, and this is a chart of the study area. You will see it begins northward of -- It's basically Cape Canaveral, and you can see that the nearest distance from shore is thirty-two nautical miles, and, on the northern portion, it's sixty-seven nautical miles offshore.

There are two sub-areas within the closed area. Those are in blue. There is a Closed Area North and there is a Closed Area South, and there is also a study area to the east that is green, and so, in each one of those areas, 240 sets would be authorized. Those would be distributed equally across all four calendar quarters. There was a previous EFP that was issued in 2008, and it was a very, very small sample size, and so our confidence levels were not very high with it, and, also, all of the effort in that 2008 EFP was clustered in the very southern portion of that closed area, and so we did not get very good spatial distribution, and so that's why we worked in conjunction with scientists from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to get a more robust sampling design, where we're giving equal coverage, both temporally and spatially.

This was what was authorized in August of 2017. It was up to 720 sets per year and 240 of those -- It was 480 sets would be in the closed area, and 240 sets would be in the open area, and this is based upon the historical fishing effort of those six vessels. The initial EFP requested 1,080 sets, and so we scaled it back considerably based upon the historic level of fishing effort of these six vessels.

It's important to remember that all six of these vessels are currently fishing in the open area, and so it's not like there is going to be an increase in the level of fishing effort. There would be fishing effort occurring in the closed area that is not currently occurring; however, the same number of sets would have been deployed under the EFP.

Similarly, 600 hooks per set, and that was scaled back from the initial application, and this, again, is based on the historic number of hooks that these vessels set. It's 40 percent observer coverage, and we have very, very specific terms and conditions to address shark bycatch, including a cap once those six dusky sharks -- If six dusky sharks are brought back dead to the vessel, that vessel would have to stop fishing for the remainder of the EFP project period.

It's six vessels with electronic logbook submission for all trips and 100 percent review of electronic monitoring video footage would have occurred, along with all other pelagic longline regulations. It's logbooks, regular observer coverage, size limits, closed seasons, gear and bait requirements, including circle hooks, individual bluefin quotas, which limit the ability of pelagic longline vessels to fish if they do not have sufficient bluefin tuna quota, reporting, protected species workshops. All of the other pelagic longline regulations would apply under this EFP.

This is the update that we're providing. Since August, no research activity has occurred under that initial EFP. We received a new EFP application on December 14 of 2017, changing the affiliation of the principal investigator from NOVA Southeastern University to Florida Fisheries Solutions, Limited Liability Corporation. No other aspect of the research project was altered in the new application.

In recent months, we've been deliberating upon this new application, and we have determined that, with receipt of the new application and the change in affiliation of the principal investigator, we consider the original EFP that was issued in August to be invalid. Because of the change and the controversial nature of the EFP request, consideration of the new EFP application will require further evaluation, including consultation with the HMS Advisory Panel, which is occurring this week, and informing the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

The agency remains committed to ensuring that any future decisions regarding HMS conservation and management measures and closed areas are based upon current data. Obtaining current data from the closed areas has proven to be controversial, difficult, and very expensive. The agency will work collaboratively with our advisory panel, the ICCAT Advisory Committee, commercial and recreational fishing interests, academics, environmental NGOs, and others on the appropriate next steps to improve long-term management of highly-migratory species, and that includes a discussion later this week at the HMS Advisory Panel meeting of how do we resolve this dilemma of obtaining data from areas that have been closed for seventeen years and we're required to do environmental analysis of the impacts of these closures. We're going to be having that larger discussion this week and for the foreseeable future.

I am willing to take any questions or comments at this point in time, and you can see all of the documents that are available at these two websites, including the revised application, the previous application, the draft environmental assessment, and the final environmental assessment, as well as the response to comments on the draft environmental assessment. Thank you.

MR. PHILLIPS: Okay, and so the questions are for clarification. This is not public comment, I know as bad as we want to sometimes, but we appreciate the presentation, and we appreciate you moving your schedule around as our schedule has obviously moved around today, and so I will open the floor for questions.

DR. DUVAL: Really, I appreciate the presentation. I have just one question. As far as you know, there is no extramural grant funding for this proposed EFP?

MR. PEARSON: No, there is not, not that I'm aware of, and, right now, both the Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program and the S-K grant proposals are out for review, and I don't recall seeing any proposals requesting funds to conduct this research.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you.

MS. BECKWITH: During our discussions later on this week, will there be someone from HMS available to ask clarifying questions as they come up for us?

MR. PEARSON: I am leaving tomorrow for Silver Spring, and we will be in meetings Wednesday through Friday, and so I would say no. However, perhaps I can talk to some people, and, if we're informed of the time, perhaps we could be available by phone.

MS. BECKWITH: Okay, and so then I will ask one of my clarifying questions now. There has been quite a bit of comment on the fact that, within the revised application, there is a statement that says that, if there are any vessels that would like to participate that are not within Dayboat Seafood, that they could contact the PI and that the vessels would be subject to request for funding support for the project.

Now, I don't know if you can give us some indication of what that additional funding support for the project would be. I think there is some speculation on what that means, but I guess I would like to hear it directly, if that has been explained, what that additional funding for the project would be.

MR. PEARSON: The EFP that we issued in August indicated the names of the six authorized vessels. If other vessels were to want to participate in the project, they would need to undergo what we call a priors check and so forth, and it would need to be substituting for one of the six authorized vessels, and so, if one of them broke down and another vessel from the Northeast wanted to participate, they perhaps could contact the principal investigator and be a replacement vessel.

MS. BECKWITH: Right, and the specific verbiage that I am referring to says any non-Dayboat Seafood, Inc. vessels would also be subject to request for funding support for the project. I would have to presume that that means that they would have to take some portion of the profit the fish that are legally sold and assist with funding for say the observers or grad students or training or something along those sorts, but that statement has caused a lot of angst in the public, because it is sort of a -- The term I keep hearing is sort of a pay-to-play scenario, and if there was any clarification on specifically what those vessels would be paying in terms of funding support.

MR. PEARSON: That would be basically a business arrangement between Dayboat Seafood and whomever was requesting participation in the project, and, as I said, there are six named boats on the EFP application. One of those six named boats would have to withdraw from the EFP, and we would need to issue an amendment to add the other vessel, and it would need to operate under the terms and conditions that are specified in the EFP. Any other arrangements for that would be Dayboat Seafood and Dave Kerstetter's purview, but we have already run the priors checks on those six boats, and those are the boats.

MR. BREWER: Following up on Anna's line of questioning, and, Charlie, I've got three lines of questioning and no more. Have you discussed with Dr. Kerstetter whether he intends to charge these non-Dayboat boats by the pound or by the set? How much is he going to be charging them to fish in the closed area?

MR. PEARSON: No, we have not discussed that, because it has not been raised. Dayboat is putting forth the resources to conduct this research and they are the ones that are funding Dr. Kerstetter and funding the observers. However, we have 100 percent video monitoring of everything and 40 percent observer coverage, but, in terms of how those arrangements are set up,

we have not been involved in that. We are interested in obtaining the valid scientific data from these closed areas.

MR. BREWER: Following up on that question, you said there were only six boats that are in the application, and I am looking at the application.

MR. PEARSON: That are on the EFP.

MR. BREWER: Okay, and you're saying that are going to be permitted under the EFP, but you've got the provision for other boats to be substituted in if one of those six is disabled for some reason, and is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: That's correct, yes.

MR. BREWER: I am looking at the application, and that's fifteen boats that are there, and is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: It's been a while since I've looked at the application, but that sounds right.

MR. BREWER: Okay. In the next, you mentioned that, with regard to the original EFP, it was invalidated because there was a substitution of the institution affiliation. Is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: That is partially correct, yes, sir.

MR. BREWER: Is it true that NOVA Southeastern University demanded that its name be taken off of the initial EFP?

MR. PEARSON: I am not privy to why the affiliation of the principal investigator changed. I don't know why that happened.

MR. BREWER: Okay, but it did happen?

MR. PEARSON: We were not a part of the discussions. All I know is that no research occurred between August and December, and then, in December, we received a revised application with a new affiliation for the principal investigator.

MR. BREWER: Did you all not get a communication from NOVA Southeastern University requesting that their name be taken off of this EFP?

MR. PEARSON: Not that I am aware of. We have heard it secondhand, but there is no letter or any formal communication.

MR. BREWER: Okay, and so Dr. Kerstetter has resubmitted in December of this year with a new institution affiliation, and I believe the institution is called Florida Fisheries Solutions, LLC. Is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: That is correct.

MR. BREWER: What can you tell us about Florida Fisheries Solutions? Who is involved in that and how long has it been in existence and that sort of thing?

MR. PEARSON: I can tell you that Dave Kerstetter is the primary agent for the corporation. Otherwise, I don't know anything else.

MR. BREWER: Okay, and let me just tell you that Florida Fisheries Solutions, LLC, was formed in December of 2017. It has one member, and it has one manager. Both of those persons are David Kerstetter. Its principal place of business address is Dave Kerstetter's home, and were you aware of that?

MR. PEARSON: Yes. Kind of, again, secondhand.

MR. BREWER: You all consider that to be an institution?

MR. PEARSON: It is a limited liability corporation.

MR. BREWER: Now, let me change tact here a little bit. Do you know a Dr. Stephen Smith at the University of Miami?

MR. PEARSON: No.

MR. BREWER: Are you aware that the National Marine Fisheries Service consulted with Dr. Smith to determine the parameters and -- I should say the parameters so that the --

MR. PEARSON: Actually, to tell you the truth, it's been a couple of years, but that is correct. We did, yes, and the sampling protocol was developed in part with the assistance of Stephen Smith. I do recall that now, yes.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Thank you. As a result of that consultation, were there sampling parameters set so that the study would be statistically valid?

MR. PEARSON: Yes.

MR. BREWER: Are you aware of how many sets were necessary for the study to be statistically valid?

MR. PEARSON: Yes.

MR. BREWER: Okay. I spoke with Dr. Smith, and he informed me that the number of sets necessary for it to be statistically valid was four sets in each area per quarter. Is that accurate?

MR. PEARSON: I don't remember that. That would be how many sets per year? Is that four sets total by one boat?

MR. BREWER: No, that is the number of sets that would be necessary for the study to be statistically valid, regardless of how many boats made those sets.

MR. PEARSON: So forty-eight sets?

MR. BREWER: Forty-eight sets per year, yes, sir, total, inside and outside.

MR. PEARSON: There is a statistical -- There is a significant difference between four sets and one set. However, your confidence levels are lower than it would be if it's 400 to 100. That essentially was the problem with the first EFP, was because of the small number of sets and low confidence levels associated with those, and so the larger sample size is going to give you more confidence in the conclusions.

MR. BREWER: What I am asking you, sir --

MR. PEARSON: As well as the fact that the EFP -- It could not have been approved if it was not consistent with Magnuson. If it contributes to overfishing or worsened the condition of an overfished stock, it would not have been approved. We could not get that through our lawyers, and so, regardless of the minimum number of sets that are allowed, the EFP was determined to be consistent with Magnuson, as all EFPs are required to do. I understand your point with regard to the sample size, but I hope that you also understand the difference in the confidence levels associated with those numbers.

MR. BREWER: My question to you, again, sir, is how many sets per area would be necessary per quarter for this study to be statistically valid?

MR. PEARSON: I do not have those numbers. You do.

MR. BREWER: Yes, sir, I do.

MR. PEARSON: From what you have said. I can tell you also that the sampling design that was approved does produce statistically-significant numbers.

MR. BREWER: Yes, sir, but the numbers that you were setting forth appear to be orders of magnitude larger than what would be statistically necessary. Are they not?

MR. PEARSON: Those numbers do not contribute to overfishing for any of the species that would be encountered.

MR. BREWER: Have you taken a look into the level of bycatch that can be anticipated from this study?

MR. PEARSON: Absolutely.

MR. BREWER: If it goes three years, how many blue marlin would be taken as bycatch?

MR. PEARSON: Are you aware that the level of bycatch, with blue marlin in particular, is projected to decrease as a result of this EFP, because the catch rates in the closed area for blue marlin are lower than they are in the open area, and white marlin and tunas and sea turtles.

MR. BREWER: Okay. So, I am sitting here looking at the numbers that were put forth by Dr. Kerstetter.

MR. PEARSON: We did not use -- We conducted an additional analysis, because some of the assumptions of fishing effort that he used were erroneous. For example, he just used catch per unit effort and then multiplied that by the number of sets that he was requesting, not considering the fact that those vessels are already fishing in the open area, and so your catch is the difference between the catch rates from the open area versus the catch rates in the closed area.

MR. BREWER: I am curious as to one thing, sir. What did you base your additional study on if there has been no longlining in the closed area for almost eighteen years?

MR. PEARSON: We used the catch rates from the 2008 EFP, although they weren't determined to be significant, but that's the best available information. For the open areas, we used the catch rates, the CPUEs, from 2012 to 2015. That was the best available information.

MR. BREWER: What I did, sir, is I took the exact same study that you're talking about, the report that was issued, I believe, in 2011 by Dr. Kerstetter for the 2008 to --

MR. PEARSON: Have you read the final EA and the analysis? There is a very thorough analysis in there. That's what we should be discussing.

MR. BREWER: Yes, sir, I have.

MR. PEARSON: Please ask about that.

MR. BREWER: I am sitting here looking at the -- There were 182 sets in the 2008 to 2010 study, and I am extrapolating, and I admit it, so that we would be talking about 1,080 sets per year for three years, and I am taking the bycatch that is reported there, and I am multiplying it by the additional number of sets. What we're seeing here is bycatch of white marlin and sails, and I can give you the numbers that are extrapolated out.

MR. PEARSON: But you are neglecting the fact that those vessels are fishing in the open area and they have bycatch of sailfish and white marlin and blue marlin outside of the area as well. What we looked at was the difference, because the vessels are going to be fishing, they are fishing right now, and they are catching sailfish and swordfish and tunas and marlins.

MR. BREWER: Okay.

MR. PHILLIPS: Chester, can we let --

MR. BREWER: I am going to let somebody else has a shot.

MR. PHILLIPS: Chris has a question. Thank you, Chester.

MR. CONKLIN: Switching gears just a little bit, you issued the EFP in October for this area, and have you got guys any good information back, and can you give us some update on what kind of sets they were having in those areas up until the new application?

MR. PEARSON: There was no fishing activity occurring in the closed areas under the EFP. Nothing has happened.

MR. GRINER: For the current fishing that's happening currently in the open areas, what is the percent observer coverage currently?

MR. PEARSON: It averages right around 15 percent, 8 to 15 percent. We have certain targeted areas where observer coverage is higher, but, generally, for the open areas, it's between 8 and 15 percent.

MR. GRINER: In the closed area, it would be mandated that it jumps up to a minimum of 40 percent, and is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: That is correct and also for the open area fishing as well too, for the study area, in the open area.

MR. GRINER: Then they would not be allowed to go on a trip that didn't meet those minimum requirements, regardless of whether they were fishing in the study area or not the study area, and is that correct?

MR. PEARSON: If it was not a research set, they could fish in the open area under normal observer coverage levels.

MR. PHILLIPS: Tim, what I am thinking he is trying to say is, if any of those boats are part of the research, whether they're inside or outside, they're going to be working on a 40 percent observer coverage, and I think that's what he's saying, but I am just trying to clarify this.

MR. GRINER: I am just a little confused. I was just wondering whether they could be on a fishing trip where they were not part of the study and then end the fishing trip as being part of the study.

MR. PEARSON: No, a trip is a trip, from port to port.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Based on our experience in the Gulf of Mexico with an exempted fishing permit a couple of years ago to allow some Gulf states to take red snapper in some tournaments, and so, for example, the Destin Rodeo, it was determined by NOAA that they could not charge people -- In other words, the Destin Rodeo couldn't charge people to participate in that EFP, and that seems to be opposite of what is happening here, where someone could pay and then become a member and substitute a boat in here, and so I'm just wondering about the inconsistencies there.

MR. PEARSON: There are six vessels that are named on the EFP application and authorized to participate in the project. If one of those were to drop out, Florida Fisheries Solutions or whomever would have to request that this other vessel be allowed to participate in the project and to resume the activities of the vessel that has dropped out and all of the financial responsibilities associated with that. I guess I am struggling to understand what you're referring

to by paying to participate in the project. I don't understand that. Could you elaborate upon how you envision that to occur?

MR. PHILLIPS: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't understand what he is asking. He kind of broke up there.

MR. PEARSON: I said, that the concept of paying to participate in the project, I don't understand what you are referring to there, if you could explain what you're referring to and how you would envision that occurring. Who do they pay?

MR. PHILLIPS: Let me go to Michelle. She might can clarify this.

DR. DUVAL: Rick, I think this gets to the question that Anna was asking earlier. In the revised application that was submitted by Dr. Kerstetter, on page 13, like actual page 13, of that proposal, and so I'm not referencing the EA document, but page 13, and it's up in the top-right-hand corner, and the second bullet on that page says that any vessel wishing to participate will be welcome to contact the PI and the co-applicant. All participating vessels must meet all of the same requirements, including observer coverage and video auditing, and non-Dayboat Seafood vessels will also be subject to requests for funding support for the project.

As Anna was saying earlier, I think that's what a lot of folks have been referencing as boats paying to participate or be part of the project, that any boats beyond those six that have already been preapproved would be -- It sounds like they would be requested to pay the PI in order to participate, and I think that's what folks are getting at, and so I think there is some confusion and misunderstanding around the table about how that would actually work, and I understand that you have indicated already that any conversations about any monetary exchange or any funding of the project are a conversation between the PI and any vessel that is not already approved that would wish to participate.

MR. PEARSON: Thank you. Now I have a better understanding. That was basically -- The revised application that was submitted in December of 2017 is essentially the identical application that was submitted in November of 2016, and so it's the same thing, except for the change in affiliation of the principal investigator, and so you have to kind of go back to the beginning of the project and understand that Dayboat, Scott Taylor, did not want to create the impression that this was a monopoly for the boats that are affiliated with Dayboat Seafood, and so he invited other boats to participate.

The part there about paying is because observers cost, and also the new electronic logbooks that are being experimented with in this EFP cost, and there are data transmission costs, and there are costs associated with operating a fishing vessel, and so those are the costs that he's referring to there, and, again, the reason he was indicating that other boats could participate was because he didn't want to create the impression that this was just a Dayboat Seafood operation.

In fact, he did not receive any interest from say the Bluewater Fisheries boats, and, in fact, some of the Bluewater boats, and they are kind of based out of New Jersey, have been discussing conducting an EFP, submitting an EFP, on their own. That was what the reference on page 13 is to.

DR. DUVAL: Thank you very much. That really helps inform the conversation.

MR. PHILLIPS: Yes, it does, and that was a very good explanation.

MR. PEARSON: Thank you. When they were saying the pay to participate, that was what -- But there are costs associated with it, and, in fact, that's why the agency itself is not conducting this research, is because it's expensive, and we can't -- We don't have the funding available to do fishery-independent monitoring in that area, and so it's kind of a cooperative project, to a certain extent, and that is why we're entertaining the idea, because the agency is hearing from longline boats saying that, for example, we can't avoid bluefin tuna in some of the open areas, when the catch rates for bluefin tuna inside that closed area are much lower than outside. Apparently, the fish migrate further offshore.

They're saying we need access to some of these areas, but we're not able to provide that access without any data, and we cannot, at least right now, in the current environment, conduct that research on a fishery-independent basis, and so we're trying to answer some of these questions, and this is what the larger conversation is going to be about over the upcoming months, is how do we resolve this dilemma of when an area is closed to a particular gear and you want to know what the impacts of that gear are in that area, but we can't obtain it, and so that's the dilemma that the agency is at right now.

Again, that is part of the larger discussion that I referenced in the closing sides. Right now, nothing is going on. The revised EFP application has not been approved, and the former EFP application that had been issued is invalid, and we are really in a discussion and listening mode right now. That's really the update.

MR. PHILLIPS: Very good, and I've got one more question from Chester, and then we're going to be winding this up pretty quick, I think.

MR. PEARSON: Okay.

MR. BREWER: I didn't see the schedule for it, but when do you plan to have public comment with regard to this EFP application?

MR. PEARSON: There is no public comment on this.

MR. BREWER: Thank you.

MR. PEARSON: But anybody can submit comments, but there is no formal comment period or public hearings scheduled.

MR. HARTIG: I had a couple of questions about the shark species that are under major rebuilding plans. You mentioned dusky, and you mentioned if one boat caught six dusky that he would be out of the fishery and another boat could come in. Does that just mean the --

MR. PEARSON: No, that would not occur. The dusky cap would transfer to the replacement vessel.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, and so what is the total dusky? Is it thirty-six dusky?

MR. PEARSON: That would be the total cap, yes. There is also a trigger at three dusky, to whereby they have to reduce their soak time, I believe to eight hours.

MR. HARTIG: Okay. How about oceanic whitetips? They have just undergone a new status, and how many of those are allowed to be taken in this EFP?

MR. PEARSON: Zero. There is no retention of them. We have very, very strict terms and conditions. A lot of the problem with the -- Let me see if I have that here. Yes, those are prohibited by longline vessels, and so there would be none.

MR. HARTIG: Yes, I understand they're prohibited, but do you have the same kind of cap that you do with dusky, that you would shut down the EFP if you had X number of whitetips that were considered dead discards?

MR. PEARSON: No, we don't have that, and I believe that's because this is a fairly recent change, and, if we were to approve the EFP, we would have to reconsider it on the basis of oceanic whitetip.

MR. HARTIG: Okay, and I would suggest that you do that.

MR. PEARSON: Thank you. Good point.

MR. HARTIG: If you looked at the dusky bycatch, if you're looking at that based on 2008, the research that was done previously, dusky sharks have made a tremendous comeback. We see numbers of them in a number of fisheries that we participate in now, and so it could be -- I don't know what the number was that was caught back then, and if this area -- I mean, it comes into the hundred-foot contour, which does come into significant dusky habitat, and so I have some concerns about dusky in this survey, and you have addressed them, and you will shut the fishery down if they catch more than that, and so thank you.

MR. PEARSON: That's correct. Yes, the vessel would be prohibited from continuing with the research. It is worth noting that a lot of the sharks -- There is going to be photographs taken of every shark that is brought alongside a vessel as well as fin clips, if they can take those, because there is a lot of misidentification, particularly at night, with dusky sharks and silky sharks.

Actually, we're very excited about a lot of the information that was going to be collected. Any sharks that were retained or brought alongside dead, they're going to be biologically sampled and the reproductive organs and stomach contents and, again, shipped in coolers to our Panama City Lab. There was a great deal of hope to obtain more information on all the sharks that were encountered in the project.

MR. HARTIG: Thank you, and I appreciate that extra mile you've gone to get the biological information. I appreciate it.

MR. PEARSON: Sure. That was one of the more difficult aspects of the project.

MR. PHILLIPS: All right. I don't see any more questions. I really do appreciate your presentation, and I appreciate your patience and your answers and clarifications, and thank you very much.

MR. PEARSON: It's my pleasure. We appreciate you all taking the time out to hear the presentation and the great questions, and I understand the concerns. We all do. It's a very controversial issue, and so, right now, we're taking a step back. I don't know what the future is going to hold with regards to this, but, right now, everybody is just taking a collective breath and saying how do we try to get these answers.

MR. PHILLIPS: All right. I think that will end our presentation.

(Whereupon, the session was adjourned.)

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