

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

MACKEREL COBIA ADVISORY PANEL AND COBIA SUB-PANEL

Webinar

April 18, 2019

SUMMARY MINUTES

Mackerel Cobia AP Members

Ira Laks, Chair

Keith Bowen

Dr. Christopher Elkins

Capt. Skip Feller

Greg Peralta

Tom Roller

Stephen Swann

Stephen Donalson

Steve English

Aaron Kelly

Gary Robinson

Council Members

Mel Bell

Doug Haymans

Steve Poland

Council Staff

Gregg Waugh

Kelly Klasnick

Chip Collier

Kim Iverson

Myra Brouwer

Julia Byrd

Cameron Rhodes

Other observers and participants attached.

The Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and Cobia Sub-Panel of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on April 18, 2019 and was called to order by Chairman Ira Laks.

MS. WIEGAND: It is 9:00. Good morning, everyone. I think we're going to go ahead and get started. Before we really get into everything, I want to go over, just briefly, how to work the webinar. You guys should all see this screen, or something similar to it. If you're looking at a computer, in the top-right-hand corner -- If it's not popped out, you're only seeing this. If you hit that orange arrow, it will pop out this window, and you should be able to see the whole thing.

The first thing that's going to be important is muting and unmuting your microphone. If you're on the advisory panel, you should be unmuted. I am going to ask that, unless you are speaking, that you keep yourself muted. That way, we're cutting down on background noise that can make it hard to hear, and so, if it's orange, you're muted. If you click it, it should turn green, and we'll be able to hear you.

The next thing that's going to be important is how to raise your hand to ask a question. If you've got a question, raise your hand, and someone on staff here will answer it. We're also going to be using this to vote on motions, and so, just to make sure everyone understands how to raise their hand and how it works, if everyone who is on the advisory panel could go ahead and click this little hand and raise their hand to make sure it's working, that would be great. I am seeing hands from most. It looks like everyone on the AP is able to raise their hand. Thank you, guys. I just wanted to make sure that worked, since we're going to be using it for voting.

Then, last but not least, if something comes up during the webinar, and you've got questions for staff, there should be a little box right here, and, if you type that question in and send it, myself or someone else on staff can see it, and we'll get your question answered. Does anyone have any concerns about how to work the webinar right now? All right. I am hearing nothing, and so we'll go ahead and see how this works.

Just a little quick background about why we're doing this via webinar instead of in person. As you guys know, for the last year or so, the CMP Amendment 31 dealing with Atlantic cobia has sort of taken up a lot of the council's time. Now that the council has approved that and moved on, we were sort of in this lull, and there were a number of issues that the advisory panel has brought up that the council had planned to discuss, but we didn't really know how the council was going to choose to move forward, and we didn't want to schedule an AP meeting that was going to last an hour and have you guys take a ton of time and spend a bunch of money to come out here for a short AP meeting.

We took all of the issues that you guys had brought up to the council, and they discussed them, and they did want some advisory panel input, and they wanted to make sure they got that input before June. That way, taking action wasn't delayed, if that's what they decided to do, and so that's why we're doing it via webinar this time. If you guys like it, we can talk about doing this more in the future. If it's not something that you enjoy, we can also talk about that, and so that's why we're giving it a shot this time, and we'll see how it goes. With that, Ira, if you want to unmute yourself, I am going to go ahead and turn it over to you to get things rolling.

MR. LAKS: Good morning, guys. Thank you for joining. We are going to start and convene the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel and Cobia Sub-Panel. Thank you again, all, for joining, and this is a little unusual to do it this way, but I'm sure we can handle it, and I want to have an approval of the agenda. Does everyone approve of the agenda that is laid out before us? Should I have everybody raise their hands or --

MS. WIEGAND: If someone doesn't approve of the agenda, they can just unmute themselves and speak up.

AP MEMBER: Motion to approve.

AP MEMBER: I second that.

MR. LAKS: If there's objection, we will move on. If I can get an approval of the April 2018 AP minutes, that would be great.

AP MEMBER: Motion to approve.

AP MEMBER: Motion seconded.

MR. LAKS: Okay. If there's no objection, we will move on. Do you want to take over from here, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I sure will. The first thing that I want to do is -- Give me just one second. The first thing that I want to do, real fast, is run through the advisory panel members that we do have on the webinar. We've got Bill Gorham from the Cobia Sub-Panel, Chris Elkins, Gary Robinson, Greg Peralta, Ira Laks, Keith Bowen, Rusty Hudson, Skip Feller, Steve Donalson, Steve English, Steve Swann, and Tom Roller. One of the things that I'm going to ask you guys to start doing when you speak, just for voice recognition using a webinar, is just state your name when you begin to speak.

I just wanted to give you guys an update on the recently-submitted CMP amendments. Framework 6 was approved by the council in October of last year, at the delayed meeting, and that has been submitted to NMFS. The proposed rule published last week, with comments on that due April 25, and so hopefully the final rule will publish shortly after that.

For CMP Amendment 31, which was Atlantic cobia management and transferring it to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, the final rule on that has published, and it became effective on March 21 of this year, and so management of Atlantic cobia, which is cobia from the Florida-Georgia line north, has been transferred to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Currently, regulations in federal waters are the same as they have been, and the commission is working on Amendment 1, which will address, among other things, management measures for federal waters, and so, if you're interested in staying up to date with what's going on with cobia, the commission is where you want to do it, and, if you reach out to me, I'm happy to provide additional materials on what they are doing in terms of cobia.

Does anyone have any questions about Framework Amendment 6 or Amendment 31? Does anyone have any questions on the two recent CMP amendments? I am hearing nothing. Ira, if it's all right with you, I will go ahead and move on to the king mackerel trip limit discussion.

MR. LAKS: That sounds great.

MS. WIEGAND: I wanted to provide you guys with a little bit of background on how things have been going with trip limits for commercial king mackerel over the last few years, and so, if you will remember, Amendment 26 was implemented in May of 2017, and that included some substantial changes to how the trip limit system works in the Atlantic southern zone, and so the way regulations currently stand right now, you've got north of the Flagler-Volusia line is 3,500 pounds year-round.

South of the Flagler-Volusia line, you've got fifty fish in March, which bumps up to seventy-five for the second part of Season 2, April 1 to September 30, with a step-down to fifty fish if 75 percent of the Season 1 quota is landed. Then Season 2 runs from October 1 to the end of February, and it's fifty fish from October 1 to January 31, and, in February, it bumps up to seventy-five fish, as long as less than 70 percent of the Season 2 quota has been landed.

Prior to Amendment 26, there had been some different line shifts. North of the Flagler-Volusia line, you still had that 3,500-pound year-round limit, but, south of Flagler-Volusia, to Volusia-Brevard, and so just that Volusia County area, it was 3,500 pounds from April 1 to October 31. Then, from November 1 to March 31, there was no trip limit. South of the Volusia-Brevard line, you had a seventy-five-fish trip limit from April 1 to October 31 and then no trip limit the remainder of the year as well.

Then we started talking about Framework Amendment 6, and the advisory panel had expressed some concerns about these low trip limits, particularly off of Volusia County, for guys that were making multi-day trips and traveling pretty far offshore, and so the council chose to modify trip limits just for Season 1.

Again, like I said earlier, that amendment has been approved and submitted to the Secretary of Commerce, and, if approved, it's going to modify the Season 1 trip limit to be as follows. Again, north of Flagler-Volusia, it's 3,500 pounds, and that stays the same. South of Flagler-Volusia to Volusia-Brevard, and so, again, we're looking at just Volusia County here, that March trip limit is going to bump up to seventy-five fish. Then, from April 1 to September 30, it's going to be 3,500 pounds. The Season 2 trip limits remain the same. South of Volusia-Brevard and all the way down to Miami-Dade, the March trip limit has been bumped up to seventy-five fish, and then, from April 1 to September 30, it's seventy-five fish with that step-down to fifty fish, as it's always been.

If you guys remember, at your last AP meeting, you expressed some concerns about the trip limit in Season 2, citing that oftentimes the weather is bad, and it can make it hard to get out, and that, at that time of year, you're competing with Gulf fishermen, and so the price is a little bit lower, and the low trip limits in Season 2 were making it really challenging to get out and make a profitable trip.

In March, we took those concerns to the council, and they passed the motion requesting that staff begin a framework amendment to address Atlantic king mackerel commercial trip limits in the

Southern Zone during Season 2, and so this amendment is going to address Season 2 trip limits only, because Framework 6 has already addressed Season 1.

What the council has asked is for the AP to go ahead and comment on what sort of trip limit should be considered in the framework. What trip limits are going to be appropriate, considering the desire to make a profitable trip balance with this need to make sure that king mackerel stays open year-round, and, just as a reminder, at the last AP meeting, you did request that the council consider a 600-pound trip limit for king mackerel. During the public comment period we had at the March 2019 meeting, a couple of other ideas were thrown around, including seventy-five fish or 500 pounds, 1,250 pounds, which is consistent with what it is in the --, as well as a hundred-fish limit, and so a pretty big variety of trip limit options.

Then, also, in the document, I just provided you guys with a little bit of extra information that may come in handy while you're having your discussion. This table here summarizes the current commercial king mackerel regulations.

In Amendment 26, they had used a conversion to convert number of fish into an average weight, and that average counted based on trip intercepts in 2015, and it was 8.48 pounds per fish, and I know there is a difference between the size of the fish landed during Season 1 and the size of the fish landed during Season 2. We weren't able to get the data from the Science Center quickly enough to be able to give you guys the difference in king mackerel weight for the seasons, but I trust that you guys are out there fishing, and you are perhaps more knowledgeable about the size of the fish you're catching than I am, but, just to compare it to what was done for Amendment 26, these are the average weights you're looking at, and so fifty fish is about 424 pounds, and 100 fish is about 848 pounds, on average.

Then, last but not least, I also provided you guys with the most recent landings for king mackerel, and these were all pulled from the Regional Office's ACL monitoring database, and so keep in mind that 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 estimates are still preliminary, but you can see that, during the last five fishing seasons, the commercial king mackerel fishery has landed, on average, about 45 percent of its annual catch limit, and so there's a little bit of room there. With that, I will go ahead and take any questions that you have, and, Ira, I will let you lead the discussion.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I have one question before we get started, and that would be back to I guess it's page 4, where you have the timing. I understand this is a framework, and, for further information, I understand that this would be an open framework. Looking at all the information I have had, and on your council website, it looks like an open framework can skip most of these processes, and I'm not quite sure why we are having scoping and all these things when, on your website, it shows that a framework can go from initial review to a public hearing to final action.

This is the third year now at the AP that -- Two years ago, we brought it up, and last year we had significant discussion, and we've had public comment on this, going back to I think the September meeting, and I know Rusty and I had commented on it, and I know you had several fishermen at the March meeting.

The possibility to have more public comment, or a hearing, or however you want to do it, you're in the heart of the fishery in June, and I'm not sure -- I know there is some need to have some more information, but, to get these guys fishing at a higher rate, I don't understand why we just can't,

for next year go to seventy-five fish and explore higher limits for the 2020/2021 season while we do that, but we left 600,000 pounds on the ACL last year, and that's lost income and lost jobs. It takes money out of fishermen's pockets, and it takes money out of the local economy.

Since your June meeting is going to be right here in the heart of the fishery, I'm not sure, and I don't know what I'm missing, or maybe it can be explained to the members of this panel and to the fishermen in general, why we just couldn't go ahead and do this. This is a fishery that is very well tracked, and there's not a whole lot of danger of going way over any ACLs, and I don't know if seventy-five fish is where we want to end up in the long term, but it seems to me, to get next year -- I don't think that's a crazy request, unless I am missing something, and if you or a council member listening or somebody can explain that, I would appreciate it.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Ira, and so I do want to note that this is just a tentative timeline that the council directed staff to start putting this amendment together, and so the timing here just goes through the standard process, and that's not to say that the council can't start truncating some of these and doing public hearings at a meeting, so that they don't have to wait in between meetings to get that input, and the same with scoping, but that's something that the council decides, and, if the AP would like this amendment to move faster, that's something that could be brought up to the council, and it has to be balanced with other council priorities going on as well as staff workload, which can be challenging, but this is very much a tentative timeline just sort of set up, and we've been asked to start a framework amendment, and so these are the steps that need to be gone through, and it's not to say that the timing can't move a little bit faster, so long as we get all of the necessary legal requirements in for public hearings and stuff like that.

MR. LAKS: Right, and I understand that. This is not -- This is a pretty serious issue. We're leaving a ton of fish in the water, and we're not maximizing what we could out of this fishery, and it's -- You know, particularly from an older fisherman, you can't take someone to help you at fifty fish. You can't train a younger fisherman to enter this fishery at fifty fish, and it's important that this gets done in a timely manner. Again, this is not something we brought up in March. This is an ongoing process, and, to me, this is one of the simpler things the council could do, and I just don't know if somebody on the panel would like to make a motion that the council expedites this.

MR. DONALSON: Would a motion to expedite -- What would that actually do to speed the process up? Is that just a motion to make a motion, or is there something that we can act on with that?

MS. WIEGAND: You could make a motion that the council -- Go ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: I thought a framework was designed to work faster. I thought that was what a framework was for. I mean, this schedule is like a full amendment, and so I just think we need to bring the council's attention to what can we remove from this process to make this go faster. Again, we were 600,000 pounds under the ACL last year. I don't know if there's a council member listening or if someone could tell me why they -- If you can give me guidance of what we should do now, Christina, or do we have an explanation of why the council wanted this to be such a long, drawn-out process?

MS. WIEGAND: Let me clarify. This timing was put together by staff and not by the council, and so this timing is the standard process that we go through for any amendment, the scoping,

public hearings, selecting preferreds. The council can choose to do -- That's why some of these are vague, like summer of 2019 and winter of 2020. It's because they can be truncated a little bit, so that these hearings and stuff are occurring at council meetings and things of the like.

If you're concerned about the time the council is going to take on this amendment -- We do still have to have public hearings and give the public an opportunity to comment, and there still has to be time for staff to put together the analyses for the different trip limit options that you guys discuss today and that the council reviews in June. I would suggest recommending to the council that they make this amendment a top priority.

MR. LAKS: Again, I don't mean to be argumentative, but, having been through this process a while and everything, I have learned through it, and framework amendments are supposed to move faster. A lot of these steps are not what I have been taught that a framework amendment is involving. I mean, what is the standard timing for a framework amendment?

MS. WIEGAND: It varies based on framework amendments and the content of the amendment and how long things like analyses take and how much public comment the council feels is necessary, and there is no legal requirement to do scoping for a framework amendment, but public hearings will have to occur, and, again, if you remember with Framework 6, to speed that process up, the council held public hearings during a council meeting, as opposed to having it as a separate webinar or meetings held in between council meetings, and so there are ways.

MR. LAKS: That just brings me back to my point that, in June, we are in the heart of the fishery. I mean, you couldn't center the issue around a better geographical point than Hutchinson Island. You're in the middle of the Southern Zone, and I don't understand why we just can't have a public hearing in June, since you're in the heart of the fishery and we're there, and then -- I'm saying to ask for the least, just for this year, just to have some increase for 2019 that we can get seventy-five fish on the table while the council considers to look at other alternatives to maybe increase in future years. This is not a static fishery, and it moves, and we just want it simple with one action. I don't know if we should make a motion for that or -- I don't know what your guidance would be on the best way to handle that.

MS. WIEGAND: I was going to -- It looks like Doug Haymans has his hand up.

MR. HAYMANS: Thank you, Christina. Ira, just so you know, there is a council member listening. Christina, if we ever get to a suite of options, would you be able to craft those into a decision document for June?

MS. WIEGAND: Based on what I hear from the advisory panel today, we are going to draft an action and a suite of alternatives for you guys to review in June.

MR. HAYMANS: But as a decision document?

MS. WIEGAND: It would be as an options paper, because you guys haven't reviewed any actions and alternatives.

MR. HAYMANS: The only way that we can have a public hearing in June is if it's a decision document, and so, if an options paper needs to come first, we're at least looking at September

before you could have a public hearing, at the September -- Or sometime between June and September, right?

MS. WIEGAND: That's not to say that you couldn't solicit public comments on this amendment. This amendment will be on the agenda, and individuals are certainly more than welcome to comment on the actions and alternatives that are presented in the options paper to the council at that time.

MR. HAYMANS: Right, but what I'm trying to clarify is that we can't take it to public hearing until we have voted on a decision document and made our decisions clear, and you're telling me that we cannot do that in June, and is that right?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct. Typically, before we take it out to public hearings, you guys have selected actions and alternatives, and staff has done analysis on those actions and alternatives, and you all have selected preferreds so that the council knows -- The public knows which direction the council intends to head.

MR. HAYMANS: So then if I might suggest to Ira and the group that, if you recommend that we do options in June, that we do public scoping between June and September and that we do final in September, or the decision document in September, and have that public hearing in September, and then, perhaps at the Full Council meeting in September, we can move this document forward to NMFS, and would that be reasonable, rather than waiting until 2020?

MS. WIEGAND: I just spoke to Gregg, and he said that since the Federal Register notice has not gone out yet that you guys can hold public hearings at the June meeting on this amendment, a formal public hearing during the public comment period, like we've done in the past.

MR. HAYMANS: Okay, and so that just means that you would have to prepare a decision document for June rather than an options paper, right?

MR. LAKS: Christina, I hate to jump in, and I hate to be argumentative, and I know you don't believe that, Doug, but, again, I'm looking at what is on your website, and an option framework bypasses an options paper. Now, I don't know if that's wrong and I'm looking at the wrong information, but we only are asking -- I am only, and I would say we have to get the rest of the AP's thought on this, and this is not my preference for the long-term solution, but just to get some more fish on the table next year. We just want one action, the seventy-five fish.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, again, I'm talking to Gregg here, and I'm going to offer up a possible solution that the advisory panel could propose. To get a full amendment done and something in place by October -- The timing of that is not really possible. However, the AP could recommend that the council consider an emergency action to raise the trip limit to seventy-five fish, given that we left so much on the table last year.

MR. LAKS: Whatever works and whatever is possible. I don't think any of us that are out there fishing on those fish care what we call it. It's just that would be a great thing to do. If that's possible, then, yes, let's go ahead and do that.

MS. WIEGAND: The AP would need to make a motion requesting that the council consider that.

MR. LAKS: Would anyone like to make that motion?

MS. WIEGAND: Again, if you're on the AP, you can mute and unmute yourself as you would like to go ahead and speak.

MR. SWANN: **I would like to make a motion to recommend that the council consider an emergency action to raise the Season 2 trip limit to seventy-five fish south of the Flagler-Volusia County line.**

MR. LAKS: Steve, if you don't mind, if you could just add for the 2019/2020 season, Season 2.

MR. SWANN: **Yes, the 2019/2020 season.** I'm sorry. That was Volusia-Brevard and not Flagler-Volusia. Actually, we talked about south of Flagler-Volusia.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry, but can you say that again?

MR. SWANN: Is it Flagler-Volusia or is it south of Volusia-Brevard? Yes, Flagler.

MS. WIEGAND: Does the motion that's the on board capture your request?

MR. SWANN: Yes, it does. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone want to second the motion?

MR. ENGLISH: I will second that motion.

MR. LAKS: Is there any discussion on this? Again, I intend this to be for one year, so we can get more fish next year instead of getting bogged down, and I still want to look at other alternatives in the future.

MS. WIEGAND: **If you remember, how we were going to do voting on motions, just to make sure that we weren't shouting out and no one's vote was left uncounted, if you are voting in favor of this motion, I want you to go ahead and raise your hand on the webinar; if you are opposed to this motion, raise your hand; do we have any abstentions. Based on our count, that motion stands approved.**

Even considering that emergency action that you recommended the council consider, that's not to say that this amendment to make more permanent changes couldn't go through, and so the council has requested that you all comment on what some appropriate trip limits would be for Season 2, and so I just want to make sure that, given the discussion that this happened, that this amendment doesn't sort of get pushed to the wayside.

MR. LAKS: Yes, that's what I was thinking too, that we do vote on this and discuss this. Also, it would be having -- If we do get the emergency action, it will be very helpful for analysis to see where seventy-five fish leaves us and where we can go from there in this timeline, and so, if anything, if we get the emergency action, it will help us make a more informed decision going forward.

MS. WIEGAND: Is there any more discussion on this? Again, if you're an AP member, feel free to mute and unmute yourself so that you can speak up as you would like to during the conversation.

MR. LAKS: The only thing that I would say that, if the emergency action isn't approved, if there is any way to still speed up a framework process. Even while we might not get it in October, even if we got it in December, it would help for part of the year. I am just trying to convey how important it is for these fishermen to get something more on the table for that season, and it's just something that we're very concerned with, and we want to look at all opportunities to do this.

MR. HUDSON: Christina, can you scroll down to where you had the annual collective weights? I think you had it through 2020, 2019 to 2020. Right here, where had the 5.9, that was the first implementation of SEDAR 38, and 5.2 was the first step-down. This year, we're at 4.7 million, and my question has to do with the following fishing season. Will this step down any further, collectively, from the 4.7, for the 2020/2021, or are we going to plateau at that point?

MS. WIEGAND: From the 2019/2020 season onward, you guys are going to stay at 4.7. There is an update to the king mackerel assessment underway. It was delayed a little bit from the government shutdown, but we're looking at being able to make management decisions on that sometime in 2020, but, until then, you guys will remain at the 4.7.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, because that will affect this other set of actions that we were going to look at in that framework amendment and how we're doing this emergency to try to get more fish caught during the fall, and that's what I just wanted to make sure, that we weren't going to go below 4.7. That way, the analysis would be pretty easy to work with. Thank you.

MR. BOWEN: I think getting this expedited would be awesome, with the seventy-five head for possibly this year, but, looking forward, I think all of us would like to see 100 head. I mean, we had quite a bit left, and, also, don't forget that we almost left a million pounds in Season 1 that was also rolled over into Season 2, and so, really, there is no way we would catch that. I'm not trying to be greedy, but I just wanted to throw that out to let everybody know.

MR. ROBINSON: I just wanted to say, up until now, I agree with what Ira has said, everything. I think he's spot-on. I think all the fishermen want that, and, what Keith just said, I would like to back that up. I just wanted to be on the record backing all that up and let you know how important this is to us.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Gary.

MR. LAKS: Christina, do we need to make a motion on having the council continue working on these alternatives?

MS. WIEGAND: You're welcome to make a motion to that effect. I will also be summarizing the conversation that you all have had and presenting that to the council as well.

MR. LAKS: I don't know if someone wants to make a motion, and maybe Christina can help you craft it, but somehow that the council still looks at these different alternatives and moves forward outside of the emergency action process to look at this further down the line.

MS. WIEGAND: I would suggest, if you all have specific trip limit recommendations that you would like to see the council consider outside of the emergency rule that you vocalize that as well, and I think I heard Keith mention 100 head, if there is anything else that you all would like to discuss and have the council consider.

MR. ROBINSON: We were thinking 100 head or 1,250 pounds, whichever comes first.

MR. BOWEN: To add to that, the 100 hundred would help the smaller fish. If you're catching five-pounders, you're going to be taking less to the dock at 100 head. Then I know there was a lot of concern with the bigger fish, but sometimes there are real big fish, and that would help the bigger fish, on the 1,250-pound side, which these are just ideas that we've thought about. Anyway, I would just chime in on that.

MR. LAKS: I would suggest that what we have there, with the previous input, that we look at all of it. Now that we have some time, and especially if we do have some information from a seventy-five-fish season, it would definitely give us a good data point as to where we can go forward from there and where we're going to be at, and so I think all of the council meeting and public comment options should be looked at.

MR. HUDSON: Ira, that update will be finished at some point early next year, and so we're going to have new numbers and projections to look at, too.

MR. LAKS: That's why I think we should leave all of those alternatives on. I don't think we should limit ourselves. Like I said, we have the data point of seventy-five fish.

MR. HUDSON: I agree, because of the fact that we did start out at a very high level, and we've incrementally gone down a half-million pounds each year, and who knows what we might have as a projection next time. It might be less reduction and more fish, and so we'll have that information, and the council will be working on this Framework Amendment 8, I guess it is, and that's what -- We'll keep working on that with all of those alternatives, because definitely you have the 100 fish and the 1,250 poundage in there, and you add some other options, and so that's what scoping and all that stuff and public hearings is good for. This emergency action gets you some fish at the end of this year that you may not have had until late next year.

MR. LAKS: I think you should make a motion, Rusty.

MR. HUDSON: **The motion would be to recommend that the council keep working on the Framework Amendment 8.** Then we'll be able to go through that normal process that you were trying to get around because of the emergency action. That, I think, is pretty simple. Everything is already there.

MR. LAKS: Christina, will we have to add the public comment as alternatives, or can we just kind of infer that?

MS. WIEGAND: **If Rusty would like that language added to the motion that he just made, I can add to recommend that the council continue work on Framework 8, considering previous public comment.**

MR. HUDSON: **That would be useful on a timeline and for discussions when we get to scoping and the council meeting in June, et cetera.**

MS. WIEGAND: Does that capture it, Rusty?

MR. HUDSON: Yes, ma'am.

MR. ROBINSON: Can I ask Rusty a question?

MR. HUDSON: Go ahead.

MR. ROBINSON: What is the size of a king mackerel when they do their first spawn? Do you have any data on that?

MR. HUDSON: Ben was pretty good on that, and it seems that that growth rate is pretty quick once they get close to your minimum size stuff, but, quite honestly, one of Ben's main concerns was always wanting to protect those year classes, and now I understand that we've got multiple year classes going, and so I think the biggest concern was that, and I heard it discussed just a little while ago, protecting the small fish and also protecting the big fish, and so the spawners will be protected. They are being protected, because we are leaving so many on the table, both commercial and recreational. Does that help, Gary?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, that helped. I am also concerned about the big fish in the spring in Jupiter and guys having to catch 150 head just to keep seventy-five, because of the sharks and how bad the shark problem is down there, and there's a lot that is just being wasted down there, also. At some point, I would like to address that and how bad the shark problem is and how many fish are being eaten just so those guys can keep seventy-five of them. I don't blame the guys. I mean, they've got to do what they've got to do, but it is a concern.

MR. LAKS: If we have time after this, Gary, in Other Business, I will let you bring that up, and maybe you can make a motion.

MR. HUDSON: But we'll stay with the twenty-four inch minimum with that little bit of percentage for a little bit of smaller ones, but I know there was people that wanted to try to change some of that, but it seems like there was a lot of pushback on that too small.

MR. ROBINSON: I would just like to make sure they spawn one time before we catch them. I would hate to see people coming to the dock with 100 head of four-pound fish or something that were just barely legal, and they haven't even spawned yet, and, if that's all that is there, that's what everyone is going to do in the wintertime in Sebastian, and it doesn't happen often, but I would hate to see that many fish taken out of our spawning stock, but I do want to see 100 head, or 1,250 pounds, whichever comes first. That would help us a lot.

Weather determines a lot of the quota that gets caught. We didn't catch nothing in the Panhandle, because of Hurricane Michael, and so there's still like 300,000 on that quota up there, because we didn't catch nothing in the fall, because of the hurricanes, and so all of that plays a part, is what I am saying.

MR. BOWEN: I also want to add to that. Not everyone is going to catch 100 head every time we go, but, when the opportunity presents itself, it's nice to -- Instead of leaving at eight o'clock in the morning and you're done and going back to the dock, you could actually put in a day's worth of work and make it worth it, when you only have maybe eight days out of a whole month, or four days out of a whole month, of work. That's all we're really trying to get at, and we have the fish to do it, even with Season 2 alone, but also with the rollover in Season 1, and we're plenty covered on that. Anyway, it would just be nice to have the opportunity is all we're asking for.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, did we get a second to this motion?

MR. LAKS: I don't know if we did. Would someone like to second this motion?

MR. ROBINSON: I will second it.

MR. LAKS: Do you guys have any more discussion on this, or do we want to take a vote?

MR. DONALSON: I have a quick question or comment, if that's okay.

MR. LAKS: Sure.

MR. DONALSON: Is there any type of research done on the effects of increasing the size of the catch limit commercially and its effect on the recreational harvest numbers? The only reason I ask is I'm just north of the area where you guys are talking about, and I'm just wondering if there's a way to see if there's any effect on the recreational angler by removing that many more fish during that time of the year.

MR. LAKS: I'm sure Christina can answer this better than I can, but the SSC recommended an ACL for us, and the problem we're having is we're not able, due to weather and the amount of days that we can get out and fish, and the low trip limits, to actually get to that ACL, and so I'm sure there's been some analysis done on how it affects the fishery, and that was the recommendation that was given to us, or it was given to the council, and that we have to fish on, to have the ACL set at that. We're just saying we're not able, on those trip limits with the days that we could fish, to even come close to that, and so I'm sure that's baked into the cake, but I will let Christina talk to that.

MS. WIEGAND: If I'm understanding your question correctly, in terms of increasing the trip limit for the commercial fishery at a certain time of year and how that will affect the recreational fishery at the same time, as far as the interaction between the recreational fishery and the commercial fishery, I'm not sure there's any data on that, aside from anecdotal data on how those two fisheries interact together at that particular time of year, but it's possible that I am not understanding your question correctly.

MR. DONALSON: No, you understand the question correctly, but I was just curious if it's ever even been thought of, of if it affects the recreational fishery at all when we increase the limits like that, and that's all. There is never any talk of increasing the recreational limit, and so I just wanted to get that on the record.

MR. HUDSON: Chip Collier just sent me the info about the fishery performance report, and we can pull out that maturity information off of there.

MR. LAKS: I'm sure all of that will be in analysis as we move forward on this framework, and isn't that correct, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes. As we move forward on the framework, there will be biological analyses done to look at fish sizes and maturity levels as well as some of the social analysis could look at interactions between the commercial and recreational fisheries, but that will all happen as this amendment moves forward and as the update to the stock assessment moves forward. Was there any other discussion on this motion?

MR. HUDSON: I have the information. It's on page 7 of the twenty-page FPR, but it's been 17.7 to 19.6 inches standard length that 50 percent of the females, and they most all are mature by the time they are thirty-five inches, age-four.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you for that.

MR. BOWEN: I just wanted to put out a little information on what we've been seeing out there, and not that this is relating 100 percent to what we're talking about with the 100 head, but kind of. I mean, we have been seeing a really big number of eight to thirteen-inch kingfish, really big marks, and, also, Ben was seeing a ton of them down there in the Spanish mackerel this year, and so the recruitment definitely looks very strong. Anyway, I'm just putting that out there for anyone that was curious about that. There's a lot of small fish, tiny fish, and that's a good sign.

MR. LAKS: If there's no other discussion, I think we should vote on this motion.

MS. WIEGAND: **If you are in favor of this motion, I want you to go ahead and raise your hand now, if you are in favor; if you are opposed to this motion, raise your hand; if you are abstaining from this vote, raise your hand now. That motion is approved.** Is there any other discussion on the king mackerel trip limit?

MR. HAYMANS: I guess I was hoping to see a motion to accept some of the public comment trip limits that were thrown out there, so that, if we do get to a decision paper in June, that you've got something to work off of, but I guess I don't see that motion yet.

MR. LAKS: I thought we added that into the motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Doug, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I can try to frame the question differently. If you will see on the screen, at the meeting in March, we received a variety of suggestions for trip limits, and so, looking at this, is there anything that you guys didn't really want to consider, or, in the previous motions, did it -- The impression I got was that it was inclusive of all of this, but, if there's something that you don't want to consider, that would be important to make clear to the council.

MR. BOWEN: I think that, if we were going to take any of those out, the 600-pound trip limit in Season 2 would be one of those, because that's really not doing us any favors. I mean, we've got

multiple fifty-head limits, 600 pounds, and so that's really helping us out very much, but, anyway, that would be the only thing that I would say.

MR. LAKS: I think we should probably just leave it in, just to have a record that it was looked at. I don't know if we will have another chance to comment on this and see where that analysis falls out, but they were suggestions, and I don't think it could hurt. While you're already doing analysis, I don't think, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Christina, that it would be that much harder to check a different poundage limit.

MS. WIEGAND: No, that's not something that is a problem for staff to analyze. That's fine. Is there any other discussion on king mackerel trip limits?

DR. ELKINS: I don't know that this is the appropriate venue or time for this, and I don't have the recreational data right in front of me, but, from memory, they also are not coming close to catching their quota, and, for the same reasons that Ira used to increase the trip limits for commercial fishermen, an argument could be made to increase the bag limit for recreational fishermen, and so that's something I'm not calling for, but it's something that I would call for the council to examine, to see if that would be possible.

MR. LAKS: I am going to bring something up in Other Business that will be pertinent to what you just said, and hopefully we can move on with what we have to do and have some time. If you would please expand on that when I get to that, I would appreciate it.

DR. ELKINS: Sure. Thanks. No problem.

AP MEMBER: Ira, can I ask you a question?

MR. LAKS: Yes.

AP MEMBER: What is the recreational -- I thought it saw six per person or something, and am I correct on that?

MR. LAKS: No. Recreational off of Florida, and I think off the whole jurisdiction, is two per person.

AP MEMBER: Two per person. Okay. Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: If there is no other discussion on this, Ira, would you like me to move on to Spanish mackerel?

MR. LAKS: Yes, absolutely.

MS. WIEGAND: Then the next thing for us to talk about is Spanish mackerel commercial closures, and, if you guys remember, at your last meeting, and I believe even the meeting before that, you have expressed concerns about this increase in participation that's being experienced in the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, both in the Northern Zone and in the Southern Zone, and there has been concerns about you guys getting very close to the annual catch limits and the possibility of closures.

Indeed, in the 2017/2018 season, there was a transfer of poundage that's allowed in the regulations. The Southern Zone transferred 100,000 pounds of quota from their zone to the Northern Zone to try to prevent an early closure, but the Northern Zone still closed early, on November 7, and then, this year, there wasn't any transfer of quota. Everyone kept their quota as was established in the regulations. The Northern Zone closed on November 4, and the Southern Zone also closed early, on February 5.

We brought this issue to the council at their March meeting, and they discussed it. Both council members from the State of North Carolina and the State of Florida agreed that the closures are having a negative impact on their fishermen and that their states are looking, sort of individually, at what they can do in state waters to address the problem.

That being said, the council does want some input from the advisory panel on management measures for federal waters that may help prevent some of these closures, including the possibility of a trip limit step-down in the Northern Zone similar to what they do in the Southern Zone. Whether the exact same type of step-down program would work sort of depends on the poundage that fishermen in the Northern Zone are landing, which is where we need some AP input. Just as a reminder, at the last meeting, you guys did pass a motion requesting that the council consider a limited-entry system for Atlantic Spanish mackerel.

I have included a little bit of additional information here. Again, this is just a summary of all the commercial Atlantic Spanish mackerel regulations as they currently stand, including that adjusted quota system that is used in the Southern Zone. I also did want to note that, at the last AP meeting, you guys had talked quite a bit about limited entry. The CMP Fishery Management Plan is a joint plan between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic Council, and the commercial Spanish mackerel permit covers both Atlantic Spanish mackerel and Gulf Spanish mackerel, and so any changes to permits, regardless, are going to need to be approved by both the South Atlantic Council and the Gulf Council, which can complicate things a bit.

I also, like I did with king mackerel, included the most recent commercial landings, as pulled from the Regional Office's ACL monitoring page, and you can see that Spanish mackerel landings have exceeded the annual catch limit in six of the last ten seasons, keeping in mind that 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 seasons are still preliminary estimates. I also pulled, based on those landings, separated out for the Northern and Southern Zones, but, as you can see, both the Northern and Southern Zones have come close to meeting their ACL in recent years. With that, I will go ahead and answer any questions and let Ira lead the discussion on this.

MR. LAKS: I think I'm going to probably assume that Steve English has got his hand raised, and I would like to hear Steve's thoughts, to start with.

MR. ENGLISH: I kind of brought this up at the last council meeting there, and we see a big problem coming in the Spanish mackerel fishery. Like I said, there's way too many people in it, and the prices are just rock bottom, and so were trying to come up with at least some solutions to protect those of us who have been in it forever and keep it from getting further out of control, and so the first thought was that, since it's a limited fishery, it should be a limited-entry fishery, and that's just common sense to me, and it should be to anybody else.

The main thing that the council will have control over is federal waters. The state waters, I suppose the state can do anything they want, and so they'll have to work hand-in-hand with them in state waters, but the main thing that the council -- That I'm concerned with the council is the federal waters and the gillnet fishery between Cape Canaveral and Martin County, and so I asked the council to do a limited entry for the gillnet fishery, to come up with a system to do that, and go back to a control date, hopefully five years back, and then add some other things in there to make sure that we end up with the right people in it and don't end up with people getting licenses and then just selling them and you have done nothing to solve the problem, and so that's my concern, and that's what I am hoping that we can get out of this on the Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery from Cape Canaveral to Salerno. With that, if anybody has anything to say, I'm open.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I have a couple of questions. It is a joint fishery management plan. If we decided to do some sort of limited entry, could we do that? I know that the Gulf doesn't want limited entry, or some of the people I have spoke to and past motions we have put on the AP. Can we do that as an endorsement for the east coast, or would the permits have to be separated, because I know -- Probably Steve and Gary remember that we did, at one time, have two king mackerel permits, a Gulf and an Atlantic.

MR. HUDSON: Ira, I just looked at the list on Spanish mackerel, and there is 1,902, and a fair of them are in Alabama and Louisiana and stuff like that, and so, if they're not wanting limited access, and this is just a single permit, open access, this is going to be tough.

MR. LAKS: Yes, that's kind of what I'm alluding to. Is there a way that the South Atlantic could manage their own jurisdiction? It would be nice to know how have the permits with active landings changed over time in the Southern Zone.

MS. WIEGAND: How the permits have changed over time is something that I could pull. I don't believe I have it broken up by state. I do have the South Atlantic and Gulf over time, since about 2012, but I believe that's something we could request.

MR. LAKS: I know one issue that happens is, since the State of Florida doesn't require a permit, a lot of people have probably relinquished them, and then you're losing all that data, too.

MR. HUDSON: Is it possible that you can break out the numbers by state and then also break out the Florida into an east and west coast breakout, maybe even down to a county resolution? I don't know, but it might be useful.

MS. WIEGAND: We can break it out based on home port.

MR. HUDSON: Yes, home ports, right. The other thing is --

MS. WIEGAND: We can break out the information based on home port.

MR. HUDSON: Right. On the other thing that I wanted to mention, on May 1, in the afternoon, the Fish and Wildlife Commission of Florida will be meeting and talking about the Spanish mackerel cast nets and hook-and-line in state waters and trying to get the step-downs put back in place. They feel, at least from what staff told me, they feel like that will help you all in federal

waters, by keeping those people from burning through so much Spanish mackerel in the Southern Zone.

MR. ENGLISH: Like I said, the main concern we have is the gillnet fishery here, and to put on the record too, and this needs to be noted, but this is a special place out there, around the Cape, at the time of year we're in there, and the unique, professional fishermen who know how to handle a gillnet in that depth won't be a bunch of people like you've got down in the state waters that don't know what they're doing and creating all the massive problems that they're creating down here in the federal waters with the gillnets. That's going to hurt those of us who have gillnet fished all of our lives, and this is our last hoorah, I guess, is the only way that I can put it.

They have a special -- In the Keys, they have a million-pound quota special thing for gillnetting kingfish. I don't see why we couldn't do the same thing for Spanish mackerel on the east coast in that zone and have the special limited entry thing for the fishermen who do that, and we don't have to do their own separate quota unless that was something they wanted to do, and it's what they've been catching, but I just think you could do limited entry and that would take care of it, and it would take care of itself.

MR. LAKS: Christina, I guess, getting back to kind of what I was saying before, and you probably don't have the information, but if we can have it brought up or maybe researched that, if we do have to do a limited-entry system of any kind, whether you did an endorsement for a gillnet or an endorsement for a zone, if that can be done in a single jurisdiction, or is it -- I mean, I know it would have to be done with the approval of the Gulf Council, but could you just do it for one jurisdiction?

MS. WIEGAND: I'm not sure of how something like that works legally or whether it's simpler to do it as an endorsement or to split the permit. That's something that myself and staff would need to look into, to figure out how adding an endorsement on a permit just for a particular area, as opposed to a particular gear, like Steve is suggesting, or like has been done in the past in the snapper grouper fishery. I would need to look into that.

MR. LAKS: I think that would be valuable in any conversations going forward.

MR. ENGLISH: I think you're going to have to know that, because, to get the Spanish fishery, the whole Gulf and Atlantic to agree to it, that's never going to happen, and that would just destine this mackerel fishery off of Cape Canaveral to get totally out of control and destroyed and hurt the fishery. I mean, it's just destined that it's going to happen. There's too many people that are going to jump in and create a monster here, and so, if we can't cut it off, then we're just destined to end up like we are down in state waters in Port Salerno during the heart of the mackerel fishery, out of control fishing and low prices, people that don't know what they're doing, and it's just going to create problems.

Like I said, I just think we need to look into any avenue possible to control that zone, in particular, and that will help. Just controlling that zone will help the entire fishery, as far as leaving extra fish for the people in state waters. It will help on keeping the price stabilized and not letting the price go in the toilet like it did this year, and I just think anything we can do to help that is a good thing.

MR. LAKS: Christina, is there a way that we can request the council to also talk to the state, to see if they can do something to require permits? Again, we're missing all that data, and it might be a way to get more of a handle on this fishery. I know the council has no purview over the states, but I know they do work together.

MS. WIEGAND: It's certainly something that -- We've always got state reps at the council table, and it's certainly a discussion the council could have around the table.

MR. LAKS: Would it be appropriate to make a motion that we request the council to further work with the states to try to -- Especially in the Southern Zone, the State of Florida? I'm sure North Carolina has their own issues on this, but to further work with the council to figure a way forward?

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry, Ira, but could you just repeat that?

MR. LAKS: Oh, boy. Would it be inappropriate to --

MS. WIEGAND: Just the very end. I was conferring about some NOAA GC stuff.

MR. LAKS: Just having the council work with the state a little bit or try to formulate a plan with the state to make this -- To have some continuity between the state and federal fishery. Again, my concern is you're losing all that federal data by people not filling out trip tickets, and it's hard to capture the fishery. Everyone is always yelling about data, data, data. Is there any way that we can suggest that the council ask the state to require a federal permit?

MS. WIEGAND: You are certainly welcome to make a motion to that effect.

MR. LAKS: Would anyone like to make that motion? Steve, is that something --

MR. ENGLISH: I think that the council, first, ought to decide whether or not they want to do a limited entry on the Spanish mackerel. If they don't, then they could ask the state to require it just for data purposes, but, if they did limited entry on it, then I think the state could take that up themselves and require it and use that for some of their management tool and get the landing data, and so it might be a little premature at this time to ask them to do it, and I don't know.

MR. LAKS: Maybe we don't have to do it as a formal motion, Christina, but can we just suggest that the council look into limited entry and work with the states to somehow stabilize this fishery?

MS. WIEGAND: You can recommend that. You can do it as a formal motion. I will note that we did present the motion that was made at the previous AP meeting requesting the council to consider limited entry for Spanish mackerel, and the council indicated they felt that that was a big step to take, and they wanted a bit more information, and so the information you guys have provided today is certainly very helpful, but, if limited entry is the way you want to go, I would definitely encourage you to make another motion to that effect and vote on it and definitely continue the conversation and make sure that the reasoning behind that motion is supported.

MR. LAKS: I know we have some members of the panel that aren't familiar with this fishery, and if I could just give a little broad overview, and I know that Steve has, but it's an extremely easy fishery to access in state waters, and you really need fifty-dollars and a bathtub with an electric

motor. It's gotten extremely crowded, and you have a lot of user conflicts, and it's essentially a free-for-all, and I think both recreational and commercial fishermen in the area are concerned that it's expanding so fast that it's just going to hurt the fishery.

MR. ENGLISH: I agree with that, and I would also add to the limited-entry system that definitely we should do an endorsement on that and look at that, if we could add that into the motion that is already there, and that's what I would like to see.

MR. ROLLER: I am in North Carolina, and, just to give you guys an overview of our fishery, obviously, to us, hitting the quota is an issue as well. Virtually our entire fishery, whether it's recreational or commercial, takes place in state waters, and, when you talk about a free-for-all in Florida, I would argue that it's an even bigger free-for-all here, because we have enormous gillnet fisheries inside our state waters, and so it's a very easy fishery to get into, particularly because they're very accessible.

Over the last four or five years, I have started -- I have both experience, and I've heard from a lot of my colleagues and associates in the for-hire industry as well as recreational fishermen, that they're starting to discuss how big of an issue it's becoming, and so I just want to preface how important this is to North Carolina, too. I have some -- As far as the for-hire, I mean, I have supported that, or I should say as far as the limited-entry program, and I've supported that in the past, and I would consider it going forward, but I want to reiterate how important it is to work with the states on this issue, particularly since our fishery is so heavy in the state waters and so accessible.

MR. LAKS: If I could just add one thing on the commercial side, Christina, and I don't know if this would, again, take a motion or just for staff to dig up, but we really don't know how many fishermen without federal permits have landings. What is the scope and range of that fishery? It's unknown, and how do you manage something that you don't really have a handle on who is participating in it, and I don't know if that needs to be a motion, but we need to find out just what is the broad range of people who are in the fishery.

MS. WIEGAND: That can be a recommendation to staff. We can see what it would take to work with the states and possibly be able to get that information to present to the council.

MR. LAKS: It's awful hard to manage something when you don't know who is participating in it.

MR. GORHAM: Obviously, the management of it, and then the biology of the fish, are the fish being caught off of Hatteras and southern North Carolina, is that the same stock of fish that's being caught all the way down into Florida?

MR. LAKS: I am not 100 percent sure, but I do believe that the fish leave here and go up there, but Christina would probably give you more information on that.

MR. ENGLISH: I can tell you 100 percent yes.

MS. WIEGAND: Steve's knowledge is certainly more applied than mine, but the stock boundary is set right now at the Miami-Dade/Monroe line, and there is a little bit of mixing in south Florida, but, in terms of management from that Miami-Dade line north, it's all the same stock.

MR. LAKS: So, basically, the fish get it coming and going.

MR. GORHAM: So they don't have the same line that cobia do?

MR. LAKS: No.

MS. WIEGAND: No, they have a different management boundary for Spanish mackerel. It's now the same as cobia.

MR. ENGLISH: I have some input on the North Carolina landings when we get to that point, but I would sure like to consider this on the Florida end first, and then I definitely have something to say on the North Carolina end.

MR. LAKS: I think, at this point, we need to craft some sort of motion, maybe in the vein of we would like the council to look at some ways to constrain effort in the Spanish mackerel fishery, exploring limited entry and other options, as well as dealing with state management issues.

MR. HUDSON: I pulled the fishery performance report for Spanish mackerel, and there is a lot of comments on state levels, Florida and North Carolina in particular, and some of that information could be useful for us to re-read as we're trying to move forward with this. Another item that Christina could probably pull up from Tracey Smart at SEAMAP is she had shown us our king mackerel recruitment for the last five years, and it was excellent, but our Spanish mackerel for the last five years was not, as far as the SEAMAP survey, and that may help give you -- It may get people to understand why an open access could be so problematic, particularly when you're having bad recruitment periods like we are now.

MR. LAKS: That's good information, Rusty.

MR. ENGLISH: One thing in your motion is --

MS. WIEGAND: Based on what Ira said, I have put a motion on the --

MR. LAKS: Christina, I think Steve wanted to add to it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. We need someone to make the motion or add to it as well, and so, if Steve wants to add to it and then make the motion, then we can continue onward.

MR. ENGLISH: The only thing I would like to add to it is where it says to manage effort for the commercial Spanish mackerel fishery, including limited entry and a gillnet endorsement and then working with the states. I will make the motion.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Is that what you're looking for, Steve?

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, that's the motion I will make.

MR. LAKS: Should we make the gillnet motion separate, as a separate motion?

MR. ENGLISH: We can.

MR. LAKS: Why don't we do that? Why don't we do the first one, Steve, and then you can make the gillnet endorsement as a separate motion.

MR. ENGLISH: **Let's do it that way, yes.**

MR. LAKS: I guess we need someone to second the first motion.

MS. WIEGAND: Correct. We need someone to second that motion.

MR. LAKS: Would anyone like to second the motion?

MR. BOWEN: I will second the motion.

MR. ROBINSON: I was out of the room, but what was the motion, Ira? I will second it, if I need to.

MS. WIEGAND: The motion is up on the board, and it reads --

MR. ROBINSON: I see it now. Yes, I would definitely second that.

MR. LAKS: Is there any more discussion that we want to have on this motion? If not, I say we vote.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. We're going to do this the same way we've been doing it. I am putting everyone's hands down now. **If you are voting in favor of this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are opposed to the motion, please raise your hand; if you are abstaining from this vote, raise your hand now.**

Thank you, guys. I'm going to pause for just one second. I see Aaron Kelly, who is one of our new AP members, has joined us. Aaron, I am going to go ahead and unmute you, to make sure that we can hear you and you can hear us.

MR. KELLY: Can you hear me?

MS. WIEGAND: We sure can. Thanks, Aaron.

MR. KELLY: Hi, guys. I'm so sorry. I'm trying to follow along, but I'm out here catching redfish, and it's a little bit windy, and I apologize.

MS. WIEGAND: We will go ahead and leave you unmuted, if you can just mute your microphone when you're not talking.

MR. KELLY: Absolutely. Will do.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you. **With that, the motion is approved.**

MR. ENGLISH: **I guess I would like to make the second motion now then that we look into a gillnet endorsement for the Southern Zone with qualifying criteria.** I would like to explain that, if I can.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Is what I have on the board there correct?

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, that is the motion. I guess we need a second, and then we can discuss it.

MR. LAKS: I will second it.

MR. ENGLISH: Ira, do you want me to speak about it now?

MR. LAKS: Yes. Christina, did you get the second, or does someone else need to second it?

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, as the Chair, you can't. Someone else needs to second it.

MR. LAKS: Would someone else like to second it?

MR. BOWEN: I will second it.

MR. LAKS: Is there any more discussion?

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, and let me explain why I did it in this manner. The gillnet endorsement only applies to the Southern Zone, and the only gillnetting that goes on is from Cape Canaveral to Port Salerno. That's where it happens in federal waters, three miles out to approximately four or five or six miles out. That way, the Gulf wouldn't be affected, because they have no problem. North Carolina could do their own thing, and North Carolina is almost strictly a 100 percent gillnet fishery anyhow already, and so this would just take care of a certain problem in a specific area and it would -- We would have to have a big discussion on that, so everybody would agree to that, and so that's why I did it like I did.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, do you mind if I clarify something, real fast?

MR. LAKS: No. Anytime.

MS. WIEGAND: Just a note is permit changes do require the approval of both councils. If it's worded like this, so it would only affect the Atlantic Southern Zone, it would only affect the Atlantic Southern Zone, but, because permit changes are a full plan amendment, the Gulf Council still does have to approve any changes.

MR. LAKS: Right, and so that would mean that they could approve our change, but still remain any way they wanted to be, right?

MS. WIEGAND: Correct.

MR. LAKS: Okay.

MR. ENGLISH: That's why I made it that way, so that the Gulf knows that this would not affect them, and they would probably be willing to go along with us, because this is a specific problem to a specific area.

MR. LAKS: Is there any more discussion on this, or are we ready to vote? I don't hear anyone commenting, and so I guess we can go ahead and vote.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am putting everyone's hands down now. **Raise your hand if you are voting in favor of this motion; if you are opposed to this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are abstaining from this vote, please raise your hand now. That motion is approved.**

MR. LAKS: Christina, I know we're doing pretty decent on time. Do you need a break? I know we can all move around, but do you need to take a break?

MS. WIEGAND: I'm all right. It's completely up to you as the Chair, but I'm doing fine. Thank you for asking.

MR. LAKS: Do any of you guys need a break? I'm sure you're free to move around at home. Is there anyone who would like a break? Speak up, please. Then I guess we'll move ahead.

MR. ENGLISH: Ira, I would like to say one thing on the North Carolina end, if it's possible to put it on the record.

MR. LAKS: Sure.

MR. ENGLISH: I am very familiar with the commercial sector in North Carolina, and I fish it, and I have fish North Carolina waters too for Spanish mackerel. The Spanish mackerel fishery in North Carolina is totally different than in Florida. In North Carolina, it's an all gillnet fishery, and they get good prices, and they catch a portion of their quota in the spring and during the summer, and they get pretty good prices all summer. They catch a portion of that quota, and then the rest of the quota that's left for the fall run is just that.

It's a fall run, and so there's a big run of fish, and everybody that has fished all summer jumps in and catches that fall run, and so they'll catch that up almost every year that they can fish, but there is years that in North Carolina -- If a nor'easter sets up at the right time, the quota will go untouched the rest of the year, because they won't be able to fish, and it's only just a two or three-week window that they catch those fish.

The only thing that I see that North Carolina possibly needs to do, so that they don't waste fish when the fishery does close in a good year, is that they add a 500-pound limit at the end of the season. (A portion of Mr. English's comment is not audible on the recording.) They should be able to land them and not have to throw them back. I understand that the state could do that, and I think the State of North Carolina could let them catch the 500 after the quota is met in state waters, and the council wouldn't even have to consider that, but that's just my thought to straighten out the North Carolina fishery.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve.

MR. KELLY: Ira, can I add some stuff onto North Carolina as well?

MR. LAKS: Go ahead.

MR. KELLY: To go ahead on Steve's note, here in North Carolina, our -- I don't want to say our gillnet fishery is one big component fishery, and obviously I'm not a commercial fisherman, but we're seeing -- We're going to have some big changes in our state fisheries. Our predominant fishery is our southern flounder fishery, and that fishery is a lot of trouble, and they're looking at some huge restrictions, and so there's been a lot of concern and worry that people are going to move into the Spanish mackerel fishery, because that fishery will be closed and restricted. They have seen a lot of closures from restrictions in recent years as well, but it's going to be restricted even more, possibly, and so that is a concern that has been relayed to me from multiple people, and so I'm just adding that for discussion.

MR. LAKS: Maybe at our next AP meeting we can add some of that to the agenda, to look into some of the consequences of those actions.

MR. KELLY: Particularly since this fishery takes place in state waters in North Carolina.

MR. GORHAM: I would definitely add it to your agenda in the future, to see what the influx on this fisheries is coming from North Carolina.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Bill. We'll note that, and hopefully we can have it added to our agenda at the next AP.

MR. ENGLISH: Once again, like I said, and I fish both states, and I would hope that the North Carolina commercial sector -- If they wanted a limited entry into it, to control how many people is getting into it, they would speak up for it, or maybe they don't, and maybe they want to allow a lot more boats into it, and I don't know. I really don't know that. That's something that the North Carolina fishermen need to come up with on their own and then have their representatives from North Carolina make that motion.

MR. LAKS: Like I said, at the next AP meeting, I will lean on you guys to provide information that you would like to see covered.

MR. ENGLISH: With that, I've got one more thing that I would like to say. Hopefully, hopefully, we can have an AP meeting in person. This Spanish mackerel fishery thing is very, very important, and it's at a crisis point right now. I think we need a meeting face-to-face with folks, and we can sit and discuss it and talk with one another and get the ideas put together, and you get a more -- You get a lot better outcome if you meet face-to-face than we do doing this.

This is fine for some things, and just getting general things out, but, when it comes to an issue like this, and, like I said, Spanish mackerel, to me -- It's important to me, and it's important to a lot of people, and it's out of control right now in the State of Florida, and we see North Carolina heading

in that direction, and so I think it's a very, very important issue, and we really need to have a meeting with everybody face-to-face and get this thing hashed out.

MR. LAKS: Steve, I'm going to bring that up, after we get through what's on the agenda, in Other Business.

MR. ENGLISH: Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Where do we move on to now, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: I will make sure that the discussion that you guys have had about the Northern Zone and interest in looking into some things for the North Carolina fishery is included in the AP report, so that that stuff goes to the council and they know that you all would like to spend some more time discussing it. If no one has any other comments on Spanish mackerel, I will move on to cobia, and so there's something for everyone at this meeting.

MR. LAKS: If there are no other comments, let's move on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I did want to -- The council wanted you guys to go over Framework Amendment 7, which was a Gulf amendment that addresses Gulf migratory group cobia. Let me flip to the map here, as just a reminder for you guys. Cobia is broken up into two different migratory groups, and you've got Atlantic cobia that is north of the Florida/Georgia line and then Gulf cobia, which is south of the Florida/Georgia line through the Gulf.

Additionally, Gulf cobia is broken up into the Gulf zone and the Florida east coast zone based on management jurisdiction, and so the Gulf Council manages Gulf cobia within their jurisdiction and the South Atlantic Council manages Gulf cobia in our area of jurisdiction, which is along the east coast of Florida.

The Gulf Council had received a lot of public input expressing concern about the Gulf cobia stock, and so they moved forward with Framework Amendment 7, which increased the recreational and commercial minimum size for Gulf cobia to thirty-six inches fork length within their jurisdiction, and so this does not affect the east coast of Florida, because that's the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction. The Gulf Council has approved this amendment, and it has been submitted to NMFS for review by the Secretary of Commerce, and it's going through rulemaking now.

We discussed this amendment in March with the South Atlantic Council and asked whether or not they would like to consider increasing the recreational and commercial minimum size limit on the Florida east coast from thirty-three inches fork length to thirty-six inches fork length, as they have done in the Gulf. The State of Florida indicated that they weren't planning on making any changes until the Gulf cobia assessment has been completed, which wouldn't be until the end of 2020, and they wanted to sort of kick this to you guys and ask you all your opinion on whether or not this increase is necessary or would be important for cobia on the Florida east coast, and so, if anyone has any questions, I am happy to answer them, but, Ira, I will let you lead the discussion on this one.

MR. LAKS: My feeling on this, especially from fishing here in south-central Florida, is our fish tend to be a little smaller in general, and we have a terrible shark problem, and so it's hard enough

to get a big fish to the boat without getting it eaten, and let alone having to release more fish to the waiting wolfpack that is waiting to eat it as you release it.

Cobia is not an easy fish to land and measure, and I think a lot of the fishermen in the area have got pretty good at gauging a size limit on what they can bring in the boat and what they can't. I would like to hear from Steve and some of the guys who fish in north Florida and up there. If I was to see anything done with cobia on the east coast of Florida, I would like the council to mimic FWC's rules and go to one per person, because we're having a terrible problem with sharks eating cobia, and, I don't know if it would do anything, and I don't know if it's a thing either way, but I certainly want to get the input from people who fish further north.

MR. SWANN: Ira, I don't really see the necessity to make any -- To even consider any changes until the Gulf cobia assessment is completed. That's my opinion.

MR. LAKS: That sounds good.

MR. ENGLISH: Of course, I fish right here out of Stuart, and that's where we have the worst shark interactions you ever saw, from here south, and I agree with you on the thirty-three inch. On the AP, I remember back, several years ago, the scientists reviewed the size of the fish, and the fish in North Carolina are consistently bigger than what we catch here. The fish in the Gulf are much bigger than what we catch here, and that's just the way it's always been. That is the assessment idea, and the scientific community, that we just have a smaller native fish in this area, and so the thirty-three inches is the right number, and it should stay that, and I do think that we need to keep two per person for the commercial sector.

MR. LAKS: Is there anybody else?

MR. HUDSON: Ira, I've got a question about the shark issue. Is that bull sharks, or is there other species involved, because a lot of cobia is closer to shore.

MR. LAKS: From what I see, it's primarily the bull sharks, but the sharks are -- They're in a pack of all different kinds of them, and it's hard to tell what they're on, but I would say primarily bull sharks. In our area, Rusty, the fish have changed their behavior. Since there are so many sharks, they tend to be offshore more, and we don't see quite as many on the beach as we used to.

MR. HUDSON: Okay, because, next week, when I'm at the Snapper Grouper AP meeting, that draft letter is coming from the council that's going to go to the HMS AP meeting at the end of May, and that's important, because I want to be able to be species specific, and so any shark species you can think that's part of the problem, sandbars or bulls or tigers or blacktip or spinners or dusky sharks. I mean, we need to be specific next week, when we send this letter up.

MR. LAKS: Sandbars and bulls are our biggest problem.

MR. HUDSON: That's the biggest part for the cobia problem? Okay.

MR. LAKS: I would say so, and I would say bulls is the majority, but I'm sure that -- I lose more than half of the cobia that I hook that get eaten by sharks. It's almost impossible to get --

MR. HUDSON: Some people have said that they fish around bull sharks on purpose to get cobia, like we used to do with the manta rays to get cobia in the old days, and so it's --

MR. LAKS: There are people that bring them up to the boat to get it, yes.

MR. HUDSON: Okay. Thanks.

MR. LAKS: Anybody else?

MR. ENGLISH: The sandbar, we have a problem with them too, but the bull sharks is the main problem, and a lot of that is because, in one area, they just chum them up to the boat and hook the cobia, and the shark turns around and eats it. They have learned that, because they live there, and they don't get caught anymore, but, down further south, on the edge, of course, the sandbars are becoming a problem too, because there is so many of them. They have learned to eat all the kingfish, and now they're coming to the cobia too, and the sandbar will eat them just as quick as a bull shark will, if they're big enough.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you, Steve.

MR. GORHAM: Steve, can you explain where that northeast commercial landings are coming from for cobia, northeast Florida that is?

MR. LAKS: Are you specifically talking about what they had in the stock ID?

MR. GORHAM: Yes, that graph that was showing where the landings were coming from.

MR. LAKS: That's interactions with the commercial fleet, I believe. That's where the commercial kingfish fleet is, and they're there, and they're catching one or two every other day, and that's where you're seeing those landings concentrated, because the boats are there fishing not for them, but there are a lot of boats in one area.

MR. GORHAM: Is it a gill mesh size that matches up with that thirty-three inch?

MR. LAKS: It's not a net fishery. It's a hook-and-line fishery.

MR. ENGLISH: Yes, it's not the gillnet fishery. They just have a bycatch of one every now and then, because most of them use small-mesh gear. The shark fishery, of course, will catch more, with a larger-mesh gear, but the Spanish mackerel fishery just -- They will catch one every now and then with their small mesh, but it's mainly a hook-and-line fishery. It's a 90 percent hook-and-line fishery, or 95.

MR. LAKS: That's where the effort of commercial fleet is, and the cobia will interact with the commercial fishery for kingfish. They will eat the same bait.

MR. GORHAM: Is that winter or all year?

MR. LAKS: Your effort is going to be where the fish are, Bill, and so you can see -- I don't have that chart in front of me, but if you looked at they move south as the year went on, with warmer

weather, if I remember, and that's back in April, and it's hard to remember, but I do know what you're talking about, and, to me, at the time, it looked like it was just following where the commercial king mackerel fleet was prosecuting the fishery and interacting with it.

MR. GORHAM: Yes, and I didn't see a seasonal thing, but I agree. Even with our lures, we sell bucktails with smaller hooks along the east coast of Florida. Looking at some of the tournaments, they're all smaller fish, and I think the justification for the size increase was to allow an additional year of spawning for our area. In North Carolina and Virginia, we've absolutely seen the benefit of it, but, outside of a stock assessment, you kind of don't have that purpose and need, other than matching up with what the Gulf has done, and so I don't disagree with waiting for the stock assessment.

MR. LAKS: With that, I would suggest that, from what we've heard from Steve, both Steve's, actually, that, if someone might want to make a motion that we wait to consider what the Gulf stock assessment shows before we would pursue any management changes, if someone would like to make that motion.

DR. ELKINS: **So moved.**

MR. LAKS: Someone has got to make the motion for me.

DR. ELKINS: **I move that we wait until the Gulf stock assessment is done on cobia before we consider changes to the present regulations.**

MR. SWANN: I second.

MR. LAKS: Is there any other comments or conversation that we would like to have about this? If not, I say we vote.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I am putting everyone's hand down now. If you are in favor of this motion recommending to the council to wait until the Gulf cobia stock assessment before making changes to current regulations, please raise your hand now.

MR. LAKS: Christina, can I just ask you one question? When is the Gulf stock assessment for cobia?

MS. WIEGAND: I believe that it is set to start sometime this year, with options for management being available in late 2020, and I'm not sure how that has been delayed by the government shutdown earlier, but it's beginning later this year and completed sometime in late 2020.

MR. LAKS: Thank you.

MR. HUDSON: **Christina, I was just going to say, if you could put the word "complete" right after "Gulf cobia stock assessment".**

MS. WIEGAND: Chris, are you all right with that, since this is your motion?

DR. ELKINS: **Yes, a friendly change is fine with me.**

MR. SWANN: I've got one more suggestion.

MS. WIEGAND: Since we've already started voting on this motion, we could go ahead and let voting continue, and then if there's more discussion. Again, I am going to go ahead and start over. **If you would like to vote in favor of this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are opposed to this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are abstaining from this vote, please raise your hand now. The motion stands approved.**

MR. LAKS: Ira, I will go ahead and turn it back over to you, if there's any other discussion on cobia.

MR. LAKS: Does anyone want to speak about anything on cobia? I know I've had my fill of them the last three years. I will take that as a no.

MR. ROBINSON: Ira, what did you just say, and you said I will take it as a no, and what did you just say? I got someone texting me, and I'm sorry.

MR. LAKS: If there was any more discussion on cobia.

MR. ROBINSON: Okay. No problem. Thank you. I just didn't hear you.

MR. LAKS: No problem. Next, we have citizen science.

MS. WIEGAND: Yes. If it's all right with you, Ira, to move on to the next thing, I will go ahead and unmute Julia Byrd. She's our new Citizen Science Manager, and she's going to give you guys just a brief update on what's been going on with citizen science.

MS. BYRD: As Christina said, I'm the new Citizen Science Program Coordinator, or I guess Program Manager, and I have taken over for Amber Von Harten, who left the council for another job opportunity, and so I've worked in the SEDAR program for a number of years, and I have been presenting to you guys about SEDAR projects in the past, and I'm excited to talk to you now and give you a little update on the Citizen Science Program.

The first thing I wanted to talk about were kind of citizen science research priorities, and so, when Amber talked to you guys at your meeting last spring, she gave you some information on the council's citizen science research needs, and so those are kind of shown here on the screen, and the research priorities helped guide the projects that the Citizen Science Program will pursue, and so the program will try to go after projects that kind of meet these needs.

The plan is to update this research priorities document every two years in conjunction with the council updating their overall research and monitoring plan, and so this happens to be the year that the council is updating their research and monitoring plan, and so we're actually going to update the citizen science research priorities this year as well, and so this is the first time that we're kind of updating this document, and so I wanted to kind of quickly walk you through the process that we're going to use and then tell you where we would love to kind of plug in some of you guys' expertise into the process.

There is kind of a three-pronged approach to updating the citizen science priorities, and the first one is to kind of have the council staff review and provide input on the council's overall research and monitoring plan, and that plan is informed by information from the SSCs, from SEDAR kind of research recommendations, that sort of thing, and so that is being -- It is being put together now, and the council will be actually reviewing that in June, at their meeting.

Once that document is done, then it will be time to develop a separate citizen science research priorities document, and so it will kind of be informed by the document that the council puts together, but we want to focus on which of these research needs could citizen science help fill, and so the plan is to try to put together this document later this fall, and it will be put together by kind of two groups.

One is the Citizen Science Operations Committee, which is a group of folks who are kind of in charge of the policies and procedures for the overall Citizen Science Program, and then the other group that we want to help develop this document is the Citizen Science Project Advisory Team. This is a new team that we want to be made up of members of all of the different council advisory panels, and so I'll say a little bit more about that in another minute, but I wanted to also quickly mention kind of this third approach that is to be developed to help inform the research needs.

In the future, we're hoping to put together what we're calling a citizen science projects portal, and so that would be something online that members of the public or fishermen who are kind of involved in the APs or the normal council process can potentially submit ideas for citizen science projects that could also be used to help inform these citizen science research priorities.

I wanted to talk a little bit more about the Citizen Science Projects Advisory Team. Again, this is going to be a new team that we're just developing now for the Citizen Science Program, and we would like to have one or two representatives from each of the council kind of species advisory panels and then also including the Habitat and the Information Advisory Panels as well, and so the main kind of role of this group would be to help identify citizen science research and data needs across all of the FMPs and then to draft this citizen science research priorities document that would then be given to the council for their review and hopefully approval.

This group would only meet one or two times per year, and so it's not a huge time commitment, but this group is really going to be able to help shape the direction the program will move towards in going after projects, because this group is going to kind of put together the document that will guide what projects we want to pursue, and so it's an opportunity for members of the advisory panels to help kind of contribute to this direction of the program, and so we would also like the folks who are involved in this team to kind of have a strong interest in citizen science and hopefully be willing to serve as potential kind of ambassadors for the program, helping spread awareness of the program, and trying to get folks involved in the different projects that we have.

I am going to pause here for a second and see if you guys have any kind of questions on the process that we're going to use to update the research priorities and then see if there's anyone from this AP that may be interested in participating in that process, and, again, that would mean you would meet via webinar probably once this fall, to try to draft that citizen science research priorities document.

MR. DONALSON: I would be very interested in joining one of these teams.

MS. BYRD: Great. Thanks, Steve. Anyone else? We're looking for one to two representatives.

MR. ROLLER: I would be interested.

MS. BYRD: Great. Thanks, Tom. Steve and Tom, thank you, guys, so much, and I will be kind of following up with you, probably later this summer, to kind of get things rolling on this. Then the next thing that I wanted to do, just really quickly, was update you guys on a few projects that we'll be launching for the Citizen Science Program in the upcoming months.

The first one is called Scamp Release, and it is a pilot project to collect information on released scamp grouper using mobile app called SAFMC Release, and that was developed by the Citizen Science Program, and it's focused on collecting length, depth, and location of released scamp grouper from all kind of sectors, and so from commercial, for-hire and recreational fishermen, and there is really limited information available on the length of released fish, and so the idea is that the data collected from this app would be considered for use in the upcoming scamp stock assessment that will get underway next year.

Where things kind of stand on this project is we are testing the evaluation version of the Release app, and I know that some of you guys have helped with testing that out, and so a big thank you to the folks who have done that. We are hoping to launch it later this spring, and, right now, we need help recruiting kind of scamp fishermen and promoting the app, and so, if any of you guys bottom fish and may be willing to help collect data for this app, I would love to hear from you, or, if you know other folks who may be interested, I would love to hear that too, and so I will have my contact information up on the screen here in a second, and so, if you're interested in learning more about this project, just let me know.

Then I will go ahead and move on to the other project that we have that will get underway soon, and we're calling this Project FISHstory, and it's a project that is going to be using historical photos to document historic catch and length estimates from the for-hire sector using kind of an electronic data collection and kind of crowdsourcing approach, and so, basically, the objective of this project is to try to fill in a historical data gap using headboat photos from the 1940s to 1970s, and so this is prior to when there was a fishery-dependent survey, and so this is before the headboat logbook program started or before the MRFSS or MRIP Program started.

The idea is that this information, these pictures, can help fill in this kind of time period where there is very limited other data available, and so the project is going to use an online crowdsourcing platform called Zooniverse, and so what's going to happen is the photos will be uploaded to this online Zooniverse platform and then training modules will be developed so that citizens, or members of the public, will be able to identify the fish species in these photos.

Then there will be a team of kind of fish ID experts that will help validate kind of the species identifications that were made, and so Rusty Hudson, who is on you all's AP, is a partner with us on this project and is providing -- Has provided and will be providing kind of a treasure trove of all of these kind of historic photos that will be used in this project.

Again, this one will be getting underway in the upcoming months, and Rusty will be scanning a lot of photos in soon, and so I just wanted to give you guys a quick update on the two projects that

we have going on. If you're interested in learning more about any of the projects, please let me know, and feel free to contact me. I would love to chat with you all more about the program or the projects, and so I appreciate you guys giving me a few minutes to update you on what's going on with the program, and I'm happy to take any questions, if folks have them.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Julia.

MS. BYRD: Thanks, Ira.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, that was the last thing we had on the agenda, and so I will go ahead and turn it back over to you.

MR. LAKS: Okay, guys. I want to bring something up that we kind of touched all around throughout our conversations today, and I think -- I don't know how we should do this, but I think this is a recommendation to the council, but we need to have a comprehensive look at the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries. We have a lot of time that we just spent on cobia, and we deal with all these issues that come up, and we never seem to have enough time, or there's not enough discussion at council meetings about this, and they seem to get shuffled under the paper.

I know that the council did a whole visioning process on the snapper grouper fishery, and I'm not really advocating for something that in-depth, but, if you look at the council's economic study they did for the value of the fish, in the commercial fishery, king mackerel is the single-most valuable finfish in the council's jurisdiction, and Spanish mackerel is the third-most valuable fishery. If you look into the recreational fishery, if you have the top ten species by directed trips, Spanish mackerel is number two, and king mackerel is number three.

Since I have been on the AP, I know our meetings are short and limited. Four years ago, we had a four-hour meeting in Cape Canaveral, and the last two meetings have been cobia, cobia, cobia, cobia, and then we have a three-hour meeting. I think this fishery needs a little more respect. I think the fishermen, both recreational and commercial, who are in this fishery need a little more respect.

I don't know if we have to dress up some mackerel in some red snapper costumes to get that, but, if that's something we have to do, we have to do it, and so I know we've touched around some of this today, and I would like to briefly get some of your opinions on this and how maybe we could ask the council to address this. Thank you.

MR. ROBINSON: I just want to second what Ira just said. It is extremely important, and this is our life. I mean, the council wouldn't want people just coming out of the woodwork and buying a permit and sitting on the council and taking their money, and so that's what I wanted to be on the record for, that this is extremely important, everything he just said. Thank you.

MR. LAKS: Also, someone had mentioned before that we have -- We don't even discuss a trip increase in the king mackerel fishery for the recreational fishermen, and we leave a ton of fish in the water, and it's the third-most directed trips in the recreational fishery, and we don't even discuss having an increase, and part of that is time for us to be able to flesh it out as an AP and then have the council be interested in it.

MR. ENGLISH: I agree with Ira on that. In fact, this is the first day I have heard of -- We did discuss increases in the Gulf sector on the recreational side, and this is the first time I've heard it over here, and I'm glad to see them come forward with it, and I would support whatever they come up with on that, but, yes, we need to go on this pretty heavy.

I think, on the king mackerel end, we ought to come up with a better, quicker way to implement trip limits, because the trip limits are just to stretch the fishery out for landings for the fishermen. You've got quotas, and that's a given, but the trip limits are just to make it most beneficial to everybody, and so I think there ought to be a quicker way to come up with trip limits than what we've got now. On the Spanish mackerel end, of course, you heard what I said on that, and it's a totally out-of-control fishery, and it's going to take a lot to get it straightened back out, and so I hope we do have a pretty good meeting on this stuff in the near future.

MR. LAKS: A couple of the suggestions I would have is that the council has some port meetings in some of the relevant mackerel communities, even if they are webinars or whatever, but to get some input from stakeholders to see where people want to go. It just seems like we always gloss over it, and there's not a whole lot of conversation.

There's little things that like I have thought of. Like I know we have Skip who is a liaison from the Mid-Atlantic, and that's great. We need that, but we're also in a joint fishery management plan with the Gulf of Mexico, and why don't we have someone from the Gulf of Mexico AP to hear what we're saying, so that when these issues come up, like we want to have an endorsement over here, they're not confused at their AP, and maybe we should send someone from this AP over to their meeting. It just seems like we always shortchange the mackerel fishery, and I think the council needs to re-prioritize it and look into ways that stakeholders can express more opinions on it.

MR. ROLLER: I agree with everything that Ira said, both of your last monologues there, but, at the same time, I want to reference our conversation that had last year, where we talked about at length -- We had a fantastic discussion at the AP about how this fishery isn't just important, but it's one of the most important South Atlantic fisheries, and, I mean, it truly is the backbone of a lot of the for-hire sector. They may not be sexy or the most attractive fishery, but, without them, we don't have -- It's our backbone, and so I just wanted to reference that and just agree with you on how important this all is and how we keep having this discussion.

MR. LAKS: Is there anyone else who has any thoughts?

MR. GORHAM: Up here in northeastern North Carolina, it's much, much different, in the past seven or eight years. I think, two years ago, we finally had a string of kings that showed up, but, as far as Spanish mackerel, I completely agree that it is the backbone of the inshore fleet. I think it's good, and the council should hear that stakeholders -- (The remainder of Mr. Gorham's comment is not audible on the recording.)

MR. LAKS: I was wondering if someone wants to make a motion to the effect that we would like the council to devise a way in which they can hold port meetings or a way to get more information and take a better look at the Spanish and king mackerel fishery, both recreational and commercial. I mean, I would really like to see port meetings and people up and down the coast to have a chance to give their opinions and then let us as the AP take those and discuss them even further. I don't

know if someone would like to attach their name to that or craft it a little different than what I said, and I'm more than willing to let anyone make it better.

DR. ELKINS: Ira, we threw out a bunch of facts that are sort of scattered about in a bunch of different documents, and I think it would be helpful, if this is not too much work, if staff could assemble some of the economic and social and harvest of the mackerel fisheries in one document, in a summary document, and that would give us a little better background to recommend for the council to -- To alert the council as to what we're thinking about the importance of this fishery, and we could perhaps, at the next meeting, have a motion to do what you want to do, is have meetings and so forth in the different communities.

MS. WIEGAND: Chris, if you will remember, at the last AP meeting, we conducted fishery performance reports, and there is a background document that went with those fishery performance reports that summarizes recreational and commercial landings as well as management history and economic trends in the fishery, and so those two documents are available for both king and Spanish mackerels, and, if you would like, I can make sure that those documents go back out to the AP as well as can be reviewed by the council, and they're also available on our website.

DR. ELKINS: That would be fine. My memory is not what it once was.

MR. LAKS: That's where I'm taking it from, from the economic contribution report.

MS. WIEGAND: That is also available on our website, but, again, I can make sure that that economic contribution report is sent out to the AP.

MR. HUDSON: Christina, earlier today, I had asked about doing the Spanish mackerel commercial ports of call, so that we could kind of get the resolution down on a county level and stuff like that, and can we do the same thing with the king mackerel commercial? I don't know how to approach the recreational at this moment, but, at least with the king and Spanish, we do have permit counts that we can sort of follow by port of call. An Excel file would be great.

MS. WIEGAND: For king and Spanish mackerel, for the commercial permits, it's easy to break that down by permit owner and home port.

MR. HUDSON: Thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, I've got this motion on the board. Did we get anyone to make this motion?

MR. LAKS: No, but I would like somebody to.

MR. ENGLISH: **I will make that motion.**

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve.

MR. BOWEN: I will second it.

MR. LAKS: If I could just open this up to a little more conversation, the fishermen in both Spanish and king mackerel commercially have requested to limit some of the effort in these fisheries, and

they're brought up haphazardly here and there, but they're never fleshed out in a full, lengthy, analyzed discussion of where this fishery should be going, and, without planning for the future, we run into these situations where we never have the conversation. We're always trying to fix what we did instead of looking into the future and where we want this fishery to go.

Things are changing, times are changing, and the economics are changing, and we need to look to the future, and, without planning on it now, we're always going to be filling in holes instead of having a secure foundation in the fishery. Also, with the recreational fishery. Like I said, it's an extremely important recreational fishery. I have customers that take all of their king mackerel, and I know they would take a third or a fourth, and I'm not saying that should be done, but it needs to be discussed. There is a lot of fish being left in the water, and I just think the council needs to hear this. I think they need to move forward and really value this fishery for what it's worth. I would appreciate anyone else's comments. If not, I think we can vote on this.

MR. BOWEN: I agree with you, Ira. I mean, it's definitely very important, and I think, around the country, the Gulf and all the way up the eastern coast, they have quotas, but they have head limits or poundages that you can actually have a chance to catch those, and there is definitely a lot of kingfish that's left every year, and it would be nice to be able to have a chance to catch the fish that we were given.

MR. LAKS: Is there any more conversation?

MR. SWANN: On your motion, recommend the council conduct port meetings to gather more information on the commercial and recreational importance of the king and Spanish mackerel fisheries?

MR. LAKS: Importance or value, that would be -- If Steve is up to changing that, that would be fine.

MR. ENGLISH: **That's a good idea. Yes, I agree with him.**

MR. SWANN: That's it. Thanks.

MR. LAKS: Do we need to re-second that, Christina, or is it good?

MS. WIEGAND: Keith was the one that seconded it. As long as he's okay with the change, then we're good.

MR. BOWEN: Yes, I's fine with that.

MR. LAKS: Is there any other conversation?

MS. WIEGAND: Doug, I can see that you've got your hand up. You're unmuted, and you can go ahead and speak up.

MR. HAYMANS: Thank you, Christina. Ira, looking back at the last six years, I count no less than twelve amendments for this fishery management plan, with three in progress now, and so just the assertion that the fish are under-loved -- I think a lot of those amendments have been

reactionary, and so what you're asking for really does sound like a visioning process, because you're looking at where the fishery wants to go in the future, and, if that process would help limit these reactionary amendments, like 8 is, I would be fully supportive of that, and I would help in whatever way I can, whether it's port meetings in Florida and North Carolina or some other process, and I would support that, if we could limit having fifteen amendments in six years.

MR. LAKS: I appreciate that, Doug, and that's part of the goal, that we're always reactionary, but, if you look at how many actions there are in the snapper grouper fishery, it's apples to oranges, and so, again though, I do want to have things move forward instead of always re-addressing things, and I think we all can work together to make it a better fishery, and I would appreciate any help you can give. Any other discussion? Then I say we vote on it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I think you guys have gotten the routine, for the most part. I am putting everyone's hands down. **If you would like to vote in favor of this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are opposed to this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are abstaining from this vote, please raise your hand. That motion stands approved.**

MR. LAKS: If I have time, Christina, I've got one other quick thing that I would like to bring up, and we might run a few minutes over, if that's okay with everybody.

MS. WIEGAND: Go right on ahead, Ira.

MR. LAKS: One other thing that I want to bring up to you guys is that the council is moving forward with commercial sale of dolphin from for-hire trips, and, not that I am advocating that we should do this, but, if the council does move forward with the commercial sale of dolphin on for-hire trips, I believe they should also allow the king and Spanish mackerel to be sold commercially from for-hire trips under the exact same regulations that the dolphin would be sold.

The area I fish in, and probably up to Cape Canaveral, and probably up further than that, traditionally always sold more king mackerel than dolphin. We don't really have the fishery like they do down in the Keys, and, in order to be fair and equitable to for-hire vessels that don't have the access to the dolphin fishery, as some other vessels have in the council's jurisdiction, and allow certain vessels to have an extra revenue stream over its competitors, I believe just isn't fair. If the council is going to do it for one species, again, historically, when it was allowed, I sold a lot more king mackerel and Spanish mackerel than I ever did dolphin. Again, this is not a policy that I think is right, but, if you're going to do it for one, do it for all. I would like to hear some discussion on that.

MR. ROLLER: I don't support this, and I agree with your assessment. I had a discussion with some -- The first time that -- When the council moved back on the sale of dolphin, there was a big to-do from some of our offshore fleet in North Carolina, and I had a discussion with a well-known member at a public meeting, and he said, what am I supposed to do with all of these dolphin that I can't sell now, because my clients don't want them, and I said, why don't you catch less and throw them back, and he looked at me and said, well, I can't do that. I kind of just threw up my hands in the air at that point, but I agree with you that the addition of an extra revenue stream for some people is not fair, and I think this is a box that we may not want to open, and let's put it that way, and so I don't like going forward with this.

MR. LAKS: Could I just say one thing? The council is looking at taking these fish out of the recreational quota and not out of the commercial quota, and so that's what they're talking about doing for the dolphin. I do believe that's right, and, again, I would expect the exact same regulations to be for the mackerel species.

MS. WIEGAND: Ira, just to sort of follow-up on that, I believe the council has discussed, if they allow for-hire sales for dolphin or wahoo, how that would be accounted for, the commercial versus the recreational ACL, and it's something we'll need to have a bit more discussion on. Accounting for fish like that is challenging, from a data standpoint, and so how that would ultimately be accounted for is still something that's being discussed, but that's a data issue, as opposed to the council's intent, and so that is something that will continue to be discussed as that amendment is developed. It's still in the very beginning stages.

MR. LAKS: That's why I'm adamant about it being the same exact rules.

MR. SWANN: So what's next? Are we going to talk about tournament sales again?

MR. LAKS: You know, this is the problem when you -- You can't peek into Pandora's Box. You might as well rip the lid off of it. Once you let the bugs out, they're out.

MR. SWANN: That's true.

MR. ENGLISH: I commercial fish, and there's a lot of fish that I catch with my kingfish permit that I can't sell, and it happens all the time, and so what's fair for the goose is fair for the gander. I am opposed to doing it unless you're going to open it up to everything, snapper grouper and the whole nine yards. Anything that's sold under the recreational quota, the recreational license, should be attributed to the recreational quota.

DR. ELKINS: I would like to echo Tom's comments.

MR. LAKS: I didn't mention, and I probably should have, that I know, in the council's discussions, they are requiring -- They are discussing requiring having those for-hire vessels have a commercial permit and sell them under the commercial permit, and so that's why, again, I'm saying it should be the same rules, where it would have to be a vessel with a commercial permit. I'm sorry that I didn't add that earlier.

MR. GORHAM: I don't even know how this idea even got this far. Quite frankly, I think it's absurd, and that's what I would like to put on the record.

MR. LAKS: Again, I'm just putting out what would be fair and equitable for all people in this industry. It's just, if I can't compete -- If another vessel has a revenue stream that I don't have access to, they have an advantage on price points that I can't have, and so it's not something that I would like to see, but I just think, if it's going to be allowed in one fishery, I need to have it allowed in my fishery. I can't compete with a vessel that can sell a fish and I can't.

MR. GORHAM: Ira, I would clarify that I agree. I definitely agree with your point. I can't believe that they're even considering it for dolphin, but, like you said, if they open one, they might as well

open it all the way up, and it would be just as wrong not to open it all the way up, if they're going to open it.

MR. LAKS: I don't know if someone wants to make a suggestion or, if there's more discussion, go ahead.

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to add that I second Mr. Gorham's comment that this is an absurd idea. That's all.

MR. ROBINSON: Ira, I had to leave the room again, and I apologize, and are you talking about the sale of dolphin and wahoo by charter boats? Is that what we're talking about?

MR. LAKS: Well, I'm not really talking about that, Gary, because that's not our purview, but the council is considering allowing charter boats that also have a commercial dolphin wahoo permit to sell dolphin off their trips, their recreational limit off their trips, with their commercial permit.

MR. ROBINSON: While they're under charter, correct?

MR. LAKS: While they're under charter, and I'm just saying that -- You know the area that I fish in, and I don't have access to that many dolphin. I do have a lot of kingfish, and, if I can't compete but other vessels can sell certain fish, and I can't sell my fish, and I think, if the council is going to start that process, and, like I said, open Pandora's Box, they need to open it all the way.

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, that's definitely Pandora's Box, because it's -- I don't know, but I think it's a terrible idea that the for-hire boats are selling their fish, and that's just my opinion. I mean, you know me. I've always been you're either commercial or you're charter or you're recreational. Pick one, and you're one or the other, but that's just my opinion, and I'm just putting it out there.

MR. LAKS: I am not disagreeing with you. I think it just should be that way for all species. You pick one policy for all the species or none of them.

MR. ROBINSON: What species right now are they letting them sell under charter? Are they doing that?

MR. LAKS: They are not letting them sell any that are managed, but they are proposing to let them sell dolphin, just dolphin. That's in the proposal right now.

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, that's a terrible idea. I apologize, but that is a terrible idea, I think, because you're going to -- It's definitely going to be king mackerel next, and it's going to be snappers, and it's just going to go right down the line. I'm with Bill that it's a terrible idea, I think, but that's just me, and I just wanted to put my two-cents in.

MR. LAKS: I am not disagreeing with you. I am just saying that the charter boats in this area that don't have access to dolphin -- If they go ahead and do that, they can't give some boats a revenue stream that other boats don't have and ask them to compete fairly.

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, I understand what you're saying. Like I said, I'm just putting my two-cents in that I think anything under a charter should definitely not be sold. You go out later in the

day by yourself and do your commercial fishing thing, like some guys do, and that's fine, but, under charter, definitely not.

MR. BOWEN: I agree with that, too.

MR. HUDSON: Ira, you can't forget HACCP, too. That was always a big concern, before and after.

MR. LAKS: I understand all the ramifications. I am just trying to make the point, Rusty, that I'm not for selling the fish on charters. That is not what I am advocating. I am advocating that you can't pick and choose what boat gets to sell which fish. It ruins the competition level if another boat has access to a fish and a revenue stream that I can't do.

MR. HUDSON: In the Gulf of Mexico, they still have the sales over there, and are those people, charter boats, equipped with the commercial stuff and doing all the HACCP stuff over there?

MR. LAKS: You know, I'm not really sure of how they proceed over there. I know it's not a great idea, but I'm just saying, if the council wants to proceed down this road, it should be aware that they are giving an advantage to people in one state, and particularly one part of the state, to the disadvantage of other charter boats, and I just think that it has to be fair and equitable. It just would be nice if we were all on a level playing field, as a businessman. Again, I am not advocating to sell my fish on my charters. I am advocating that nobody should, but, if the council does go ahead with that -- Like I said, once you open Pandora's Box, you have opened it.

MR. ROBINSON: I don't know what the rules are in the Gulf of Mexico, but I just know that they pull up to the dock with garbage cans of king mackerel, and they get their charter to tote the fish up the dock and weigh them up, to do the whole fishing experience, I guess, and they definitely do that over there, and I don't even know what the law is over there, but they definitely do it, and we have watched them do it for twenty years now. The charter will actually put the fish on the dolly and wheel them up the dock and do the work for the captain, and it's crazy, but that's what they do over there, and so I don't even know what the law is.

MR. LAKS: That's a whole other conversation that I don't even want to get into, but, again, I don't know if you all are getting my point, but I just -- I am not advocating that we sell mackerel on charters, but I am just advocating that, if the council is going to allow one vessel that has access to another fish to have an extra revenue stream, that all vessels in the council's jurisdiction should have availability to the revenue stream of the fish that they fish for.

MR. ROBINSON: I absolutely understand what you're saying, and I totally get it. I am just putting it on the record, and I think Keith is too, that we're definitely against that.

MR. LAKS: If somebody wants to make a motion that the council should not consider the sale of any fish on recreational trips, due to the fact that it might bleed over into the mackerel fishery, I'm open to something like that.

MR. ROBINSON: **I will make that motion.** Absolutely I will.

MS. WIEGAND: Does that get at the motion?

MR. LAKS: I would love to see that for the fear that it bleeds into all fisheries, or something like that. I am open to other ideas of how you guys want to --

MR. ROBINSON: If you give them the incentive to sell the fish, you're giving them the incentive to catch more of them and try harder to catch more of them, and it's not right, not in the charter industry.

MR. LAKS: I just want to see it captured, guys, that we're worried about it bleeding into all the fisheries.

MR. ROBINSON: Absolutely.

MR. LAKS: I don't know how we could craft that, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: I can make sure that that's captured in the discussion of this motion.

MR. LAKS: Okay.

MS. WIEGAND: The discussion that's been had here on the webinar, I'll make sure that that's captured to sort of back up why Gary made the motion.

MR. LAKS: **Maybe we could put in there that if sales are allowed for one species that it should be considered for all.**

MR. ENGLISH: I think you've got that covered with what you have.

MS. WIEGAND: Gary, is that something you're comfortable with?

MR. ROBINSON: **Yes.**

MS. WIEGAND: Gary, are you comfortable with the motion as written?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, ma'am.

MR. LAKS: Is there a second?

MR. ROLLER: Second.

MR. LAKS: Is there any more conversation? Then I would say we vote on it.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. **If you would like to vote in favor of this motion, please raise your hand now; if you are opposed to the motion, please raise your hand now; if you are abstaining from the vote, please raise your hand now. That motion stands approved.**

MR. LAKS: I don't have anything else, and I know we're a little over time, but, if anyone else has anything else they would like to comment on, if it's okay with everybody, or I will check with you, Christina, but does anyone want to comment on anything else?

MR. HUDSON: Ira, sorry, but, Christina, I abstained on that vote, and you didn't reflect the abstained, because of the way the sentence is structured. It's either none or all, and that could get problematic, and so I think it's going to need a lot more discussion.

MR. SWANN: Ira, thanks for your leadership today. You did a great job.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Steve.

MR. ROBINSON: Ira, thank you and Christina. I think it was a great meeting, and I really hope we get to meet face-to-face before the year is over, but absolutely great meeting today. Thank you so much.

MR. LAKS: Thank you, Gary.

MS. WIEGAND: I want to thank all of you guys for trying to do this via webinar. I know that trying to do it this way is a little new, and we weren't sure how it was going to go, and so I appreciate you guys tuning in and giving it a shot and participating.

MR. ROBINSON: It was really very easy. I mean, I think this is a great way to do a meeting like this, but I think face-to-face before the year is out would be great, but this was a really good way to do it.

MR. LAKS: I want to thank you, Christina, for putting up me. I know I've pestered you a little bit over the last few weeks, but thank you for everything, and we definitely couldn't have done it without you.

MS. WIEGAND: You guys are always welcome to pester me with questions.

MR. LAKS: That's a dangerous proposition when it comes to me, and you know that.

MR. FELLER: Thank you, all, for everything.

MR. ENGLISH: This meeting was great. I still think we need a face-to-face meeting this year.

MR. HUDSON: I agree on the face-to-face.

MR. LAKS: Well, guys, if there is no other business, hopefully we --

MR. ROBINSON: Ira and Christina, if we can come up with a face-to-face meeting, what area would it be in? Is there any consideration for that yet? Like would it still be in South Carolina, like normal, or will we do a small meeting in Cape Canaveral or something like that? Have you all even considered a meeting?

MS. WIEGAND: The standard for advisory panel meetings is to hold them in South Carolina, for the most part, and that's an expense issue. We can discuss with the council and with our Administrative Officer about the possibility of holding it elsewhere, but, more than likely, it will still be held in Charleston, South Carolina.

MR. ROBINSON: Okay. That would be fine. I just was curious, and that's all. Thank you so much for your leadership and for the meeting today. Thank you for helping us get on here.

MR. GORHAM: I would just like to add that there's a lot of value in face-to-face. You learn a lot of things about the differences along the coast and the different needs, but thank you, all.

MR. LAKS: I think, if that's it -- Again, I would like to thank everybody. I appreciate all your input, and I appreciate you putting up with me, and I think that ends the Mackerel Cobia Advisory Panel. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 18, 2019.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

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