

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**Hotel Ballast
Wilmington, North Carolina**

December 4, 2019

SUMMARY MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Dr. Jack McGovern
Dr. Erik Williams
Pat O'Shaughessy
Erika Burgess
Nik Mehta

Rick DeVictor

Other observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Hotel Ballast, Wilmington, North Carolina, on Wednesday, December 4, 2019, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will call to order the Snapper Grouper Committee. The committee members are everybody that is on the council is on this committee, and so our first order of business is Approval of the Agenda, and I know of one addition for Other Business to the agenda, and it had to do with filleting grunts, and does anybody else know of any other business for the agenda at this time? All right. Are there any objections to approval of the agenda, with that addition? The agenda is approved. Next up is Approval of the September Committee Minutes. Are there any changes or additions? Shep, of course.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to make sure you know that I am reading them, on page 36, my statement, the first paragraph, the fourth sentence, "ACT" should be "ACL". On that same page, my statement again, the second paragraph, the second "ABC" in that paragraph should be "SSC", and that is all. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Did you get those, Myra? All right. Is there any more discussion of the committee minutes? Is there any objection to approval of those minutes, with the changes that Shep mentioned? Those minutes stand approved. Now we're going to go into the Status of Commercial and Recreational Catches.

MR. DEVICTOR: I will do commercial landings, and then Mike will do recreational. I won't take long with this, because this is in your briefing materials, and Myra has it projected on there. These are landings through November 25. Just going down the list and highlighting some species, especially some of the closures, there is black sea bass, and we're at 62 percent, and blueline tilefish closed on July 30, and that's at 109 percent, and golden tilefish hook-and-line closed in July, and that's at 101 percent. Golden tilefish longline is at 112, and that closed in March, and that's one of our first closures each year, and gray triggerfish is a split season, and so that's at 104 percent.

Jacks are at 98 percent, and that closed in July. Red snapper started the second Monday in July, and that closed on August 30, and that's at 97 percent. Snowy grouper is also at 97 percent. Moving into the last couple here, vermilion snapper is a split season, and so that's at 87 percent, and that's a July through December second season, and yellowtail snapper, with an August start date, is at 35 percent. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any questions for Rick? All right. Recreational landings.

DR. LARKIN: I am going to go through the recreational landings now, and this one is one of the longer ones. We have a lot of species to go through here. It's the same information as before, but I will go through it real fast. Landings are summarized using MRIP, or we still have back-calculated MRFSS data, because some of the ACLs are still defined in MRFSS, like greater amberjack and I think one more, but these are updated through Wave 4 of 2019, and so it's from January 1 all the way to August 31 of 2019.

The 2018/2019, the effort data used to generate these landings changed from the phone survey to the mail survey, as we discussed earlier, but, anyway, they have been converted back, so that they

will match how the ACLs were set, and so the current 2018 landings are converted back to what they would be equivalent to with the phone survey landings. I know that's very confusing. They also include headboat landings as well.

This is the 2018 landings here, and I'm just going to go through the yellow highlighted ones, the ones where the ACL was exceeded, and you can see blueline tilefish there is 34 percent over, but it has a fixed closure on September 1, and so it was closed. Golden tilefish was 42 percent over in 2018, and that one closed on August 28 of 2018, and then the jacks went 11 percent over, and that one closed on December 18 of 2018. Then red grouper here, you can see it's 98 percent over, and that one closed on December 12, and, again, that was in 2018.

Then now moving on to the 2019 preliminary landings, and there was a 21 percent overage in blueline tilefish, but that one, again, has a fixed closure on September 1, and we just got these landings last week, and so the deepwater complex -- We're in the process of closing that, and you can see it's 4 percent over there, and then golden tilefish has a big spike in landings, and it also has a small ACL, in numbers of fish, but, anyway, you can see that June 17 of 2019 is when that one closed, and then the jacks closed, again, on September 25 of 2019.

We will move on to the other stocks, and red grouper is 13 percent over, and that one already closed on September 25. Then here is the ones that don't have a calendar year, and instead they have a fishing year, greater amberjack, black sea bass, and yellowtail snapper, and there are no ACL overages there. Then here is the 2019/2020 landings that we have currently.

This is the same format as before. The table here, each column is the mode, charter/headboat, private, and shore, and then the total. Then gray is when it was monitored with MRFSS, and then the clear is when it was monitored in MRIP, and so in 2013/2014 it switched over to MRIP, and here is black sea bass here. It's the same figure as before. The bars represent the landings, which are over on the Y-axis over on the left, and then the Y-axis over on the right is for effort, and each color of the bars represents the mode, and then the black dashes up top are the ACL, and you can see that, in the 2019/2020 season, the ACL dropped there, but it's still under the ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We've got a question from Steve.

MR. POLAND: Mike, just a quick question. How do discards look with black sea bass? Have they changed?

DR. LARKIN: I don't know off the top of my head, and I can look into that and get back to you. You're saying -- You're asking how have they changed in the last three years or just last year?

MR. POLAND: I mean are we seeing like the same decline in discards that we're seeing in catch, or are discards increasing, just in general, and I just kind of wanted to get a sense of the trend of the discards.

DR. LARKIN: Got you. Okay. I can get back to you on that one. For this, I just looked at landings, but I will follow-up with you on that one. Then I will move on to the gag grouper here, and it's the same format. It switched over to MRFSS in 2015, and those were zero for shore, and I just didn't put a zero there for 2018/2019. Then here is the figure here, and we're looking at the landings relative to the -- Is there another question? Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Tony.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Going back to the black sea bass, and I'm sorry to -- From what I see there, the recreational catch of black sea bass is declining in the South Atlantic, and is that correct?

DR. LARKIN: Yes.

MR. DILERNIA: Do we have any idea as to why? Is it -- I mean, is it just the concept of a species shift or -- Because it just continuously increases exponentially in the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England region.

DR. LARKIN: I don't know why it's going down. I would just speculate if I did, but I would certainly open up the floor, and I'm sure there are people at this table that know more about --

MR. DILERNIA: Could you say that again, please?

DR. LARKIN: Me personally, no, I don't know why it's going down, but I am suggesting that there are people at this table that would know and that could comment a lot better than I can on why the black sea bass landings have gone down in recent years.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you. Again, because, for the record, black sea bass is becoming our red snapper. We are just catching so many of them that we have continuously cut down and cut down and cut down on the possession and increased the size limits to stay within the RHL, because there's just so many black sea bass. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tony.

DR. ERRIGO: I was in the middle of pulling graphics for black sea bass and the discards, but I do know, based on the data, that the discards don't look like that. The discards are going up, and the size limit is at thirteen inches right now, and it's becoming more and more difficult to find a thirteen-inch black sea bass at this time, and so the discards are enormous.

MR. DILERNIA: In the South Atlantic region?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

MR. DILERNIA: So it looks like perhaps we have a recruitment event that is starting to come through the system, and they haven't reached the size yet.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, that's what it looks like.

DR. DILERNIA: Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: The commercial size limit is eleven inches, but the recreational is thirteen, and the vast majority of the discards are coming from the recreational sector, and this is the recreational landings here.

MR. DILERNIA: What I'm talking about?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, and this graphic on the screen, and is that what you're talking about, the recreational landings?

MR. DILERNIA: Yes, because I see the recreational landings just continuously going down, and you're saying that the recreational discard level is extremely high.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

MR. DILERNIA: We also have -- How quickly is the commercial sector achieving their quota, based on the eleven-inch size limit? Do we know that?

DR. ERRIGO: They are not achieving their quota, actually. There are other constraints on the commercial side, but they are not achieving their quota.

MR. DILERNIA: Is it a trap fishery in the South Atlantic?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, mostly. There is hook-and-line, but most of the catch comes from the trap sector.

MR. DILERNIA: Yet they are not achieving their quota?

DR. ERRIGO: Well, the trap sector is -- It's an endorsement program, and so there's not that many guys doing it, and they are limited in the number of traps they can have, and they can't fish very much during the winter months, because of the right whale calving season. That was traditionally the peak of the fishery, before those rules went into place.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you.

MR. CONKLIN: Looking at this, the effort certainly is going down, and so that has a direct correlation to the catch, but, when you have a thirteen-inch size limit for the recreational sector, and the majority of the effort, at least in my neck of the woods, is coming off the headboats, and so the headboats do half-day trips for black sea bass, and you get out to about forty-five feet of water, and you're dragging seventy or eighty rigs around, and so your discards are way, way, way up, because you don't get the thirteen-inch sea bass back inshore. All you do is discard, and it's a discard fishery. I mean, that's all they do is throw them back. You can catch twenty and keep one.

MR. DILERNIA: So what I hear folks making is a case for reducing the recreational size limit on the black sea bass, because they're being discarded, and you're not reaching the RHL, and so, if you reduce the minimum size, you would reduce discards, convert those discards into landings, and make your RHL and still not exceed it, where you have the accountability measures that would go into effect, and so I hear a case right there for reducing the minimum size on the recreational fishery.

MR. CONKLIN: That makes complete sense to me, and I've been an advocate of that for a long time, and, if you want to get rid of discards, I think it's a great way to do it.

DR. WILLIAMS: Before you jump the gun on that conclusion, just to give you some results from the stock assessment, which was completed in 2018, and we had a big year class that came through in 2009, and, ever since then, recruitment has dropped a fair amount, and, in fact, the last four years, we've seen the lowest recruitment we have seen in the entire time series, and so that is clearly one of the things that is driving the decline in black sea bass.

I will also note that I just pulled up the discard estimates from FES, of course off the website, and so that comes as a caveat, but there has been a decline in the discards since 2014, and so the decline seems to be largely driven by low recruitment, which we have seen now in -- I suspect in gag and red grouper as well, and possibly, when we get to scamp, we might end up seeing that, too. My suspicion, and this is just my total gut instinct suspicion, is there is something going on with our shallow-water groupers, in terms of recruitment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this topic before we move back to the landings?

MR. CONKLIN: Well, decline in discards -- Certainly recruitment might be an issue, but, looking at this, there is a decline in effort, a direct correlation, and so --

DR. LARKIN: I just want to point out real quick that you're right that there was a decline in effort, but this is like general effort for the area, and so it's not specific to black sea bass. Like the headboat landings or angler trips, they don't target -- It's not targeted effort, but there has been a decline in effort, but this isn't specific to just black sea bass.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anything else on black sea bass? All right. Back to you, Mike.

DR. LARKIN: Thank you. I think I left off -- I think I went through gag already, and so I'm going to move on to greater amberjack. This is one of the ones that is still monitored in MRFSS, and that's why it's all gray, but it's -- I believe that assessment is going to be completed in 2020, and so it will eventually be converted over to MRIP. Then there were some overages in 2015/2016 and 2017/2018, but, currently, the landings have been lower for 2018/2019, and also for 2019/2020, what we currently have.

Then mutton snapper, and this one is a huge drop. It switched over to MRFSS to MRIP, and, also, it switched from pounds to numbers of fish in 2018/2019, and so that's why you see a huge drop in numbers there, and you will see it in the figure, too. When you switch over to numbers of fish, instead of pounds, both the ACL dropped, and the landings dropped as well.

Yellowtail snapper, this is currently being assessed by the Florida Fish and Wildlife, but it's still monitored in MRFSS until the new assessment comes out with new OFLs and ABCs and ACLs. Then here we are with yellowtail snapper, and it did -- There was a change in 2016/2017. They switched from a fishing year from a calendar year, but you can see, in all cases, the landings have been below the ACL. Red pogy is there, and it switched over the MRIP in 2013, and then there is a figure there showing the landings, and these have been below the ACL.

Then here is vermilion snapper, and it's been monitored in MRIP since 2013, and I will just take my time, so you all can look at it. Then we haven't had an ACL overage for this one since we've had the ACLs. Snowy grouper, this one is in numbers of fish, and we had a big peak in 2016, but, since then, we have not had a large peak, and so 2017, 2018, and 2019 have been below the ACL.

This is golden tilefish here, and this switched over to MRIP in 2018, and this one we've had a big spike, it looks like in 2016, and we recently had a big spike also in 2019 as well, and we had a closure in 2019 for golden tilefish. This is scamp. Then there's historical landings of scamp there, and it looks like they've all been below the ACL, with a relatively large peak in 2017, but low landings in 2018 and currently for 2019.

Blueline tilefish, and they got pulled out of the deepwater complex in 2014, I believe, and here's the landings for it. We've got some overages, but that one also has a fixed closure as well, and I believe there will be discussion about blueline later. That's it, and so, if there are any questions, I would be happy to take them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? I don't see any hands in the air. Thank you, Mike. All right. Next up, we have the Status of Amendments Under Formal Review, and we're back to Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thank you. We've got a few amendments to go over. Regulatory Amendment 26, that's the recreational visioning amendment, and the proposed rule published in October, and the comment period ended in November, just over a week ago, and we're working on the final rule package for that. For the commercial visioning, the proposed rule published also in October, and the comment period ended a few weeks ago, and we are working on that final rule package, also.

Amendment 42, this would add three newly-approved sea turtle release devices to the regulations, and we published that proposed rule on September 17, and the comments were due in October, and we are also working on that final rule package.

Regulatory Amendment 30, this is the red grouper rebuilding schedule and to extend the spawning season closure off of North Carolina and South Carolina and establish a commercial trip limit, and so we are also working on that final rule package, and so we're working on about four final rule packages right now. Finally, Regulatory Amendment 29, this is best fishing practices, and we're waiting for the council to submit that to us, and so that's all I have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MR. CONKLIN: I was curious to know if you have any kind of anticipation of when we're going to get final action, or final approval, of Amendment 27, where we'll be able to take advantage of the benefits that that will provide after January 1.

MR. DEVICTOR: It's really hard to tell, Chris, and I really don't want to venture and put out a date there, and we are being asked that quite a bit. As Roy spoke to, things are taking a little bit longer in Headquarters, and so we're working on this as fast as we can, but I can't tell you when this would be in place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? Thank you, Rick. Next up, we have the SSC Report, and, George, I believe you're up again.

DR. SEDBERRY: As mentioned previously, the SSC met in October, and the report of that meeting is in the briefing book, under the main directory, and there were several items that the SSC discussed relative to snapper grouper. We talked about the ABCs for unassessed snapper grouper stocks, in light of the new MRIP estimates, and we discussed and made recommendations on draft NS 1 Guidelines for carryover of unused ACL and phase-ins of revised ABCs. We reviewed the draft report to Congress on the Modernizing Recreational Fisheries, and we had a presentation on the coral habitat prediction distribution model and its possible applicability to the South Atlantic. The SSC clarified its stand on the blueline tilefish OFL and ABC, and then we got a South Atlantic ecosystem model update.

The first thing was the ABCs for unassessed snapper grouper stocks, and, again, new MRIP estimates necessitated a recalculation of the ABCs, and there was a -- The ABC Workgroup of the SSC reviewed the MRIP estimates and made recommendations to the SSC regarding unassessed snapper grouper stocks, as well as dolphin and wahoo, which we talked about yesterday.

The workgroup reviewed all the unassessed stocks and gave preliminary recommendations for the full SSC to consider, and the SSC considerations, discussions, and actions followed. The SSC considered whether the time series for calculating ABCs for unassessed stocks are still appropriate, given changes in the catch data, and, if not, they were modified, as appropriate.

The SSC chose time periods in which the effort was relatively stable, and the SSC concurred with the workgroup's recommendations on this. In most cases, the current time series that's already in place was considered appropriate, but, in some cases, the SSC recommended removing 2008 from the reference period, to avoid the impacts of the economic recession that began in the late 2000s.

This resulted in a reference time period of 1999 to 2007, which was recommended when the ORCS approach was applied and for all stocks where the third-highest method was applied. In a few instances, the reference period was not considered appropriate, for example when declining catches were also mirrored in declining fishery-independent indices for the fishery-independent surveys, and, in those cases, the reference period was switched to more recent years.

The SSC also recommended that the new ABC control rule that is being developed revisit the ORCS approach and consider new research on data-limited approaches, given that ORCS does not perform well in the management strategy evaluations that have been conducted to date. The ORCS applicability to many of these stocks, whose ABC is much higher than the historical weight-based catches, also is of concern.

The SSC recommended that some stocks be removed from the species complexes and assessed separately through SEDAR, because catch data, fishery-independent indices -- Fishery-independent indices are available for some of these stocks, and life history, genetic, and other data needed for stock assessment are now available. The SSC recommends that some stocks be considered as ecosystem component species, because they are not really targeted by the fishery and do not require management as a separate stock or as a member of a species complex.

If you look at the SSC report, there is a very nice table in there that groups the species by management unit, and then, as you look at the table, you will see what the current status is and what the SSC recommended for ABC going forward. What I have done here is I have kind of grouped those species, or species complexes, by what the SSC recommended, and so these are species for which the SSC recommended updating the original method, what was used in the previous ABC, but with the new MRIP numbers, and so the ABC basis, which was ORCS, and the reference period, 1999 to 2007, remain the same.

This generally resulted in an increased ABC recommendation, except where noted in red on this slide, and then some additional recommendations were also made, and so, within the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, spadefish, bar jack, and gray triggerfish and hogfish were included. The new hogfish ABC recommendation for North Carolina and Georgia resulted in a decreased ABC. The deepwater complex in this group included silk snapper and yellowedge grouper, and the snapper complex included cubera, gray, and lane. Grunts included margate, tomtate, and white grunt, and then the shallow-water complex included red hind and rock hind.

Within these recommendations, cubera snapper was recommended to be an ecosystem component species, and it was recommended that gray snapper go through the SEDAR process, and so there is more information available for that species as well, and then margate was also recommended as an ecosystem species.

MR. CONKLIN: I was unable to attend the SSC meeting, but I'm just curious. When you guys recommend that we designate those as ecosystem species, does that mean we are going to have to do an amendment to make that happen, and what exactly are the impacts and effects of that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, we definitely need an amendment to do that, and I had some questions about it too, and I don't know if you want to answer those questions now, in the middle of the presentation, or I don't know if you want to go until the end of the presentation and then back up to the questions, and so tell me what you would prefer.

DR. SEDBERRY: Well, I think there's a few more species coming up that are recommended as ecosystem components.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we'll just wait until the end, and then I had some of those exact same questions, Chris.

DR. SEDBERRY: Okay. The second group of stocks, the SSC recommends a new ABC basis, using the new MRIP numbers and an updated reference period, and this resulted in a decreased ABC recommendation for the stocks that included black grouper and scamp, and there was particular concern about scamp, due to declining landings and the SERFS fishery-independent index, and then for knobbed porgy as well. There are decreased ABCs recommended, due to declining landings and declines in the SERFS index.

Then there was a group of species where the SSC recommends a new ABC method for the basis, including new MRIP numbers and an updated reference period, and that includes dropping that 2008, because of the changing economic conditions that began in that year, and this generally resulted in an increased ABC recommendation, except where noted, and so within this group are almaco jack, which the SSC also recommends removing from the jacks complex and assessing

through a separate SEDAR. Then the porgy complex includes scup, and the SSC recommends a decreased ABC, due to a declining SERFS index, along with declines in landings.

Another group has the recommendations of updating the original method with the new MRIP numbers, and so using the original ABC basis, but with new MRIP numbers, and adjusting the reference period by dropping 2008 for decision tree stocks using the third-highest method, and so, again, this usually resulted in an increased ABC, except where noted, and so, within the deepwater complex, this included blackfin snapper, misty grouper, queen snapper, and sand tilefish.

Sand tilefish resulted in an increased ABC, but the other species -- Either it remains the same or decreases. Within the jacks, there were banded rudderfish and lesser amberjack. In the grunts complex, there is sailor's choice, which is going to be recommended an ecosystem component species, and the shallow-water groupers included coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, and yellowmouth grouper, with coney being recommended as ecosystem -- Coney and yellowmouth grouper being recommended as ecosystem component species, and, within the porgy complex, jolthead porgy -- The recommendation is to move that to a SEDAR process species, and saucereye porgy be considered an ecosystem component species, and then whitebone porgy was included within this group as well.

Then, finally, there was dolphin wahoo, and we reviewed the ABCs for them as well, and we talked about this yesterday, and I don't know if I need to go into this again, and I don't think that I will, and so that's what we did, as far as the new ABC recommendations on unassessed species that came about as a result of the new MRIP numbers, and so I think we can take questions on that before we go into other things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so Chris posed some questions -- First, I really like this table that was in the document, and it was very helpful, and then, in the presentation, it was even more helpful how you had organized it, and I guess can you remind us -- Maybe, originally, when the species groupings were made, and then we would have this grouping ACL -- If we take something out and put it in ecosystem component, and it wouldn't be part of that -- I guess I'm just wondering what the benefit of being in that group ACL complex is, versus putting it over into the ecosystem component, and I think you all had some discussions on that, I think.

DR. SEDBERRY: I would have to look back into our notes to see exactly what we were thinking, but, at the same meeting, we also considered the bullet mackerel and frigate mackerel and adding them as ecosystem component species to the dolphin wahoo plan, and so reviewing that decision document kind of refreshed in our mind what an ecosystem component species is, or at least in my mind, and we had just gone through what constitutes an ecosystem component species with regard to those two, and it just seemed to me that, as we went through these other stocks, that they also fit the definition of ecosystem component species and could be removed from the complex and managed as ecosystem components, but I would have to look back into my notes, or into the minutes, to see exactly what the entire SSC was thinking.

MR. POLAND: I've got my notes from the SSC meeting here, and my recollection was exactly what you said, George. It was those recommendations were kind of in the context of just review the EC definition and status for bullet and frigate mackerel, and I think there was some discussion as well on kind of the guidelines between EC and the species needed for conservation and management, and I remember the SSC having a little bit of discussion about targeting, or directed

fisheries, around some of these species, and it seems like some of the species that were recommended for EC were species that aren't necessarily targeted, especially in the recreational fishery, and then, with the new FES numbers really magnifying the variability in the landings from year to year, since these are very low-intercept species, I think that's kind of what pushed the SSC over the edge to recommend these as EC species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve, it's kind of hard to hear you, and maybe you could pull the microphone closer next time.

MR. POLAND: Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So I guess that, if we were to take something out, and, yes, it would require an amendment to put it over into ecosystem component, then the ACL for the grouping is then decreased by the -- I mean, the ABC is decreased by the amount that was allotted for that particular species, and is that how that works? I was looking at that in the table. If you pulled some out and you had a grouping that had four in it, and then you were recommending to remove three of those as ecosystem component, and now that group just has one in it, and so I assume that that ABC, and then ultimately what the council sets as the ACL, is now reduced by the estimated ABC of those other three, and is that how that works?

DR. SEDBERRY: I see Mike has his hand up, and he's saying, yes, that's how it works. That was my understanding too, but, again, I would have to look at the details, but, if Mike says that's the way it works, then that's probably the way it works.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. So any action by the council would go through those factors about whether the stock is in need of conservation and management, and you have a recommendation from the SSC, and I don't want to say that's meaningless, but, by itself, it doesn't trigger a need to do anything. It's clearly a management or policy decision as to whether you want to continue to keep the stocks in the fishery for management purposes.

You would go through those factors, and then I presume whatever fishery management plan action, and I think it would have to be a full-blown amendment, but you would walk through and discuss those kinds of issues about the ACLs and the accountability measures, and I presume you would even get some SSC input on that, so you could acknowledge that, yes, that's how we intended it to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks, Shep.

MR. CONKLIN: I feel like I heard some conversation before about going through the whole complex and checking off what could be thrown in that bin as ecosystem, or what doesn't have significant landings or whatnot, and I'm not 100 percent familiar, and so that's why I was asking. In my mind so far, ecosystem component species, what I was thinking, is it's like a forage fish or food for something else, but it doesn't necessarily have to be, obviously, but I was looking at -- I was wondering why they didn't choose tomtate. If they don't, does that mean that we have to keep it in the lineup for an assessment and keep bringing it up?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I don't think it necessarily means that it automatically goes on the list for a stock assessment, but it would still get a number, and I think if people are targeting it -- I think there's a checklist that you would use as to whether or not something should be included in the FMP or it could be considered as ecosystem component, and so, just like Shep is saying, the SSC is recommending this, and we could go through that checklist for these species and figure out what we want to do, and so I'm going to go to Roy and then back to Chris and then to Art.

DR. CRABTREE: Back in I think 2010, when we were working on the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, we did go through some of these, and, in fact, we moved some species out of the FMP and probably made some EC species, and we did have a checklist based on the guidelines and things that we went through in that process, but it makes sense for me to do that again. I think, periodically, we ought to review the species we're managing.

If you think about it, I mean, some of the issues that we talk about a lot are these rare-event species and the problems that causes, but, really, if something is really that rare of an event, then why are we managing it? That has always struck me, because it seems to me that either they are extremely uncommon, or there's just no fishery for them at all, and so it's hard to argue that they really need conservation and management, and so I would support going through that and looking at the SSC recommendations, and maybe there is some other ones we look at, and maybe there is some things that we should manage and aren't managing, but I think it would be a good exercise to work through.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go back to Chris and Art, yes, I completely agree, and, at that time, it seemed like there was some discussion of some handoffs, and so some of those species that came out of the plan -- For example, FWC sent a letter and said we're willing to take over management and extend the state regulations into federal waters for these particular species, and so there was definitely a handoff that took place, and so I support going through these recommendations and the council making a decision, looking at that checklist and talking about it all over again, and I do think it's time, and I also agree with Roy that it's something that should probably be done periodically, and I completely agree.

MR. CONKLIN: That's what I was getting to, is if there is any way that we can take everything that we look at and find a way to move it out to either out of the complex or into ecosystem, as long as it doesn't have economic repercussions, but just stuff that we don't need to -- I don't want to say pay attention to, but treat the same way we do the other directed sort of fisheries, and that's something we need to do more than once, and, if we could do that every -- If we come out with a list of them every -- If we hand them over and see what happens, and then I think that would be a great exercise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and it sounds like you want to make a motion, but I'm going to go to Art while you think about that, and so Art and then Chester.

MR. SAPP: This may exist, and I had the same concerns and questions that Chris had there, and I have received several questions in the moment right now as to what makes a species an ecosystem -- Or fit into that ecosystem component there, and so perhaps, somewhere on the website, if it doesn't exist, we could define what could potentially reach that -- What could possibly be that kind of a fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good questions.

MR. BREWER: With regard to the other business that we have at the end, I think that tomtate, grunts in particular, you would consider, or at least take a look at, as being an EC species, because, if you take them out of the complex, then this whole thing about fishing with cut tomtate goes by-the-by, I believe, because, if they're not part of the complex, they're not in the twenty-fish aggregate, and, just in general, the idea of going back through these species and seeing which ones do we really need to focus on managing makes a lot of sense, to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with some of what you said. I'm a little concerned, just from my end, with taking grunts out of the complex, and I feel like people are definitely targeting them in south Florida, and so definitely it's something to think about and talk about, and it sounds like we're going to start that discussion when we get to Other Business, to talk about using them for cut bait, and so, Chris, are you thinking that maybe you want to make a motion that we review the species that are in the -- I think you already have a draft motion written over here.

MS. BROUWER: Just one thing. When you are getting ready to evaluate and consider adjusting all of your ABCs, based on the changes that George just went over, you will necessarily have to go back and evaluate the complexes and do all of that as part of that amendment, and so I just want to -- You know, that's going to be a part of that whole process already, but certainly, if you want to make it more of a periodic review, like we were talking about, we can definitely do it like that as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess my question would be, if we start -- I can't remember the timing of that particular amendment, when it's coming back to look at those things, and I'm wondering if we should start something as a precursor to that, so that things are removed, so that they don't get analyzed in that amendment, all those different species, and so it's kind of chicken-and-egg here as to which one is the best.

MR. CONKLIN: I am not quite familiar enough with the process of designating something as an EC species, and so I don't know if I am prepared to make a motion, and maybe I need to do some more homework on it, and it was a good discussion, if somebody else thinks that's great, but I don't want it to be a slippery slope and have economic repercussions by shooting off the hip, and so I probably need to learn a little more before I make a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good questions. To me, it's partly also about possibly removing it from federal management at all, and so it seems like you would be making -- There would be multiple decision points here. Do we want to move it into ecosystem component, or do we want to remove it from the FMP entirely, and possibly kick it over to the state for management, or multiple decision points, and it's not necessarily saying, if we take it out, it automatically goes to ecosystem component.

MR. BELL: I think, based on the discussion we've had, I think maybe staff has an idea of what we're trying to move towards, and I think there is an advantage to examining what you're managing, or what you're kind of on the hook to manage for, and, if you can kind of reduce some of these things that really aren't fisheries -- Your options are shift it to ecosystem, shift it to the state, and there's different options available, and so I was thinking that maybe, at this point, we could just kind of direct staff to give us maybe some options, or a way to move forward, the best

path forward, to kind of intertwine with what we're already talking about, and we could kind of pick it up from there.

MR. GRIMES: Well, ultimately, whether we can justify designating something as ecosystem component and removing it from conservation and management is going to be fact based and based on those factors, or a checklist, as the Chair described it, and that will take considerable work, and you've got an example of that in Dolphin Wahoo Amendment 12 for bullet and frigate mackerel, but you could easily start an options paper or white paper exploring the issue, and you don't necessarily need to make the decision that you want to start a plan amendment, but I would suggest basically what I think that Mel was saying, to start with the species that the SSC recommended, and you could have people add to that list, and then start talking about it, and it will morph into whatever.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep.

MS. BROUWER: If you recall the spreadsheet that Brian showed that had all the color-coding, there was an amendment that is intended to adjust the ABCs for unassessed snapper grouper species, and it didn't have a color on it, and I suspect that it may end up being purple, or pink, that color. However, one thing that comes to mind though that you're also going to have to think about, as part of that whole process, is going to be the whole allocation thing. The timing of that amendment is still kind of up in the air, because there are so many different components that are going to have to go into that, and so I'm just putting that out there, so you all just think about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me talk about -- I agree, Myra, with the timing. It seems to be an important point here, and I would like to see something that Mel and Shep are talking about, and I don't know if it's a white paper that lists these particular species from the SSC as a start, and, like I mentioned earlier, I am not necessarily saying that definitely go to ecosystem, but maybe some of them are completely removed, and then having some of the history about how this was done before, and so there were a number of them, and I think sheepshead was one of them, as an example, and there was a letter from the FWC that said, hey, we're going to manage in state waters, and we took it to our commission and enacted some state regulations and changed those up and then extended them into federal waters.

I would, ultimately, like to see some document that gets into this, but I agree that the timing is kind of critical here, and I don't want to make a lot of work by necessarily directly tying it into this ABC document, where there's all this analysis. Shep, to me, is suggesting a precursor document that goes over some of these issues, and then we can decide which path various species go before there is a lot of work done, and so are there thoughts on that?

MS. BROUWER: I think that would be a good idea, and that is something that we could begin putting together, and maybe give you an update at the March meeting, as far as we can take that, we can develop that, if you will give us that leeway, and I think that would be fine.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MR. CONKLIN: I also want to look at some species, adding some, that we don't even manage at all, and I don't know if that would be appropriate for this committee, but that would -- It would need to be a two-way street, I would think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree. Do you have some snapper grouper species in mind that you are thinking that you want to add, so that you could get that on the table now?

MR. CONKLIN: I don't know if they are snapper grouper species or not, but barrellfish and African pompano.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, I don't know how you want to handle that, and I believe barrellfish would be under snapper grouper, and African pompano not necessarily, and so I don't know if you just want to add them in as part of the discussion, that we would also like to consider additions, and two possible additions to federal management would be barrellfish and African pompano. I am looking around the table for other hands. Roger, would you like to come to the table?

MR. PUGLIESE: Just a quick consider, as you're looking at these, the possible preference toward ecosystem component may be valuable as we're moving toward the development of the ecosystem modeling and all the diet composition work, at least adding that in and understanding where those species may fall and how they're a part of the complex, and that may direct you one way or the other, in terms of how important that may be for the overall effort, and the timing is actually really good, because we're going to be having the model reviewed and then begin to have the SSC discuss the types of things it can be used for, and a very basic type of thing may be looking at the information we do have and then building in more complex diet composition work that's been ongoing, and you'll have a report on the review and have some of that initial discussion at the June council meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I see staff is still typing up here, and I don't want to keep asking Myra questions while we're typing, and so just stand by. I am looking at what you're typing up there, and so, right now, it looks like it's talking about ecosystem component species, but I'm also wondering if it needs to include removal from the FMP as one of the options.

DR. SEDBERRY: There are also some species that were recommended as SEDAR species, rather than being removed from a complex and being assessed separately, and I don't know if you want to treat them here or in a different motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a very good point. Maybe -- While Myra is typing, I'm going to go over here to Shep and then Roy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a suggestion. Instead of going directly for the ecosystem component aspect, I mean, we're basically looking at this to begin to evaluate the need for continued conservation and management, which could result in removing the species from the FMP, designation as ecosystem component, or continued management.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I really like that wording, and so help Myra. Can you say that one more time? It sounded like begin evaluating species, and then I'm going to turn it back to you.

MR. GRIMES: Begin evaluating the continued need for conservation and management of the species identified or recommended by the SSC for ecosystem component classification. Evaluating the continued need for conservation and management.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that “for EC designation” was not part of what Shep was saying, and so I think that --

MR. GRIMES: Well, actually, I did say it, and then you could start with the species that the SSC has recommended, but we can add to that list or --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra, I am looking over here to you about what you think is best. While they are typing, I’m going to go to Tony.

MR. DILERNIA: Madam Chairwoman, barrellfish, is that the same barrellfish that we catch up north like in a hundred fathoms? It’s a rare-event species up north, but we do catch them. I don’t know what you would do to manage them. You’re not going to throw them back from a hundred fathoms.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I believe the Snapper Grouper AP talked about barrellfish before, and I was looking at the landings off of Florida, and my recollection is that they may be caught in the wreckfish fishery, is my recollection. I see thumbs-up, and so swordfish also, and so it can certainly be part of the discussion.

We have changed up some wording here, and I’m going to read what Myra has on the board and see what we think about this, see if this is capturing the discussion that we had. Direct staff to begin an information paper to begin evaluating the continued need for conservation and management of species recommended by the SSC for EC designation, also evaluating adding additional species for management under the FMP. Do we think that that captures our discussion? I see heads nodding yes. Let me look on this side of the table.

MR. CONKLIN: Do you want me to remove barrellfish and African pompano, because the barrellfish are primarily caught in the swordfish fishery, and -- They might be an area that we don’t even want to go down, but I’ve heard a couple of times, more than a couple of times, that there is an emerging fishery and that somebody needs to pay attention to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let’s leave it up there, and we’ll look into it and see. I have definitely looked at the Florida landings, and I have my own opinion about whether or not it should be in the FMP, but I don’t mind having the discussion about it, whether to do it or not, and so I say leave it on the list. Mel, did you have something else? I saw you reading the language.

MR. BELL: I think, for purposes right now, that gets us going in the right direction, and then we can get into details of, if things come out, which way they go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I know that Myra is finding a place for this, and so, Myra, you mentioned that you thought that you might be able to have some information on this in March, and I didn’t know if you wanted to put that as part of this paragraph.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, with the understanding that it may not be the most complete thing, but we’ll bring you what we can gather for you to look at in March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so you think this is good enough direction to staff, and we don’t necessarily need to make this as a motion? Okay. Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: I will read it. **Move to direct staff to begin an information paper to begin evaluating the continued need for conservation and management of species recommended by the SSC for EC designation and also evaluate adding additional species for management under the FMP, such as barrelfish and African pompano.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there a second? It's seconded by Steve. We have had a lot of discussion on this. Any more discussion? **Is there any objection to this motion? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

Before we completely leave this, I want to go back to the other item that George brought up about how there are some species that are recommended being removed from the complex and then some also being recommended to consider for a SEDAR stock assessment, and, at the very least, maybe we need a motion that lists out the species that are being suggested for a SEDAR stock assessment, so that the SEDAR Steering Committee can consider those species, and would that help, John? Okay. Maybe a motion that looks at the species that they are recommending get a SEDAR stock assessment, and so I'm going to pause while we go try to find those species.

All right. We think we have that list, and it came from the table that was in the SSC report. Myra, maybe you could delete the words "species the" from the very beginning of that, and just go with "the SSC recommends". Thank you.

MR. POLAND: Those are the four that I saw in the table and my notes, but I was just going to ask George to just provide a little bit more context for not necessarily almaco, and I think that certainly fits the bill, but, for knobbed and jolthead porgy, what was the SSC's rationale for recommending that for an assessment, those two species for an assessment?

DR. SEDBERRY: I think, historically, some of these porgies and grunts were lumped together, because of identification problems, identification problems in the landings and the landings statistics, and I think those problems have been resolved, that they are identified separately now in the landings and landings statistics, and there is also a lack of life history information on them, and stock identification information on them, and that has been -- That is or has been resolved, and a lot of these species now have life history studies and population genetics studies on them, and so there is now enough information to do a stock assessment on them, and they are also abundant enough in the SERFS trap and video, or particularly the trap index, so that there's a fishery-independent index of abundance for them as well, and so we just felt like there was enough data -
- The reasons they had been lumped in a complex no longer exist, and that there's enough data available now to do a SEDAR stock assessment on them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so do we -- We have just identified a list here, and, John, do you think we need to make this in the form of a motion, that the SEDAR Steering Committee consider these for stock assessments, or just having them listed out here is enough? Thoughts?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Having them listed out is -- Normally, you would run these through your SEDAR Committee for priorities. Some of these stocks may be on our priorities list already, and they just haven't risen up to the top. I thought gray snapper was one that we might have prioritized through the stock assessment prioritization tool, and maybe almaco, and so they have been talked

about, in some cases, but it would take a process of figuring out where they would fit in there, and so I think, if you gave this to -- The SEDAR Committee could talk about it in March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So the SEDAR Committee, South Atlantic Council SEDAR Committee, is the first stop for these four species, and then the Steering Committee meeting happens, I believe, in May, and so the timing would be right that it would go through first a SEDAR Committee of the council and then back through the Steering Committee process, if it made it through to the next step. It looks like we're in the form of a motion. Would someone like to make this motion?

MR. BELL: I move to recommend --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Hold on. We're still editing. Stand by. All right, Mel.

MR. BELL: **Madam Chair, I move to recommend that the SEDAR Committee request the following species be considered for assessment through the SEDAR process: gray snapper, almaco jack, knobbed porgy, and jolthead porgy.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there a second? It's seconded by Spud. Any more discussion on this?

MR. POLAND: Jessica, I just want to be clear that this will -- This is going to go to the SEDAR Committee, our SEDAR Committee, and we're going to have a discussion about the assessment priorities, because, I mean, I don't have a problem, especially if the data is there, to move these forward, but I want to have kind of a broader discussion on priorities before I really task SEDAR with starting these assessments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, and maybe we look at that. What do we call that thing, the checklist, the prioritization list? I don't know what that document is, and so maybe, at the March SEDAR Committee meeting, we can look back at that list again. Good points. Any more discussion? **Any objection to this motion? All right. Seeing none, that motion is approved.**

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think what would probably be good form on this is that, if the SEDAR Committee supports this and we take this to the Steering Committee, probably the first step would be to ask the Science Center to do some evaluation of what data is actually available and what type of assessments could be done. As you know, we work two years out, and so we would be looking at these for probably 2023, 2022 or 2023, to be looked at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we've seen part of George's presentation. Are there any more comments or questions? This is primarily on that table that was in the SSC report, and are there any more questions before we move back to his report out? All right. I'm going to turn it back to you, George.

DR. SEDBERRY: Thanks. The SSC also reviewed the Draft NS 1 Guidelines on carryover of unused ACL and phase-in of revised ABCs, and this was mentioned the other day in Gregg's report in the Executive Finance Committee. They also had the SSC's comments and remarks, and I have them here.

The SSC is concerned that the carryover has the potential to reallocate the ACL, since ABC decisions are not where the allocation decision is made, and so the question came up of, if a sector does not catch its portion of the ACL, how will the carryover be allocated in the carryover year, and so the SSC recommends adding guidance on the use of phase-in and carryover for stocks that have ABCs, but do not have OFLs, and, again, the question is what would set the upper limit on the amount of carry-forward or phase-in, if an OFL has not been specified? The OFL would set this upper limit when combined with the ABC for future years, but, when there is no OFL, it's not clear how the upper limit would be set.

The SSC also recommended a retrospective analysis be conducted on the efficacy of assessment projections, to gauge how well carryovers may work. A management strategy evaluation could be implemented retrospectively, using an assessment from a data-rich stock as a reference model, and a combination of assessment methods, ranging from an age-structured assessment to catch-only methods and carryover amounts could be evaluated relative to standard performance metrics, just to kind of get an idea of how this would work in a data-rich stock, and that would give us some idea how it might work for our other stocks as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions for George? I don't see any hands in the air.

DR. SEDBERRY: Okay. The SSC also commented on the Draft Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Act Report to Congress, and, again, this was mentioned the other day in the Executive Finance Committee, but NOAA Fisheries is directed to produce this report in consultation with the SSCs, and so the SSC had a look at the draft, and we had many kind of editorial comments that are in our report.

Most of our recommendations and comments had to with we thought there was just -- A lot of the material was incomplete, and there's not much mention made of effort and age and growth and life history studies and reproduction and stock structure and fishery-independent programs. We thought there was a need for additional description of commercial and recreational fishing effort data collection. The stock structure section only mentions genetics, and it leaves out other methods, such as mark-recapture, morphometrics, otolith chemistry, tagging, and more traditional methods.

We thought that the ecosystem factors should further differentiate between the effects of high-frequency environmental variation, like changes in temperature and salinity, versus low-frequency basin-scale oceanographic phenomenon, like El Nino or the North Atlantic Oscillation, that are occurring on a much longer time scale.

The report makes a lot of mention of the analyses that NMFS does, but the SSC felt like the states and some outside organizations are also heavily involved in collecting and analyzing the data and conducting some of the analyses that are incorporated into the models and the stock assessments, and that needs to be mentioned more clearly.

We felt that the criteria for including outside datasets were too restrictive and that sometimes the short-term and localized data collection programs can be very informative, even if they don't cover the entire range of the stock, and that some local programs and studies and monitoring efforts are also quite useful.

There is a lot of mention of the SSC reviewing data coming in and consulting with the Fishery Science Centers on data coming in and research program development, and the SSC was concerned about the time commitment of the SSC and the Science Centers in reviewing these potential new data sources that would need to be reviewed, given our current workloads. The document is a little vague on these reviews, and the reviews might actually already be part of our SEDAR process, but it needs to, I think, be more clearly stated about what's meant by these data reviews and done by the SSC and the Science Centers and whether that's part of ongoing processes that we already have, because we do review a lot of the data, but the SSC and the Science Centers, and maybe these mechanisms are already there, but, if it requires additional time and commitment by the Center and the SSC, we need to know where that time and resources is going to come from.

There was mention of a liaison between the Science Center and the SSC, and, again, is this something that's already going on, and we have a liaison, or is this something new? Again, the language is a little vague, in places, about whether they are describing something that's ongoing or something that needs to be developed, and we felt like some of these things are already there, but, if there are new things that need to be developed, we need to know where the resources are going to come from.

The SSC recommended including federal scientists in state research projects for federally-managed species, to facilitate the use of data in stock assessments, and, again, some of that is going on already, and it's required by some grant programs. The states and NGOs would be very useful in addressing gaps in the MRIP survey, such as those anglers who rent houses or fish from private docks, and these programs need to be developed in conjunction with MRIP. The SSC recommends that outreach efforts and evaluation of the efficacy of such efforts are needed to improve angler compliance with fishing regulations, which we always need more outreach, and so those are our suggestions and comments regarding the Modernizing Fishing Act.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Any questions on that? George mentioned that we did talk about this during the Executive Finance Committee, and Gregg is working on a letter that is going to incorporate those comments and considering some other comments, and we're also asking, if other council members had comments, that they provide those to Gregg, so he can get those in the letter, and the turnaround time on that is pretty quick. We've already had a little bit of discussion on that, and I don't know if there's any additional questions here. It looks like heads are saying no. Thanks, George.

DR. SEDBERRY: The SSC had a -- We received a presentation on a coral habitat distribution model, and this is a habitat probability model, and, again, these are deep-coral HAPC-type areas, and the idea is that it's using existing data from submersibles and ROVs and high-resolution sonar surveys to predict where additional coral habitat might exist, and so, if this works, and if it's approved, it could be useful for management.

The presentation gave some examples from the Mid-Atlantic, where some canyon areas have been set aside for protective management, based on the use of this model, and then they used some examples from the Gulf of Mexico about what's going on there, in terms of mapping deep-coral habitats and predicting where additional deep-coral habitat might exist, and so, if approved as usable for management, this could be used for development of Coral Amendment 10/Golden Crab Amendment 10/Shrimp Amendment 11.

The SSC had a few comments, and the model assumes that the habitat is closed and that there is no time-varying relationships, and we thought that this was a source of uncertainty in the model. The assumption is that these deep corals are very long-lived, some of them thousands of years old, or at least the coral colonies live to be thousands of years old, and the habitat is very stable, and so it doesn't change on short timescales, and the life history of these animals is such that time is not a huge factor, and that space can be -- Since you don't have replicate sampling over time, you can use samples from the same area as replicates, and we felt like this added some uncertainty and was an area where additional research might need to be done, in terms of whether those assumptions are actually true.

The SSC recommends further developing this model approach for the South Atlantic. As I mentioned, most of this has been done in the Mid-Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, but it's been begun in the South Atlantic, and so we felt like it needs further development, which could include model validation using subsets of the data, and this further development could help the SSC determine if this is best scientific information available in the future. Again, there's a lot of potential here for mapping deepwater coral areas that are important in some of our fisheries in the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions on that topic? No questions, no hands.

DR. SEDBERRY: We've got two more things. The SSC was also asked to clarify the blueline tilefish OFL and ABC, and the question was to clarify if the intent of the SSC in setting the OFL and ABC for blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic's jurisdiction was to add the estimated values of OFL and ABC for the portion of the blueline tilefish stock south of Cape Hatteras to those north of Cape Hatteras to the North Carolina/Virginia border together, to get a single OFL and ABC for the entire South Atlantic. Yes, that was our intent, and so we just needed a clear statement that that's what we intended, and so, yes, we did intend that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions about blueline? All right.

DR. SEDBERRY: Then, finally, I believe, the SSC, at our October meeting, heard two presentations on the outcomes associated with the South Atlantic Ecopath with Ecosim model coordination meeting that occurred this past summer. The presentations had to do with diet collection analysis, and there's been a great compilation of additional diet information that has gone into the model, and so there's an improved diet matrix. In the past, there have been proxies substituted for some species or information from other locations, and so the diet matrix has been greatly improved, and that process pointed out additional areas, or areas where additional diet data are needed, for species of concern and where ontogenetic spatial and temporal diet variability might needed, particularly in light of climate change.

The diet matrix, the SSC believes, would be useful in examining biological relationships that can inform stock assessments. For example, red snapper predation on black sea bass might be an area that this model could be used to look at.

Future developments, the presentations also outlined where the model stands and what the next steps are going forward, and so the workgroup is meeting now, through conference calls, to review the Ecopath with Ecosim for the South Atlantic region, and so they began that work in late November, and the final review of the model will come to the SSC at our April 2020 meeting, and

the SSC agreed with this timeline and path forward for this model development. I believe that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions about this tool and this model development? Any more questions for George about the SSC meeting? All right. Thank you.

DR. SEDBERRY: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Wait. I'm sorry. Art has a question.

MR. SAPP: Not really a question so much. Well, it is, but I'm curious. On the picture of that blueline tile you had there, I saw the two red dots, and is that some kind of measuring device that you all have on those subs?

DR. SEDBERRY: Yes, they're lasers, and they're either ten centimeters apart or twenty centimeters apart, and I can't remember -- I was not involved in that photo, but it looks to me like it's probably twenty-centimeter dots.

MR. SAPP: Got you. Cool. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Next up, we're going to go into -- I believe the AP report is next. Jimmy Hull can't be here, or be on the webinar, and so Bob Lorenz has graciously offered to go over the Snapper Grouper AP report.

MR. LORENZ: Hello. I'm Bob Lorenz, and I am a recreational representative on the AP. I live here in Wilmington, and I have now for eighteen years, and two years before that, a long time ago, and so welcome to my town, and I hope you enjoy it. I'm going to give the report today, and I will give a little more credit to Jimmy, our Chairman, who said he wanted to do a little more -- Get a little more in on this mackerel fishery that he's allowed to pursue as part of his portfolio, and I was coming anyway, and so he said, why don't you save the council a few buck and you do it, and so I welcomed the opportunity.

We have a pretty diverse AP on there, and so a lot is discussed, and our meetings are basically half-a-day one day and a full day and then another half-day, and so we cover a lot of territory, and I will be covering that here.

We had an update on the Snapper Grouper FMP amendments, as is always done, and basically anything that came from the AP was just, particularly probably when you got to the visioning-type documents, that a lot of their heart and time is put into it, and, to some, it seems to take a very long time to get anywhere, and so that's probably the only comment that came out of that, was that a lot of this is uncompensated work by members of the AP, and often income displacing, and so, if you had -- If they had their druthers, they would like to see some of that proceed a little bit quicker.

We had an update, and we were given a lot of information on a lot of topics, and so we had an update on the Southeast Reef Fish Survey by Dr. Wally Bublely with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the AP thought it was absolutely awesome, and, if you get a chance to look at that presentation, it's very good, with color graphic maps and everything, and some of us were very awed at where we fish, that these studies that they are doing, in order to get

information on the life history of the various snapper grouper species and then kind of bake the results in, into the stock assessments and where there is abundance and where the species are.

I can tell you, from some of the things that I looked at, that it was right on. I mean, I was absolutely amazed that, at a place that I'm always picking up some white grunts, that's where they were, and the little spot where there is red grouper, and that's where they were, and I think others felt that way. We liked it, and it was a fantastic presentation, and there was a great job done, and we saw a lot of value in it, and, naturally, the AP is going to go, hey, keep putting some money towards that, and, hey, we want to be updated on this every year, and this was so good, and then thank you. People, if they spoke of anything, it was, hey, a neat way that would go toward cooperative fisheries is this is something great to enroll some of the fishermen in, to participate, and would that be of any value, and so that offer was made.

We had our citizen science update by Julia Byrd, and she introduced to us Allie Iberle, council staff, and we had seen Allie before, and she presented, and I guess it was when she was a student, on something with fisheries, which we found interesting, and they brought forward the FISHstory project, which is very interesting, and it's of value that could be within citizen science, and what it was is one of our AP members, actually, was pretty instrumental in this, Rusty Hudson, who is kind of a lifelong resident fisherman and resident in the Daytona area, and he fished commercial, and his family had a history, way back, with a charter and headboat business, along with just very knowledgeable about what all went on in that area. He has these old-time photographs of the fishery down in that Daytona/northeast Florida area.

It was thought that, well, wouldn't this be nice, if you see these pictures of these fish, to see what went on years ago, before we really went into real fisheries management in the 1940s and the 1970s, and so, through FISHstory, there will be this tool called Zooniverse that is going to be used kind of by citizen scientists that will be trained, in order to identify species, and then kind of use this interactive software that's going to eventually get to give you some measurements on length and issues like that.

Where it may be valuable in fisheries management, and it's probably going to be great public relations when you're dealing with your stakeholders, is where was the fishery once before, and where you could you honestly take it someday, because where were the fish, what was their abundance, and what was their size, and how easy were they to catch, and this will come from these kind of photographs that are initially coming from the ones from Rusty, but so many of us have seen them, as we go to various seafood restaurants, and I've been in the Keys, and I've been to Morehead City, and this and that, where you just see these old photographs that are fantastic.

Julia Byrd, who is still up on her game of hitting the AP for volunteers, did a pretty good job of getting at least four of us, and maybe there was five of us, that are going to be involved in her little pilot study, and I think we'll be trained in January on using this interactive software, and I will be one also that will be involved in trying to take a shot are how good are people like us, and don't forget that we're bottom fishermen, at identifying these species and learning to use this software, and could this be carried on then to other folks that would participate in citizen science.

We had a fishery performance report, and this was on scamp, and we kind of love these things. We're bottom fishing, whether we're commercial or whether we're from the charter industry or you're a private boat recreational angler like myself, and this is a chance for us to get to talk about

fishing, and so we kind of like this, and so we kind of had the overview of that, and we were kind of asked our questions to report on this by Myra, and then we immediately proceeded to start throwing out information on these questions and making it almost humanly impossible for Myra to keep up with typing everything we're saying, but we certainly appreciate the information and getting that down.

Basically, what came from our AP was there was nobody really targeting scamp, and we catch them, and everybody loves them, the private recreational fishermen, and we love them, and the charters grab them, and the commercial likes it, and they add it to their portfolio, but nobody is really targeting them, and they are kind of interesting, in that you will get the reports from folks from south Florida that, yes, we see a lot more of them, and we could actually go fishing for them, but they're in with everything else, and they're close enough to get.

For those of us, once you get to South Carolina or North Carolina, they're kind of out there, in 125 or 140 feet of water, and most of us kind of were agreeing that we catch them, and they're often in there with red grouper, and we're not targeting them. Nobody decides to call their buddies and go out on a scamp trip, but we catch ones that are pretty good sized, and they're mostly legal, and so you will probably see that sort of in the report, that, in Florida, they kind of seem to be more abundant, and people can come across them.

As you go up, we don't come across them as much, just mainly because of the nature of how far we have to go out for them, but that's the type of information that we provided within that fishery performance report, and there's definitely a grade of how this fish is pursued from south to north, and it might be an interesting species for regional management, because of those differences.

We got into something, and this is really a group of ladies and gentlemen that -- Our proceedings proceed quite orderly, and everybody stays that way, but we had the presentation on the environmental impact statement for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and, kind of in short, the AP would kind of put that in the bad idea bucket, and so they immediately kind of joined hands, regardless of which stakeholder you were or what sector you were in, and basically were providing most of the information on why they don't like this or why this doesn't work, and this has absolutely no bearing on the presenter, who was Beth Dieveney from the sanctuary staff, and I do want to make note of that.

She gave an excellent presentation, and she was very respectful of us and very patient of us, in listening to what was brought forward from the AP, and some of the things that were brought up was the transparency of this kind of a thing, and they started with a meeting with small, private groups of stakeholders, fishermen in the Keys, and some of that is not going to be public record. Some of the AP members who were down there in the Keys and participated in that would have liked to have seen that, and so they said that, no, when we go to more of the public outreach meetings, the public meetings, the comment will go by the normal procedure.

I guess there was just a lot of comments that people wish would get out there publicly from those meetings that will not happen, and, interestingly, at this time, it looked like it was treated as a Monroe County, Florida thing of interest, and there was amazing interest from the other counties, as you go up into Dade and Broward and Palm Beach, I believe. Folks were saying, from up there, that there is no public meetings that are going to be held here, and they were concerned about that, and apparently so many of those fishermen consider the Keys their backyard to fish, and so there's

probably going to be a lot of talk or a little bit of argument from people down that way, and, in fact, on the AP, we have two fishermen.

We have a recreational private boat fisherman, who fishes almost exclusively in the Keys, and we have an AP member who runs boats out of Key West, clear out almost to the Tortugas, and they both live in Broward County, but they work, or they play, in Monroe, and the mentioning about, oh, here's more regulations, and they could be confusing, and, gee, will they ever go away, once they're here, and you have closures that are already affecting like the charter industry, and must there be more hammers upon our heads, and statements that, oh, gee, diving is going to be allowed, and diving occurs twenty-four/seven.

Diving is twenty-four/seven, and you have spawning fish, and wouldn't that be almost as disruptive as fishing, if that was controlled, and so that came out from some of the AP members, the fact that you put a sanctuary and you shift effort to areas that there aren't any restrictions, and then the fact that, gee, to better control fish spawning activity, you would just close an area to fishing, and is it all the time, or for extended periods of time, and wouldn't it be a lot easier, or a lot more fair -- Fair comes up a lot with us, and we're starting to talk a little bit more among ourselves about what is fair for regulations and even how we interact with each other and who gets what. If you want to protect fish spawning activity, there is other ways to do it. When they are spawning, you stop the fishing, and you don't necessarily need to never allow people to go there at all. Issues with transport, and there are going to be areas that have no wake and idle speeds and things like that are now major areas for transport.

Probably the most eloquent argument was made in closing from one of the AP members who owned a number of charter boats, and has a charter business, who brought up the fact that, within this proposal, if you look, one of the reasons to reduce fishing is that these fish are under stress or whatever, due to things like hurricanes and turbid water and water quality, and that's sort of an issue.

The solution is reduce where you can fish, extend the sanctuary 741 miles, and one of the key things that you're going to do is reduce the fishing. Where is everybody else? When you look in there, fishing, or overfishing, was not really identified as a problem for the fishery species in the Keys, and it was things beyond their control, what we would call acts of God or be it big sugar or big developers and that sort of a thing, and so that's where you could get everybody to join hands, even those of us like just a simple tourist from North Carolina that goes to Monroe County only to spend some money was on their side.

What they ended up doing was wanting just to make a recommendation to you, since you will see it, to please put it in the bad idea bucket, and so we did make a recommendation that you maintain just the status quo down in the sanctuary, and we had twelve in favor, and there were three abstentions.

We had an economic performance report for the snapper grouper fishery, and that was done by Christopher Liese, and it was an interesting report for me, and I deal a lot with economics and business development here in Wilmington, and you can see it all around you, as you walk around our riverfront, and so it was interesting for me, from a business point of view, but the way the presentation went, and the analysis, was kind of analyzing Gulf snapper grouper fisheries with the

Atlantic, for respect to the economics, and they're a little bit different with the individual transferable quota, and what you have is kind of an open quota that everybody shares here.

The report kind of shows you that our fishermen in this region work pretty darned hard for what they net, because probably one of the biggest things in that presentation was the amount of net profit there is for revenue. I think, if I remember, it was somewhere around 3 to 5 percent, which is really low, and, if you're an investor in a business, I mean, that's maybe what a supermarket runs, gets, and that sort of a thing, but the fishermen actually defended -- The commercial folks defended their position, saying it's not all that bad.

Some of the things that were mentioned were that there might be boats that are idled, if you longline for tilefish for a long period of time, and, if that's closed, some fishermen said, well, not necessarily so, and we go after other species, like wreckfish or that sort of thing.

One of the things that happened at this AP meeting is -- The only two members that couldn't make it at any time during the meeting just so happened to be people who pursue deepwater fish, and it was a representative who longlines down in the south Florida area was not there, and somebody who is up near Hatteras that can do it commercially, but also takes recreational charters out for those type of fishing wasn't there, and so we didn't have the benefit of their kind of input on any of the deep-sea species. We just had a South Carolina rep, who has a business with boats that do pursue, from time to time, the deepwater fisheries, and so they got involved in some of the comments.

A lot of the talk was, gee, fishermen are taking shorter trips, and the fishermen would say, well, it's not because there's not necessarily fish, and there's a lot of factors there, and some of us are moving to outboard fisheries with faster boats, but with that, it's coming, concomitantly, that we might use a little more fuel to get out there and back, and they didn't see it as all that bad, because they're saying there is also intangibles that they get, like they can spend a little more time with their families, and they're looking forward to that, and it's a quicker turnaround in the fishery.

Also, one of the reasons they are migrating to that type of fishing, smaller boats and less time out there, is just the way the business goes for the commercial guys, and they are serving restaurants and smaller areas that are demanding fresh fish on a constant basis, and they can turn around and provide that pretty quickly, and the economics may not be showing that, in the classic way that it was done when from the way the original study went in the Gulf and then that was applied here to us. The fishermen basically were saying that we're not doing too bad, and there's some things that we could do to become a little profitable, but we're okay.

There was some discussion on the commercial electronic logbook project, and excuse me, and I didn't really know that I would present this, but, on some of this, being a private boat recreational fisherman who is -- You know, I'm kind of unidentified, and they don't really know when I go fishing or how much I catch, and I don't feel a lot of this on the commercial side, but the fishermen are very much for this, the commercial folks, the electronic logbook project.

Where they kind of come from is, hey, can we hurry up and have it, for a speedy completion, and have it on multiple platforms, so that we can use it and can make sure that it can be easy, or, if we changes -- Some of them state that, if they have to have logbook changes, that is kind of currently

difficult to have executed in the current system. They were kind of told that, when the electronic system goes through, that it will be such that that will eliminate all those problems.

I know you have to deal with Regulatory Amendment 33, the red snapper seasons, and we had a discussion on that, and we've discussed it a lot, because we have been there before, and quite a few things, and one of the biggest things is, when you get to, and I know for certainly the recreational area, they do not care about the three-day minimum, and you can eliminate -- Suggest to eliminate the three-day minimum, and they're perfectly happy, if there's going to be a harvest season, with one day or two days, and it really doesn't matter. There is not a lot of days allowed to harvest at all anyway, and so you don't need to be tied to a three-day requirement, as far as the AP is concerned.

That did bring up some discussion with the three-day minimum, and it kind of varies a little bit regionally. Again comes up sort of a need for -- There is a desire from many AP people for regional fisheries management. You have Florida, where you have some commercial fishermen that want to actually have an August 1 start date for the commercial fishing season, provide kind of a fish, the red color, the nice thing, and they just think that it would be nice at that time of year to have that.

You then run against you have a North Carolina interest that is stating, when you get to Amendment 30, if you're going to start talking about protecting the gravid or the spawning red grouper that is available in North Carolina in June, why don't you open the red snapper season for the commercial in June?

Another thing you will have to consider is, of course, you're going to have the recreational fishermen who are going to come in who almost universally never as a group, and you can probably find this out from the recreational NGOs, do not basically want the commercial season to proceed before the recreational season, and so that always comes up and is discussed, and it's something that you all may have to deal with, because we actually came to no conclusions on that, even though we work together very good at problem solving.

We mentioned about, again, can seasons be different, and red snapper has a very long spawning season, and discards and discard mortality, and then, when you get to the recreational group, it differs, because of different reasons, and you have the Florida component, if you're looking from roughly the St. Johns area down to Canaveral, where the red snapper are kind of pesky for those kind of people, and I know that Tony had asked a question with respect to the sea bass and the sea bass fishing. Well, in the fall, you have fishermen from that area that are complaining -- They were complaining last year that the red -- It was difficult to fish for sea bass, because of all the red snapper, and so you have that kind of statement going on, where they would love either to find a way to get at some of those snappers, and something that may be needed in outreach is to keep coming up -- I don't think everybody really gets what's trying to probably be done with this huge bell-shaped curve that I see with respect to age and sizes of snapper.

People see this cut that is kind of out there now moving through the system, and they kind of focus on that, because there's so many, and, periodically, it wouldn't be a bad idea to just update folks on what really you're trying to achieve in this red snapper management situation, because the Floridians, particularly in the northern half, just -- They are ground zero for these things, and

they're all over the place, and they want to be at them, and they get in their way sometimes, as they say, for other fisheries.

As you go north, you didn't hear as much of that, whether it's from the recreational or the charter or the commercial groups, because the red snapper for us -- They're starting to get out there, and, I mean, until you get to ninety or 120 feet of water, where they show up -- When you get to Georgia and South Carolina and North Carolina, they are in waters that is a thirty-mile trek or something, and you're not necessarily going to go out there all the time, and somehow we find a way that we can avoid a concentration of them. You don't hear of anybody wanting to sea bass fish in North Carolina that is being bothered by red snapper, and you will if you go to the Daytona area of Florida, and so there was some consideration there within the seasons of allowing them to have them, but, again, you're going to be against the probably recreational interests that don't like them coming ahead of us.

I believe they made -- No, that was on the grouper, and so I'm not going to bring that up at this point, and so they just wanted you to know, particularly the Chair, that the red snapper fishery is very important, and the landings are different, and the experiences are different with them, and they would like kind of a shout-out to consider regional management for them.

Regulatory Amendment 34, the SMZs in North Carolina and South Carolina, I know that's relatively new, and that was near and dear to me, and I'm very thankful for Steven Murphey, our Director from our Division of Marine Fisheries in North Carolina, to put that forth in front of you. Interestingly, and I know, at this point, I spoke on this, and I pointed out -- Nobody else probably really cared quite as much, being they are from the other states, but I kind of started the conversation, and I want to keep introducing the aspect of fairness when we deliberate with each other and we're trying to make tough decisions on who can fish what and with what gear.

Our artificial reefs off of North Carolina were basically -- This was brought up by one of our members who is a retired DMF member who had the history, and they were basically started by private funding, and private funding from the recreational side of it, and there was a point where, due to liability issues and that sort of thing, they were turned over to state management, and now what has happened in our state -- As I have seen, there is a little bit of personal opinion here, but, as the budget is cut for our DMF more and more, increasingly more of the really neat stuff like research -- There was a thing here, just in this hotel, where we were seeing the grad students that presented papers on things like flounder research and how the eggs develop in our sounds.

That was funded by the recreational coastal fishing license, and so I kind of said, hey, guys, you know, it's kind of a fairness thing, and I would be interesting to go along with Steven, and how about some backing on this from all of you to keep these artificial reefs kind of a little more preserved for recreational fishing, but then understanding how history went, and there were commercials that would hit some of them a little bit once in a while, maybe for amberjack around this time of year, and let that happen, but get rid of various fishing gears. If they're rod-and-reel fishing, let's do that.

People kind of went along with that, which was interesting, and so we went through that, and some comments came up as to how do you enforce that, and would you really just -- Certainly describe the gear, with rod-and-reel, and one of the members, and I was so happy that it came from Florida, just for our North Carolina contingent that knows that, for over a decade -- I have been very

frustrated in my own state, of every time a group of us would like a governor to bring forth an okay for our DMF to enter into a joint enforcement agreement with the federal government, somebody else always knocks it out of the barrel and gets to the governor, whether it's a republican or a democrat, and we've been through both of them in trying to do that, and it's very frustrating.

I found it interesting, and it kind of got off my radar, and I didn't think about it, but somebody from Florida brought that up, of, well, how are you going to enforce this, that that would be an issue, and doesn't North Carolina not have a JEA, and so what would the specifics be with that, and so, just in fairness, I wanted to bring that forward, and so we came up with a motion, or I did, and we wanted to request that you and the council designate these thirty artificial reefs in the EEZ of North Carolina as special management zones and restrict the legal gear, and we put in there commercial and recreational, to be fair to some of those that have historically fished there that were commercial fishermen, to the handline, the rod-and-reel, and sportfishing, and limit spearfishing harvest to the recreational bag limit.

Interestingly, you can see what happened there. We had eleven in favor and three abstentions. For some, maybe they were in the conservation zone, but, for others, they might have thought that this isn't kind of my argument, but notice that nobody said no on the commercial side, and so the fairness aspect is getting through, and maybe we can wheel-and-deal and work together a little more and a little better. I'm kind of proud of that.

We had the update on the MyFishCount, which is the voluntary way, for those of that are private boat recreational anglers, to report our catch, and it's very well liked, and it's gaining popularity, and people brought a lot of positives up for that, in good ways that it can be used in the future, with respect to changes, by showing, particularly with the location-type data, which fishermen are warming more and more up to, to finish filling out, and that tells you where the fish are being caught by us, and maybe that can be used a little more in intelligent management practices, and maybe on things like the Florida Keys National Monument, and that could tell you where maybe there's a little bit overkill coming for future regulations.

We had our SEDAR update, and Kathleen Howington took right over where Julia Byrd used to excel, and she took right over there for getting a bunch of our commercial fishermen involved to volunteer for the SEDAR studies and the sampling for the fish like the gag grouper, and some of our commercial fishermen participated in that.

We did have a talk on how to get information out, and I thought it was interesting that NOAA Fish Watch was probably -- Everybody was agreeing that that was probably one of the most valuable sources of information for all of us to obtain information. Those of us that are older, they're still using a lot of print, or certainly the things the council put out via email are very important to us, but, for the future, if you want to evolve, you really have to get on these social media platforms, and that's where the youth is, and that's where it's going on, and so, as some of us have to hang it up, due to bad knees and bad backs, and we just can't get up early, those are the people that you want to reach out to.

We did, interestingly, and I might make it in public comment later, because I will probably get off track a little personally, but this Amendment 46 for private recreational permits and reporting, and I didn't read totally up on your deliberations in September, but I know it's been pushed back, or

pushed out, or pushed away, and that came as a surprise to some on the AP, and that is something almost that is universally talked about.

I have been on the AP for five-and-a-half years, and somebody always brings it up, and it's the commercial brings it up first, and they will often bring it up on fairness, why can you guys just fish, and we don't know who you are and what you get and where you get them and why is everything upon us, and enlightened recreational fishermen will say, you know, you're kind of right, and I think it would be better to know who we are and where we're fishing and make us report them, because honest data is the best. If it hurts us sometimes, okay. If we gain sometimes, it's okay.

We don't need to be behind the black curtain of you don't know we are and what we're doing and where we're going and how much we're getting. It could be overstated, and it could be understated, but, if you're going to look at fairness, get us in the game. Get us in the reporting game and know who we are and know where we are and how many there are, and that's the way to better fishery management, and so, once again, it's brought up, and you can see unanimously, to let's have commercial licenses and permitting, and so that's going to never stop, and I will comment a little more in public comment, and so it's back on the table again for you from us, and that was unanimous.

There was a motion out there, and, again, this comes up to the regional management, and it had to do with the grouper spawning season closures, and I think kind of motivated by the fact of females become riper in Florida sooner and later in North Carolina, and you may want to delay a North Carolina start at some point, and I don't know if you ever accelerate it in Florida, but that's where that comes from, and that's kind of, again, a plea for some of the groupers, and for the red snapper, in particular, to consider regional management, and not as strong there, and you notice that we had ten in favor and four opposed, and so there will be people that aren't exactly for that.

One thing that came up, and I don't know what you can do about it, but the charter boat industry, when you get out of Florida -- The North Carolina through Georgia is very impacted by the right whale regulation for the slow speed, with respect to servicing the recreational fishermen that want to use the headboats. The distance you have to travel to go after these snapper grouper is quite out there, and these folks are getting into kind of a non-economically-benefitted circumstance of the amount of time it takes to run a good trip for their people, and they're running into things like -- I believe at eleven hours the law kicks in, or there's a regulation that kicks in, for another captain, and that kind of thing, and so it skyrockets, and I don't think anything can be done there, and it's Endangered Species, but they're hurting, and so maybe, if they can be helped out in another way, if you can be ingenious in trying to figure that out.

That's kind of about all there is, other than there is -- You will hear the AP loves to have updates on things, particularly where some of these visioning and port meetings went and what's coming about from some of that impact from way ago, and people may bring that forward.

In closing, I want to thank you, and this is the end of the report, and, if you have never been to one of our Snapper Grouper AP meetings, come to one and witness it. A lot -- I say a lot, and I see Chris, and Dave was there at the last one, and Tim was at one, and Roy showed up, and we go about things pretty good, in a pretty nice manner, and kind of a good spirit of cooperation, and, if

you're in from one of the NGOs or some group towards recreational and commercial fisheries, maybe see what we're doing and how we're doing it.

I know, in the five-and-a-half years, I couldn't be with a finer group of people, and I have learned so much, and I've got so much respect for some of the people, the people running the charter industries and the people in the commercial industry and the people that are running very integrated operations, from they are catching the fish, they own the boats, and they have a restaurant, and they have a fish house, and so what they go through and how they are still going through it with a very chin-up attitude, and then the charter industry -- It's great working with them, and I feel very privileged that they tapped me on the shoulder to help out a little more, or to assist with helping keeping the group managed and going at the meetings and allowing me, and trusting me, to present their case to you all. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great report. Thanks, Bob. Do we have any questions?

MR. WHITAKER: Thank you for that very good presentation, and I go to those meetings because I learn a lot more there than I learn here, to tell you the truth, but, anyhow, one thing that was said that struck a note with me, and it was Rusty Hudson who made this comment, and he said, to the best of my recollection, and I haven't read the minutes yet, that the shallow-water grouper are moving offshore earlier in the year now than they used to in Florida, and it occurred to me that, obviously, that may be temperature related, and it occurred to me that that could have some real impacts on access and maybe catches of some of those species that might become more of a factor down the road. Todd Kellison was there, and I asked him about it, and he said they don't have definitive data on those movements, but they were going to consider it and start looking into it a little bit, but, anyhow, thank you for your presentation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, David. Any more questions or comments? All right. Let's go ahead and take our lunch break and come back at 1:30, and then we will be working on blueline tilefish. Thanks, everybody.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: I said we were going to go into blueline tilefish, but just kidding. We're going to go into Amendment 33 for red snapper season, and I'm going to turn it over to Myra to get going on her PowerPoint.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is the little orienting presentation that we always do before we dig into the decision document, and so this is not in your briefing book, and it's very short. It's basically just to remind everybody where we are and what we're doing at this meeting. This amendment currently contains two actions. Action 1 would remove the minimum number of days for the South Atlantic red snapper seasons, both commercial and recreational, to take place, and Action 2 would modify the start date for the red snapper commercial season.

In September, you reviewed the purpose and need for this amendment, and you also reviewed public hearing comments, and we held public hearings in August, and then you voted to remove two of the actions that were included at the time, and one of them would have changed the start date for the recreational season, and the other action would have modified the days of the week

that are open during the recreational season, and so those two were removed and put in the appendix.

We also went over the timing, and so, at this meeting, you're scheduled to review the analyses and consider approving this amendment for formal review, and we would submit the amendment to NMFS in January, which would mean regulations would likely be effective in mid to late 2020. Before we proceed with discussing this amendment though, and we have already gone over this, there were some concerns that council staff wanted to bring to your attention before we get into the discussions, and Gregg is going to come to the mic to tell you about that.

MR. WAUGH: Thank you. Good afternoon. First, as Myra said, we want to make you aware of some public relations concerns that have come up related to this amendment, and I want to make clear that we're not expressing any views pro or con and trying to influence your decision on this amendment, but we just want to make you aware of these issues.

As you're well aware, management of red snapper causes angst with the public, and a number of public relations concerns have surfaced during development of Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 33. While red snapper management continues to be a contentious issue all on its own, particularly in reference to the disparity between the structure of the recreational and commercial seasons, the public has grown increasingly confused by the actions in the amendment and how they could benefit stakeholders.

We have done everything we can to clarify, during public hearings, that the amendment would not allow more fishing days, but we have still received several inquiries asking if the amendment would allow more fishing days, and we tell them the answer is no. Under the existing law, the council can't increase the season until we get a new stock assessment that's been completed, showing the scientific justification to do so.

Currently, NOAA Fisheries determines the length of the recreational season, based on the catch rate estimates from the previous year. The estimates must allow for at least a three-day season, or the fishery can't open. Some stakeholders remain unclear as to why removing the minimum number of days could be helpful, and others are in favor of removing the minimum number of days requirement, to allow for a one or two-day season. Public comments have stated this change will allow for more flexibility, and then you've got others that are saying that it would increase the derby effect, with the associated vessel safety concerns, should the change result in fewer fishing days.

There is also concern about the public's perception for the proposal to change the start date of the commercial season to earlier in the year. Right now, the proposal is May 1. Currently, both the commercial and recreational seasons begin in July, and the commercial season is based on the commercial annual catch limit and continues until that limit is estimated to have been met, based on commercial reporting requirements.

Although many frustrations with the commercial fishery are rooted in misinformation and misunderstanding, a decision to move the commercial season even further ahead of the recreational season would likely be perceived as unfair by some recreational fishermen, adding to the distrust felt towards federal fishery management.

No matter how this amendment moves forward, the council is likely to face reactionary backlash from the public, particularly from the recreational community. Since the amendment does not, because it can't, address the issue that most recreational fishermen have brought forward, that is they want a longer recreational season, it's likely that the public's perception of federal fishery management will continue to decline. Council members and staff will need to work together, in an effort to address these challenges.

Again, regardless of what the decision is here, we just want to make you aware of these public relations concerns, and, again, just to reiterate that we're not trying to influence you one way or the other, and I would be glad to answer any questions or provide any clarification.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Gregg. Any questions for Gregg? All right. Thank you for that explanation. There might be more as we move through. All right, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and so this is Attachment 6a in your briefing book, and so I will just walk you through the decision document. I have already gone over the background and the actions that are currently in this framework amendment, the objectives for this meeting, the expected timing, and the purpose and need statement, which, as I mentioned, was reviewed and approved at the last meeting. I will just pause here momentarily to see if anybody would like to review the purpose and need statement or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: As I read the purpose and need statement, I think it needs some work. The part that says -- I mean, I understand what the amendment does, but the part that says, "remove minimum number of days to allow commercial or recreational harvest of red snapper", it does sound kind of like what Gregg was saying, that we're lengthening the season, when really we're just removing a constraint about the fact that there is a minimum number with which we would not open the season at all, and so the way it's worded is a little confusing, even though we know what we're doing. Mel, did you have your hand up?

MR. BELL: I totally agree with you, the way that reads, and I didn't know if you wanted to adjust that now or just talk about it a bit and then --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am fine with either one. I would certainly welcome comments or adjustments.

MR. BELL: Well, so what you said was -- I think that's correct, and what we would be doing is removing the current constraint on the number of minimum days. That's what we're doing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Right. Myra is getting that up there, and I'm looking around, if there are other questions or comments or discussion on the purpose and need. I think people are still reading it. This might be okay for now, and we could come back to the purpose and need at the end, after we go through the two actions if we want, and let me look around and make sure that nobody else wants to talk about it right now.

DR. CRABTREE: My recommendation would be to go ahead and talk about the actions and see if we're going to do this or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sounds good. We will do that.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on to Action 1, the title of that action is to Remove the Minimum Number of Days for the South Atlantic Red Snapper Seasons. You've got your no action and your preferred, which would remove the requirement that is specifying that the red snapper commercial and recreational seasons in the South Atlantic would not open if projections indicate the commercial or recreational seasons would be three days or fewer.

As I said earlier, the analyses for this amendment are qualitative, and we don't have enough information to really do a quantitative analysis, and so we have here a number of bullets that basically summarize what we have analyzed in terms of biological, socioeconomic, and social effects.

Biologically, this action is not expected to result in either positive nor negative effects relative to no action, and, under circumstances where the projected red snapper fishing season would be more than three days, there would be no difference in the economic effects. If the recreational season were to take place in three days or fewer, your preferred could result in economic benefits relative to no action through increased consumer surplus, increased business activity, and increased revenue. There's a table here that shows you the range of the estimated change in recreational consumer surplus under your preferred.

Then, as Gregg mentioned, Preferred Alternative 2 could exacerbate existing derby fishing conditions, where fishermen feel pressured to compete and potentially put themselves in unsafe conditions on the water. However, on the other hand, while safety-at-sea considerations are important, also allowing for the harvest of red snapper in the South Atlantic, regardless of season length, is likely to be perceived as having positive social effects, and so we put both of those things out there for your consideration.

The IPT has no recommendations at this time, and I have included what the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel has recommended, and they gave us some comments and recommendations at both their April and October meetings, and there is also a link to the public comment that was submitted to the Snapper Grouper AP when they met in October, and a summary of the public comments that were obtained for this amendment. Then the last thing that I have for you under each of these actions is just a list of bullets for what we extracted from your discussions back in September, so that we can draft the council rationale.

What we heard you say was that management has changed fishermen's behavior as it relates to red snapper, and, even if the season were to be one day, people would likely behave in the same way that they are behaving now, and, ultimately, it is up to each individual to decide whether it is safe to go fishing or not.

You also mentioned that short-term fisheries, like red snapper, are necessarily going to create accessibility issues, and we talked about National Standard 10 and that it could be argued that safety-at-sea concerns already exist under the current approach, but they could also exist on any given Saturday when the weather is nice. You also mentioned that tournaments also create derby-style fishing, and so these are all the things that we extracted, as I said, from your discussion, and so I invite you to either provide more rationale or whatever, so we can draft Chapter 5 of this amendment, and I will pause there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. All right. Discussion?

DR. CRABTREE: I guess I've said this before, but it does seem to me, if the season gets three days or less, then we need to re-think it, and I'm not talking fish tags or something like that, but it does seem to me that it would be more acceptable to have a season every other year, but have it be a little bit longer and avoid some of these derby issues for something like that, but I just don't see how any of us are going to gain from a potential one or two-day season. It's just kind of going to be a mess, but I will leave it to you.

MR. SAPP: The AP said, and I agree, that, even if it was a five-day season, it's still pretty well a derby effect, and you've got five out of 365 days, and you're pushing hard to accomplish anything. I don't want to entirely take the opportunity to go red snapper fishing away from these guys for a whole year, and we'll seriously get some negative responses out of that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Others? I agree. I am concerned about not having a red snapper season at all again, and I agree that, even with six days, or five days, that it's still a derby effect, as it would be if it was three or less, and so are there other comments on this action?

MR. BELL: I agree, and I think, to Art's point, it already is a derby mentality, when you only have the number of fish we have and what, of course, factors in is we're playing roulette with the weather, and you never know what the weather is going to do, but my fear all along with this has been, if the fish continue to rebuild, as they sure look like they are, and their accessibility is greater, and anything we do to optimize access for the public is going to result in the number of days sliding down, and who knows?

I mean, we might -- We haven't done the calculations yet, I guess, for this year, but we might be at four days, or we might be at three days pretty soon, and so that's why Action 1 was -- It was to keep some level of access available for the public, because that's what we're hearing, is some access is better than no access at all, and, putting on an enforcement hat, I get the whole derby thing, but it already is a derby, and it would just be a little more of a derby, I guess, but I felt like we were doing something that we were asked to do by a lot of folks, and the idea was to maintain some level of accessibility for folks, realizing that it is -- We are having success in the rebuild, and that's a good thing.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Just to mimic what everybody else has said, one day is better than none, from a recreational standpoint. To give me three days every other year versus one day this year, I may not be here next year, and give me what I can now for the recreational guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What I'm hearing around the table, unless I see more hands in the air, is that we're okay, and we already have a preferred alternative here, and we're pretty much saying the same rationale, and I'm taking it as we don't want to make modifications to this first action. All right, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on to Action 2, this one would modify the red snapper commercial season. For this one, you have two alternatives. You have selected a preferred, which would modify the season to start on May 1, and you also considered Alternative 3, which would modify it to start the second Monday in June. Currently, it starts the second Monday in July, and so, again, just some bullets that correspond to the analysis that's in the draft amendment.

For the season for red snapper for commercial, it hasn't been open in May since 2009, and so there is not enough information catch rates that would allow us to predict how long the season would last under the current commercial ACL, and so, again, it's qualitative, and it's reasonable to expect that, since fishery-independent trends in red snapper abundance and anecdotal information from fishermen suggest that red snapper are doing quite well, that the ACL could be met earlier in the season under Preferred Alternative 2.

Then, in terms of discards, we looked at what's available from the commercial discard logbook, looking at total discards by month, and so we do see that total discards, according to that dataset of red snapper, are higher in the month of May, compared to other months, and you can see this table, which corresponds to Table 2.1.2 from the amendment, and you can see the total at the bottom, and you have May, June, and July that have the highest numbers of discards for the commercial sector. As you have mentioned also, Preferred Alternative 2 could result in reduced discards in the month of May when the season opens for shallow-water grouper.

The other thing to think about is you could have less discards in May, but then, if you meet the ACL early in the summer, when water temperature is going up, that could also increase discard mortality, and so you would be looking at some negative biological effects on the stock from that.

Another thing we pulled together is we looked at what was caught in commercial trips that caught red snapper, and this table shows data from 2016 through 2018, and so you can see that gag were most frequently caught, 26 percent of the time, and that's the co-occurrence of gag.

In terms of economic effects, those would be similar across the alternatives, since the harvest would continue to be limited by that ACL, and then, of course, in terms of social benefits, you're going to have some variation there, depending on where you live. In regard to the preferred opening, you're going to have some folks that are going to be better off with a commercial season starting in May, and other people, as Bob Lorenz mentioned earlier, had requested that you consider an opening in late summer, and those were folks from Florida.

Again, your Snapper Grouper AP recommendations, public comments, and the majority of comments requested an opening in August, and those were commenters from Florida, and, in terms of your rationale, here are the bullets. You did acknowledge the concern that folks had voiced about harvest occurring while red snapper are spawning. However, you did talk, back in September, about some studies that indicate the red snapper peak goes through September, and so there's really not that much of a concern, and you did make some changes to the purpose and need, in regard to reducing harvest during the spawning season, and you removed that from the purpose and need.

You also acknowledged that commercial season opening before the recreational season would result in some conflict between the sectors, and you did state, on the record, that reducing discards is what's best for the resource, and, in terms of more rationale, there was some conversation about, when the vermilion closes, that allowing red snapper retention during that time would benefit some folks, particularly in the Carolinas, and Bob Lorenz also mentioned, since Regulatory Amendment 30 is going to be effective pretty soon, that's going to reduce or constrain harvest of red grouper, and allowing harvest of red snapper during that same time of year would be beneficial, and so that's what we have in terms of rationale for this action. I will pause there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion on this? I can say that at least we talked to a number of commercial fishermen, and I can't support the May opening, which is our preferred right now. Of all the folks we talked to, they seemed to be okay with July, and I would like to go to the no action alternative here and just keep the season the same as July, but I will see what others have to say.

MR. SAPP: I heard much of the same. Many of the folks -- I had people actually that were liking the May 1, and I had an equal amount of folks that wanted to go later, closer to September, but the vast majority, which doesn't speak exactly to that in public comment, wanted a status quo, to leave it as it was. The numbers, if it was strictly my personal beliefs, the numbers say that they are catching red snapper while they're catching the gag groupers in the beginning of the May season, but the majority of the folks want status quo, and so that's where you've got me right now.

MR. BREWER: Of the comments that I've gotten, and I have not spoken individually to commercial fishermen, but most of them favor later in the year, and August 1 was the date that came up repeatedly, and I understand that, if we try to put that in as an alternative right now, that we would be slowing this down, and so, as the next best, I would say status quo, July 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MR. BELL: I have had issues with this all along, and I think Action 1 -- Action 2, just given the differences in the fishery and the timing and the desires of folks from the Keys all the way to North Carolina, there is just no one happy tweak. If we were going to change it, there is no one thing to change it to.

As to it being on top of what we're calling the peak of the spawning, they are such prolonged spawners that you're going to get spawning somewhere, regardless of what you do. Dangers of going later in the year, now we're into hurricane season, and then, earlier in the year, you kill the fish before they spawn, and they don't even get a chance. If you wait until they are in the spawn, some of them maybe spawn. I mean, I would be fine with no action myself, but the true benefit of this being in Action 1 and allowing some access for people, and we just rock on like we are right now, in terms of the timing.

DR. CRABTREE: It's clear to me that there's no consensus to change this, and so our best move is to leave it where it is, it seems to me, and I have heard from a lot of the Florida fishermen, and that's where the bulk of the fishery is, that they seem okay with leaving it where it is. **I will make a motion to change our preferred alternative to Alternative 1, no action.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's seconded by Chester.

MR. CONKLIN: Like I said before, we're talking about seventy-five pounds of fish for like a thirty-eight-day season, and it's really disheartening that we even have to -- That we should be talking about it. In other regions, they are trading around millions of pounds of fish, and we're screwing around with seventy-five pounds, and so, with that, I would just as soon leave it where it is, as far as the status quo. If it were more, and it had more of an economic effect on people, then I may be sensitive to changing it, but, for that reason, I will maintain status quo.

MR. GRINER: I am also sensitive to the fact that it is only seventy-five pounds of fish, but part of the problem that we've got is the biggest reason it's only seventy-five pounds of fish is because of the discards, and so, at the end of the day, if we're really interested in the discard situation -- Looking at the table, it just makes sense to me that May 1 is going to give us the biggest bang for our buck in trying to reduce the discards, and, to me, that was the whole real point of moving to May 1.

That's when we're encountering them, and that's when we're fishing with big baits and big hooks, grouper fishing, and, once July rolls around, we're using small hooks and vermilion and trigger fishing, and we're just not having the encounter rates. We're not having the discards that we do in May, and so, at the end of the day, it is only seventy-five pounds, and it's not really going to affect anybody's pocketbook that bad, but it is going to continue to exacerbate our discard problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to go to Art and then back to Chris, and I can say that, at least for Florida -- In Florida, I have the commercial landings numbers from 2007 to 2018, and they're anywhere from 67 to 100 percent of the landings in Florida, and North Carolina is anywhere from zero to 6, and one year 9 percent, and so I'm tending to go more towards what the Florida fishermen are saying.

MR. GRINER: Well, to that point, if we were able to have landings in May, I think you would see North Carolina with a lot more landings than that.

MR. SAPP: It's so interesting, and I couldn't agree more, Tim, and the majority of fishermen that I was speaking to that wanted that May 1 date were -- It's a small group in the far southern region, and it's crazy that the two ends of our region are the ones that want that May 1 date more than anything, but the majority of guys that I spoke to, and it was a lot, said they encountered them more while they were vermilion fishing, even with the smaller baits and smaller hooks, and they were just getting eaten up by them, and I agree that the goal was to get it beyond seventy-five pounds by getting rid of more dead discards, or the perception of dead discards, and I believe, after speaking to these people, that it occurs more now in the middle of the state during a vermilion fishing trip than even the grouper trips.

MR. CONKLIN: I would be willing to maybe change it after we get more fish in a couple of years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Is there more discussion? Are we ready to vote on this motion? **The motion on the table is to change the preferred alternative under Action 2 to Alternative 1, no action. Let me see a show of hands of those in favor, nine in favor; those opposed, three opposed; any abstentions, one abstention. The motion passes.**

We have a draft motion on the board, and we can make it now, or we can wait until Full Council, and so this is final action for this particular amendment, and this is the motion to send this to the Secretary, and this will be a roll call vote at Full Council, and so do we want to make that motion now or just wait until Full Council? Full Council, is what it seems like. Okay. Thanks, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: The next item then, since we're talking red snapper, is Marcel is on the line to give you an update on red snapper CPUE, and so let me get him ready.

DR. REICHERT: Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity to briefly update you on some fishery-independent data. I have given many presentations to the council, and I believe this is my first webinar presentation, and I only have a few slides. This is just a reminder of the collaborative nature of the Southeast Reef Fish Survey, or SERFS, and it consists of three partners, MARMAP and SEAMAP, both housed at South Carolina DNR, and the SEFIS Program, housed at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and the three partners are using three vessels that are on the left side of this slide, the Palmetto, the Savannah, and the NOAA Ship Pisces.

We had a very successful 2019 season, with a total of one-hundred-and-ten-and-a-half sea days, during which we deployed well over 1,700 chevron traps and 323 CTDs. We collected over 44,000 fish, representing seventy species, and, of those, we kept over 12,000 for life history, and that means that we took the otoliths and reproductive tissues, to look at maturity and fecundity and the like, and the samples represented forty-four species.

The preliminary data show that the red snapper this year was ranked sixth overall in our traps, and maybe you remember, in my update that I gave in June, that red snapper was ranked fifth, and, this year, it switched places with white grunt, and, since the sampling season ended in September, we are currently in full sample and data processing mode.

I will provide an update on the red snapper chevron trap catches, and I want to remind you that this does not include the video data, and so this is only the catches in the traps, and the time series is similar to what I presented in June, except for the fact that we added one year, the 2019 data, and the video data are not included, because that takes generally a lot more time to process, and, as usual, the CPUE is given in catch per trap, and we continue to use the zero-inflated negative binomial method to standardize the data, and the variables included in this standardization were sampling date, depth, temperature, and latitude.

This graph that you will see in the next slide is normalized to the long-term average, and, as I always mention some caveats, and I want to note that this is a summary overview of the fishery-independent catch data, and it's not an update of the stock status. Obviously, that update would include a lot more data and analyses, such as fishery-dependent data and a number of other data and information.

The presentation of the CPUE data, similar to what I presented in June, the black line is the standardized CPUE, with the gray area indicating the 95 percent confidence interval, and the red dots are the nominal CPUE, and so that's the not standardized data, and, as a reminder, the Y-axis, the value of one is that long-term average, and that's the dotted line in the graph, and the two represents twice the long-term average, and 0.1 represents half the long-term average.

As you can see, the data show that CPUE in 2019 was lower than in 2018, but still about three-times the long-term average. What was interesting is that we saw slightly more traps with red snapper, but, on average, the number of red snapper per trap was slightly lower than in the previous year.

I added the blue box as a reminder to you that, in SEDAR 41, the most recent red snapper stock assessment, the index working group concluded that the period 1990 to 2009 of the trap survey should not be used as an abundance index. This was, in large part, due to the smaller spatial coverage, and I mentioned that in my previous presentations, and also the lower number of traps

sampled in these years. It is also a reminder that, in the stock assessments, a combined video trap index was used, the so-called CVID index, and so that may look slightly different than the index that I am presenting here.

You may remember that we started adding the distribution maps in our presentation, and this is the distribution map for red snapper for the 2019 data. Among other things, you can see that the coverage was pretty good, and the color scheme is the same as in my previous presentations, where blue means we sampled, but there were no red snapper in the traps, and green, yellow, orange, and red means an increasing number of red snapper found in the traps. The distribution of red snapper was very similar in 2019 relative to previous years.

I didn't add that slide, but we recently updated the age composition through the 2018 sample year, and the data, the preliminary data, showed some evidence of several strong year classes, for instance 2015, 2005, and 1997, that were working themselves through the population, but we just finished the ageing, and we're conducting a QA/QC at the moment, but I'm more than happy to present that data in one of the future presentations.

Before I open the floor to any questions that you may have, I, of course, need to acknowledge Christina Schobernd and Nate Bacheler at SEFIS, who provided the data at very short notice, and I mentioned earlier that their sampling season ended in September, and Michelle Willis and Margaret Finch worked very hard with Tracey Smart to get the data from SEAMAP and MARMAP together, and Tracey also provided the map, and last, but not least, Walter Bublely and Dawn Glasgow worked very hard to get the analysis ready for the presentation today.

Of course, also, this is a collaborative effort with a lot of people, and so I want to acknowledge also everyone who participated in the cruises and helped us with both data and presentations, both current and in the past, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you may have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Marcel. Are there questions?

DR. MCGOVERN: Marcel, I was wondering if you have seen any trends in the mean length or the length frequency distribution of red snapper over the years.

DR. REICHERT: I think they are following the pattern that we see in the age compositions, and I don't have that slide here, but, in the trends report that we hope to distribute early next year, there is a graph with the length distribution, and, especially in the smaller lengths, you can see several pulses go through the population, but I don't have that data in front of me, and I'm sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anybody else?

MR. SAPP: Thank you very much for a great presentation there. Do you think there's any chance that you're seeing reduced numbers in the traps due to an increase in size, or average size, of the fish, as larger fish have a tendency not to want to get in there as much?

DR. REICHERT: I would need to look at the data, but I don't believe so. I have been out on one trip to Florida where we had a number of relatively large red snapper in the trap, and so I don't believe that that's an issue, although, of course, every gear has its selectivity, and so that is something that we are currently looking at, and that, of course, needs to be taken into account, but

I don't believe that the decline in the CPUE is a result of less larger snappers coming into the trap, if that's your question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there more questions? I don't see any more hands in the air. Thank you, Marcel.

DR. REICHERT: Absolutely. Thank you and happy holidays.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. We need to back up to the red snapper amendment. We forgot to go back and fix the purpose and need, and, based on the fact that we chose no action in Action 2, we definitely need to edit that purpose and need, and so Myra is going to pull that back up for us. I think that the part of this document, the "while minimizing discard mortality", I guess that's partly up for debate here. I am going to look to others. Mel, you were making changes to this earlier, and if folks could please check this out and offer some edits.

Anna is making a suggestion to put a period after "South Atlantic", and I think delete the rest, and is that what you're suggesting? There is one recommendation, and so Myra is going to fix that up, so we can see what that looks like.

MR. SAPP: Like I said, they're saying that we're still going to be minimizing discard mortality, and keeping it the way it is, due to the amount of fish that you're seeing during -- I guess it would be the same, and they gave us the same dates, and I don't know. It's confusing, but they are still discarding fish, to some degree.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know if I would go there, since we're not making changes.

MS. BROUWER: I would suggest, if you would like to keep the bit that says, "to increase the socioeconomic benefits to fishermen and fishing communities", and then just wrap it up like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, in other words, after the words "South Atlantic", add back the "to increase the socioeconomic benefits to fishermen and fishing communities". Okay. She is going to make that edit, and I'm going to keep going around the room, and did someone else have their hand up?

MR. GRINER: I don't know that we're increasing the socioeconomic benefit to anyone. I mean, maybe maintaining what is there, but you're not increasing anything. We are definitely not minimizing discards, and we're not increasing any benefit to anyone, and so I don't see how any of it could stay in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the word "maintain". Folks, check that out. All right. What do people think? I see that people are still discussing it. It seems like people are okay, and so are we okay with this? All right. We need a motion to accept these edits to the purpose and need statement.

MR. WOODWARD: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have a second by Mel. Now we are done with that amendment. **Is there any objection to that motion? That motion stands approved.**

MR. CONKLIN: Do we need a motion to remove Action 2 from the document to Considered but Rejected, so we don't have to go out with it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, we're good. Now we're going to move back in the agenda to Abbreviated Framework 3, blueline tilefish, and I believe that Roger is going to come up here.

MR. PUGLIESE: I will be addressing Abbreviated Framework Amendment 3 to the Snapper Grouper FMP to address blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic region. The amendment is going to adjust the annual catch limit and the annual catch target for the recreational, specifically, and the council, at the September meeting, had directed the staff and IPT to advance and develop the framework amendment to provide the foundation for the adjustments and actions and the supporting information.

Just to reiterate what is being proposed, it's the actions will now establish a new ACL. The total allowable catch limit will be 233,968 pounds for the South Atlantic region, of which 117,148 is for the commercial and 116,820 for the recreational, and it also establishes a new recreational ACT, and this was done through averaging the PSEs over the last five years, which came out to an increase to 70,886 pounds for the ACT.

The actions were addressing the recommendations from the SSC, which, as was stated earlier on in the SSC report, at the October meeting, the SSC re-addressed the issue and reaffirmed that their intention was that, based on the SEDAR 50 and the combination of the information coming from the workgroup, that it was intended to be a combined ACL from Hatteras north to the North Carolina/Virginia border and the south, and so you would end up with one ABC and OFL for the region, of which those translated to the proposed ACLs, total ACL and ACLs, for the recreational and commercial sector.

At the last meeting, the council reiterated and had discussions on the National Standard 1 Guidelines relative to considering management uncertainty, and they reaffirmed their intent that the ACL be set equal to ABC, and, in doing that, some of the rationale that was laid out in this document is identifying that the ACLs and the commercial and recreational management measures for blueline tilefish have been established in the Mid-Atlantic region, making the previous implemented 2 percent set-aside between the ACL and the ABC in the South Atlantic unnecessary.

The ABC recommendations for the area between Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and the North Carolina/Virginia border account for previous blueline tilefish catches in the Mid-Atlantic region. Changes to state regulations, specifically in Florida, would improve the regulatory consistency and, effective July 1, 2019, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission required a restricted species endorsement and a federal permit to commercially harvest blueline tilefish, and improvements to the recreational reporting requirements, through the implementation of electronic reporting for the for-hire fishery, currently under rulemaking, is expected to contribute to better recreational landings data and closure estimates.

Therefore, the proposed action for blueline tilefish addresses the objectives of the FMP, and, by approving the amendment at this meeting, it potentially could allow the new ACLs to go into effect early in the 2020 fishing year.

We have considerations on if there is any other additions or revisions or recommendations for the abbreviated framework, and I thank the IPT and my-lead, Mary Vara, for getting this done and completed to you, including the codified text, which is under 4b, also. Up here is a draft motion to approve the Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework 3 for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate. Give staff editorial license to make any necessary editorial changes to the document or codified text, and give the Council Chair authority to approve the revisions and re-deem the codified text. Now, we do have public comment tonight, and so I just wanted to at least get it on the table, get it before everybody, and have the discussion relative to the document and other comments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Roger. I appreciate all your work on this. I am going to start with Shep, and then I'm going to go to Chris.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I have I guess a fairly prolonged statement that I was going to make, if you want to recognize Chris first.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was going to make that draft motion in the form of a motion. Do you want me to read it again?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't think you need to read it again. You can certainly make it. Of course, it would be a roll call vote in Full Council, but, yes, you can make that in the form of a motion.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay. **I will make that in the form of a motion.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there a second? It's seconded by Anna. It's under discussion, and now to Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Please bear with me a little bit on this. If you look on -- First, I'm going to go over a few tables that are in the draft amendment that are in your briefing materials. If you start with Table 1.3.3, despite commercial closures, we have exceeded the commercial ACL in every year but 2017, as reported in the table. As reported earlier in this committee meeting, 2019 harvest is currently estimated to be 109 percent of the commercial ACL.

If you go next to Table 1.3.4, we have not closed the recreational sector since 2015. Despite the lack of closures, we have exceeded the recreational ACL every year since 2015. As reported earlier in this committee, 2019 harvest is currently estimated at 121 percent of the ACL. That does not strike me as a compelling record to support the lack of management uncertainty and the lack of buffer between ABC and ACL.

I have mentioned all of this before, and, at the last meeting, we discussed it, and we've had some additional council rationale, or justification, for the lack of a buffer added to the document, and a lot of this justification has been related to improvements in recreational data collection, largely in the for-hire component of the recreational sector, but I think, if you look at other places in the document, for instance on page 7, we state that, since 2016, the recreational ACL of 87,277 pounds has been exceeded, but a closure has not occurred, because in-season recreational landings are typically not available until after the fishing season concludes, and you have the dates in there, and

so we can get all the data improvements we want, but, if we're not using it, and we're going to follow this process, that's not going to reduce management uncertainty, and that's not going to reduce the likelihood of going over the ACL.

I think, based on that information, I go back to what I said before. I think including a buffer between ABC and ACL is the more defensible course of action, and that's generally what I would advise you to do. However, we've been down this road before, and I have mentioned all of this, and I don't anticipate that the council's views on this matter have changed. If I'm wrong about that, then okay, and I'm looking around and not thinking that I am, and so I am going to offer -- I think that there's another approach to this, perhaps another way of viewing and addressing the situation.

In some respects, what we have before us could be viewed as being as much of an accountability measure issue as it is an ACL/ABC issue. The National Standard Guidelines, and I will actually quote you this. In 600.310(g)(7), it sets out a performance standard for ACLs, and it says, if catch exceeds the ACL for a given stock or stock complex more than once in the last four years, the system of ACLs and AMs should be reevaluated and modified, as necessary, to improve its performance and effectiveness.

We have clearly done it more than once in the last four years, and so it is a "should", and it's not a "shall", and so it's strongly recommended that the council undertake this reevaluation, and so it seems to me, given the aforementioned ACL overages, we're supposed to be reviewing and evaluating the existing system of AMs relative to this stock anyway, and, if the council takes some action now to show that it's moving in that direction and it's initiating that evaluation, it would help establish some record support that the council is acknowledging some level of management uncertainty and is considering whether management changes in the accountability structure are warranted.

To go just a little bit beyond that, I think there are changes that the agency could implement in how it implements the in-season closure and be more aggressive and not wait until the end of the season and wait until the waves report recreational landings. If you take that, coupled with your improvements in the for-hire data collection, which will come weekly, then you will have much more timely data, and you will be able to reduce management uncertainty, and you should be able to constrain catch to the ACL.

I would add that this is in the recreational sector, and we saw a table earlier in this committee meeting that showed that more than half of the recreational harvest of this species is coming from the for-hire component already, and so that's a lot of it, and getting that information in a more timely manner could be a big deal, if you're coupling that with more aggressive implementation of the in-season AMs in the private component.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep, and so I also wanted to put a couple of things on the record. In the past, we've talked about Florida state waters and how that could be contributing to these landings that are coming in after the season is closed, and so FWC recently took some action, and so, for commercial, we made blueline tilefish a restricted species, and now we require the commercial federal permit in state waters, and anybody that's fishing under that permit would have to abide by whatever changes, whether it's an open closure or whatever changes are happening through the council process, and so that's one thing that we did.

Then, on the recreational side, since we don't have any recreational regulations for blueline tilefish, we're going through a process where we're getting feedback to try to change the blueline tilefish regulations on the recreational side, and so we have taken some action on the commercial side, and we're in the process of working on an action on the recreational side, and so I just wanted to add that to the record.

MR. PUGLIESE: Actually, one point I was going to make is, when I mentioned the actual total landings, et cetera, the catches, is that, in reality, if you look at the 2018 numbers, if you look at the new ACLs, neither the recreational nor the commercial would have closed under the new established ACLs, and, also, if you looked at the PSEs over time, they actually were fairly -- The 2018 was like 27 percent, which was like half of the original earlier years, and so there are some contributing factors showing that the numbers are getting better, but then, also, the fact that in, actually, 2018, neither one would have been actually exceeding the ACL, based on the new established numbers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great points, Roger. Thanks for bringing that up.

MS. BECKWITH: The last thing worth noting is that the next item on our agenda is a recreational accountability measures modification amendment, and so we have recognized and are discussing recreational accountability measures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion?

MR. PUGLIESE: It's probably more to the scientific side, but I think one of the more significant connections with our partners to the north is the discussions we're going to be having about the fishery-independent surveys and the refinement of those systems, and I think that's also going to contribute to even better information, in terms of at least the populations and future activities relative to blueline tilefish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Any more discussion? We have a motion on the board here, and it's been seconded. **This will be a roll call vote in Full Council, but is there any objection to this motion that's on the board? Once again, this is approving Snapper Grouper Abbreviated Framework 3 for formal secretarial review and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate and give staff editorial license to make any necessary editorial changes to the document/codified text and give the Council Chair authority to approve the revisions and re-deem the codified text. Any objection to that motion? That motion stands approved by the committee.**

Thank you, Roger, and so next up is the recreational accountability measures, which is Regulatory Amendment 31, and I think Brian is headed this way.

DR. CHEUVRONT: This is Snapper Grouper Regulatory Amendment 31, and it's Attachment 7 under Tab 8 in your briefing book, and you last saw this amendment back in March, and you all did a lot of work on this amendment then, but you haven't seen it for the last couple of council meetings, and so, really, what we wanted to do is, because you had done so much work to this and made so many changes to it, and you had set it aside for a couple of meetings, and a number of

things have happened, is, before we move much further along with this amendment, we want to make sure that what we've got for you now is what you want.

We went from nine actions in March, and we are now down to three actions, and it was very, very complicated, and you were cutting out actions, and you took some alternatives from some actions and moved them into others, and you were sliding things around, and so we're looking largely for some clarification from you and making sure that we are going in the right direction before we start asking staff to do a whole lot more on this.

We're now down to three actions, and the first action is revise in-season closure and recreational accountability measures, and Action 2 is revise post-season recreational accountability measures, and 3 is to announce starting and ending dates before the season starts for a given species, and so our objective for this meeting is basically to review the actions and alternatives, but there was a minor edit that was made for the purpose and need as well, but we want to talk about the timing of the amendment, because that has changed, obviously, since the last time you saw it, and, as I had said, the last time you had seen it was in March of this year, and so you're going to review the purpose and need and the actions and alternatives.

The idea is that you're going to review the document in March, if you're staying on schedule, in a draft document format, assuming you're going to approve what we're showing you today, given any edits that you give us. The council is going to then -- In June, we're anticipating that you will review the draft document with analyses and perhaps hopefully choose some preferred alternatives, or sub-alternatives, and then vote then probably to send it out for public hearings over the summer. Then, in September, you would then be able to review the public comments and make your final edits and then vote to send the document to the Secretary of Commerce for formal review, and that would also fit in.

Now, on the priorities thing that you had seen in the past, we were going to have you -- It was going to go through December of 2020 that you were going to be working on this, but we think that we could probably get this going and get it finished in September and not December.

Now, the modification to the purpose and need, and I think it's pretty simple, and I don't think that we need to dwell on it a lot, but, in March, the council voted to remove the dolphin wahoo actions from this amendment. It had been a joint snapper grouper and dolphin wahoo amendment, and the accountability measures actions that were in the amendment for dolphin wahoo got moved into Dolphin Wahoo 10. John really appreciated the addition of several more actions to a very large amendment, and so his went up to like sixteen actions, and we dropped down to three. Sorry, John.

The recommended IPT changes are highlighted in yellow here. In essence, what we're recommending is just drop the references to the Dolphin Wahoo Fishery Management Plan and make it grammatically correct, and so probably the easiest thing to do is just to then go ahead and have a motion to accept the IPT changes, to accept that, if that's what you all want to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Once again, we have IPT changes to the purpose and need statement, and we would need a motion to accept those edits.

MR. GRIMES: Before you do that, I would just add, as part of the IPT, that we did this before Amendment 10 was -- Before your Dolphin Wahoo Committee earlier this meeting, where Dolphin

Wahoo 10 was sidelined, and I don't remember what the discussion was relative to the accountability measure changes that were in there, and so you may want to -- You may now, depending on what you do with 10, want it in this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to look to Anna, but I will start, and so I believe that the intent is to keep those accountability measure actions in that amendment, but it was just sidelined, because we're waiting for some more information from the SSC, and so it was difficult to have some discussions about those actions that were in there until we have the updated data, but I will look at Anna. She is thumbs-up that that's her understanding as well. We need a motion to approve the IPT's edits.

MR. BELL: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have a motion by Mel, and it's seconded by Steve. Is there any more discussion on the IPT's edits to this purpose and need statement? **Any objection? Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

DR. CHEUVRONT: Rick and I have worked a lot on this amendment, and the IPT has met once about the amendment, and there have been some concerns, and we just -- There has been discussion that we just wanted to bring up to the council, and it's not that we're making suggestions for what we're telling the council that you ought to do, but these are just topics that came up in IPT discussions, and we wanted to bring them forward to the council.

One of the things was whether or not the council would want to continue working on this framework at this time, as opposed to setting it aside for a little bit, and there was a couple of reasons that were given for this. The in-season AMs have been only triggered seven times since 2017, and so there was some concern as to whether that was an issue that even needed to be addressed, and it just doesn't happen very often, and then the post-season AMs are rarely triggered, as the stock must be overfished, and we only have five stocks that are currently overfished, and one of this is red snapper, and so this doesn't really apply to them.

The IPT -- Well, this is something that we can just address in the action, is that, in the background, it states that one of the purposes is to simplify the AMs and Action 2, when you see the way the alternatives look, it doesn't simplify it at all. It actually makes things rather complicated, and so we probably will need to talk about that and whether really and truly you are simplifying them or not, but one of the bigger concerns that the IPT had is that you're getting a lot of new ACLs, based on the new MRIP data, and there was some concern that, if you're changing the AMs now, once the new ACLs go into place, you may have some concern about wanting to re-look at those AMs later on, because we're not really quite sure what the impacts of those new ACLs are going to be on the AMs and how often they are going to be triggered, whether they're going to be triggered more often or less frequently, and I'm not really sure.

We're not telling you or advising you one way or the other, but these are just topics that came up as discussion as the IPT was going along, but we wanted to make you aware of these are things that you IPT had come up with as reasons that you all might want to be aware of and discuss as part of this amendment, and so I will leave it there, and, if you tell us to drive on, we drive on, but we just wanted to make you all aware of these possibilities of things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think those are very good points. Let's have a discussion about those points that you just brought up, and so I was looking at the actual wording of it in the document, because there is some bullets on it, and I really agree with the one that you have on the board there about moving forward at this time with the -- When we're working on bringing in these new MRIP values and trying to work on that, and I feel like this is going to definitely affect how we think about these accountability measures, for sure. I would lean towards maybe putting a pause button on this, but I'm going to certainly look around to the committee and see what other people think about this.

MS. BECKWITH: In addition to those points, the IPT had also talked about the use of the PSE for in-season versus post-season, and I thought that was an interesting discussion worth having, and if they should be averaged or set, if we should sort of set the species or let them be fluid, based on that year's PSE, and so I thought that those points were valid and that we needed to discuss those. I would be fine discussing those, and I'm fine putting this aside for six months or a year, because maybe we'll get some -- We'll look at it at a later date, but, yes, I'm kind of okay either way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Other folks, what do we think about that?

DR. MCGOVERN: I agree, and I think it makes sense to put the pause button on it, and I was wondering if Brian had a thought about when we might pick it up again, and I guess we're going to start talking about the ACLs and allocations in March, and so maybe in June or something like that?

DR. CHEUVRONT: We're actually going to pick up in March -- We're going to have a serious discussion of allocations, and then we're going to start the amendment for unassessed species and ACLs, for the information that we got from the SSC in October, and you all had decided, in September, that you wanted to see what those values were that came from the SSC, and you wanted to see them at this meeting, but you wanted to wait until March, and hopefully you could see what the GAO report was going to say, and you wanted to have the discussion on allocations, and you wanted to start thinking of accountability measures and ACLs and allocations, because they are all related, and you wanted to start thinking in terms of the big picture, and we have planned for you, in March, sort of -- You're going to have kind of an allocation day kind of approach.

We don't have the timing of all that worked out yet, but there is going to be some serious discussion, at a philosophical level, and Chris has been sort of pushing for that for almost a year, and we've punted on it a couple of times. We've had a presentation ready at least since June, and we wanted to go into that and have those discussions, and then, now that we've actually got numbers that you can start to work with, and we're going to start an amendment, that is not terribly unlike an amendment that you did a few years back, when there was some revisions to MRIP before, but, this time, now the revisions are different, and you may want to look at your allocation schemes, because all you did at that time was you applied your existing allocation rule and just applied the new numbers.

This time, you probably want to take a harder look at it and decide if that's what you want to do, and so we envision all of that happening starting in March, and so, if you go that route, my suggestion would be that you start with the allocation ACLs and then you pick this up once you get a better picture of where that's headed, and I'm suggesting -- If you're asking me personally

what I would recommend, I would say waiting a year to pick this back up again, because I think this other amendment that you're starting in March will be better underway, better fleshed out, and you will have a better idea of where it's going.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Based on that discussion, and I appreciate all that insight, and, based on all that thinking of all these other things that are happening simultaneously, or that have been sequenced here, it sounds like you're suggesting to bring this back in December of 2020, and is that what you're suggesting, or were you suggesting September?

DR. CHEUVRONT: We could bring it back in December of 2020. I think that would be probably a good time to have that discussion, but you can bring it back sooner if you want. I mean, if you're ready for it earlier, then just say bring it back sooner, and we can do that. It's just a matter of let's chart this out, because I'm not even sure how far we're going to get with things in March. I would really like to get the ball rolling in March and have a plan set where you want to go with the ACLs and the allocation discussion, starting in March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Those are good points, and so I think, since you're going to be working on our priorities spreadsheet, maybe it goes to the December meeting, but we've got some hands in the air, and so I'm going to start calling on people to see what they think. Steve, I saw your hand, and, Mel, I saw your hand.

MR. POLAND: I was just going to say that I feel like we're kicking a lot of these sticky issues down the road, but I do appreciate your comments, Brian, because I do agree, and I need to see some numbers in front of me, and I feel like we need to start these allocation discussions and kind of look at this holistically, but I don't know if I want to wait until December, but, then again, I don't know what's going to come out of the March meeting, and so I would certainly say that, maybe in March, we'll revisit at least the timing, and then we can kind of decide if we feel like we want to bring this back in September or wait until December.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Steve, personally, I think you're making a good point there. One of the things that you could end up with, conceivably, is a version of a Comprehensive ACL Amendment Version 2, because remember you did allocations, and you did AMs, and you did all sorts of things in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment in the 2011 thing, and it was a killer amendment, and it was -- I think it was probably the biggest amendment we've ever done, with the number of actions and all the other things in there, and you may find a better way of dealing with it, but it shows how all those things were all tied together, but you may want to bring it all back together in one giant amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. BELL: Nothing really new, but I was just going to say that, given what we were presented by the IPT, in terms of how the current in-season and post-season AMs play out, and there is other things I think that would be helpful for us to know that would give us a better -- The ability to have a better-informed decision, and I don't see any -- Then looking at what it is that we're trying to achieve, and I think we would be better off waiting, whether it's March or December, but I think -- I don't feel any compelling reason to move right now, based on what I've heard.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

DR. WILLIAMS: I just wanted to mention that, since I was looking at some of the actions, this deals a lot with the PSEs that are coming out of MRIP, and it is to note that, with the switch to FES, that, in general, the PSEs went up, and so that may change sort of some thinking too on ranges and such, and so --

DR. CHEUVRONT: To follow-up from Erik's point, what are we going to do -- Because some of these things rely on following PSEs over multiple years, and now you have got PSEs that were calculated two different ways, and so now you've got PSEs that you're going to -- There is a mathematical difficulty there when you're -- These PSEs are not like those PSEs, and how do you combine them together to look at that? There are some intricacies in here that will have to be worked out, if you're going to go that PSE route.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Also great points, and so what I'm hearing around the table is it seems like we want to hit the pause button on this and that we're going to bring this back maybe in December of 2020, but you're going to kind of chart this out on our priority list, so we can see what this looks like, but, based on what Steve is saying, maybe we'll talk about a number of these things at the March meeting and see if we want to take this amendment up earlier, at maybe the September meeting, or we want to keep it at the December meeting of 2020, or merge it into some other amendment or what. Do we need to have more discussion on this? Are there people that feel differently about this amendment? I see heads nodding, and I'm going to suggest that we take a break, and maybe folks can find some coffee and some revitalized energy and come back.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Remember that we have public comment that starts tonight at four o'clock, and so we're going to see what all we can get done between now and four o'clock. Next on our agenda is the Summary of the Best Fishing Practices Outreach, and I am going to turn it over here to this team that's at the table to go over the document.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, I'm going to start us off, and I'm going to be looking to the state folks to jump in with anything that I may have missed, and so what I did here was just sort of put together a document based on information I could find related to best fishing practices from each of the state agencies, as well as Sea Grant, and so this is, assuming my Google abilities are up to snuff, likely what fishermen are able to find when they Google online to try to find best fishing practices information.

Starting with North Carolina, they have a number of different recreational fishing brochures available on their website, as well as continued work that they've done partnering with Sea Grant, as well as North Carolina universities, to do further research on release mortality of snapper grouper species and different recompression techniques. Related to that, North Carolina Sea Grant, back in 2015, I believe, worked with staff in North Carolina, Virginia, and New Jersey and for-hire captains to test multiple descending devices in the Mid-Atlantic, and that final report is available online, and it's one of the first things that pops up when you search for North Carolina descending devices.

Sea Grant also has a number of brochures and blog posts and articles in CoastWatch that provide information on descending devices and barotrauma and sort of general best fishing practices, and I will look over to that side of the table and see if there's anything that they would like to add.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Christina. The only thing in addition that I would add is our Coastal Angling Program is really ramping up and handing out circle hooks and red drum rigs, as well as just bare circle hooks as well as descending devices, and, right now, the Division is putting together kind of an options paper for our Marine Fisheries Commission to consider circle hook requirements, safe handling, best practices, that kind of stuff, for some of our state fisheries, and we certainly intend to use that in conjunction with our current public outreach and really just kind of spread the word from the state to the federal fisheries in our state.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then we'll move on down the coast to South Carolina, and, in searching, I found a number of blog posts and videos that provide information on descending devices and barotrauma, as well as interactions at public outreach events and during dockside surveys, and then I know you guys have heard about this a number of times, but just another friendly reminder that the South Carolina Wildlife Federation, in conjunction with staff here at the council, developed a tutorial for offshore anglers, to help them learn about barotrauma and reduced release mortality using descending devices, and they also gave out free SeaQualizers as a reward for completion of that tutorial.

MR. BELL: DNR has been doing a number of things over the years related to best practices, and it started out mostly with the use of circle hooks, and then, more recently, handling practices related to not pulling fish, particularly large fish, out of the water and taking a lot of pictures and that sort of stuff, but that's probably on our website, I would think, or some old articles or published things, and so we do have a number of things that we've done over the years related to those items.

Then, more recently, related to descending devices, we did participate in the distribution of SeaQualizers, and we still have some SeaQualizers onboard, and we're trying to give those out and promote that, and that's all done through our outreach and education folks over there, and so there's a number of things going on still, but I don't know how Google-able they are, but I would suspect that they would be linked on our website, on the marine side.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Continuing to the next state down, we've got Georgia. Again, there are a number of blog posts and videos on their website that provide information on barotrauma and descending devices, and they have also held free public workshops, where experts present on the use of descending devices, and then participants are eligible to win SeaQualizers, and several in-person interactions and public outreach events during dockside surveys, and I don't have the information included here, because it was after the briefing book deadline, but Kathy Knowlton, who works for Georgia DNR, did submit a list of the number of descending devices that they have handed out at these public events that is very impressive.

Additionally, Georgia Sea Grant is partnering with the Nature Conservancy on forums that are discussing outreach strategies specific to Gray's Reef, but one of the discussion topics for that is best fishing practices, and attendees are eligible to receive a free descending device there as well.

DR. BELCHER: Just to kind of add on to that too, Georgia DNR is also working with Nature Conservancy on that. Because of the FishSmart having been out, and they've been working on it,

and we're like in our third year with them, with the descending devices, and SeaQualizers started out, but we've also been working to get out other devices as well to the fishing community, just so that everybody was kind of integrated and there wasn't duplicity of effort.

Kathy has really made a very strong effort to be present at all of those, and so just to kind of put that there, and there's quite a bit that's she's involved in. I forget, but the numbers are pretty amazing, what she's been able to get out for all of these different descending devices, and then we've also been working with short leader rigs and circle hooks for red drum as well.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and last, but certainly not least, FWC actually provided a list of all of the work that they've been doing. Like all of the other states, they've done a lot of in-person interaction, with promoting just proper fish handling and best fishing practices, and, of course, descending devices and ensuring that anglers that are using venting tools know how to use them correctly.

There is also the Catch of Florida Memories Saltwater Angler Recognition Program, which promotes best fishing practices. There are catch-and-release brochures, as well as videos and a fish handling webpage, like many of the other organizations, and there are a huge series of videos on YouTube detailing how to properly vent, how to use descending devices, and those are all disseminated through press releases and social media, as well as used to inform anglers who participated in this FWC citizen science study.

In this study, anglers were provided various types of descending devices, in order for FWC to learn about possible barriers to descending device use in Florida, and you can see here the number of devices and which types were disseminated, and then Florida Sea Grant recently started their Florida Friendly Fishing Guide Certification Program, in partnership with FWC.

You have also got agents that have taken a series of offshore trips with anglers, to introduce them to descending device gear, and, of course, we have linked to this webpage a number of times, the catchandrelease.org page, which has information on catch-and-release practices, handling, hooking, dehooking, and circle hooks, as well as descending and venting devices. Then, last, but not least, I did include the FishSmart red snapper and red drum conservation project, which I know that all four of the states have been participants in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions or comments or concerns or input? Anything here? I know that we asked for this presentation and a list of all the different things that are ongoing, and are you looking for something from the committee, something specific, feedback from us?

MS. WIEGAND: No, I don't think we're looking for specific feedback related to this document that we've got in front of you right now, but I am going to turn it over to Cameron to talk about what's been ongoing from the council, and I know that she does have some input that she would like to get from you.

MS. RHODES: Hi, everybody. We have been throwing around the idea of possibly tapping into a lot of these resources that are already available, and I think that's really what we wanted to get at when we presented this to you all, is that there are so many different things that are already up and running that it seems that it would be best to not reinvent the wheel, and there are some original things that we can certainly do, but it seems like it might be good to follow suit with what the Gulf

Council did, and they have put together a separate domain, which is basically hosted under their website, where it's strictly dedicated to best fishing practices, and it incorporates all these different videos and printed materials, whatever it might be, on that website, and it's from all the different states.

They might have some original content in there too, but they're tapping into their partners, in order to really source all of this material, and that is, I think, what we have in mind moving forward, but this is definitely something that we would like to get input from you all about before we go ahead and start building this webpage on our site, but, before we get into that kind of stuff, I just wanted to go over some of the things that we have been doing.

We have recently picked up some more initiatives that are best-practices-related, and so we have mentioned this to you all in the past, but I just wanted to bring it up again, that that tutorial is up and running, and it's hosted on one of the main slides on our webpage, and we're consistently posting about it on our social media accounts, and it's a really great tutorial, and we have heard a lot of positive input from stakeholders about it, and so it's definitely something that we're going to continue to promote to folks, so that they know that it's available.

There will come a time where people aren't going to be receiving descending devices after taking the tutorial, and that time I think is approaching rather quickly, but, that being said, we're still going to actively use this as a really helpful outreach tool and training tool for folks who have an interest in it.

We have also revamped MyFishCount, and so now, having BeBe Harrison onboard, and she's been doing a lot of outreach to promote MyFishCount, and, in doing so, she's also been actively promoting best practices, and that's been done at fishing clubs, and that's been done with George Poveromo, and that's coming, and so that's really exciting, and he's going to be actively involved in helping to promote MyFishCount, and, in turn, also working on best fishing practices.

Then we've also done some partner events, and so we went to Georgia DNR's Coast Fest, and were there promoting best practices, and, as you can see behind you, and apologies to the folks who are on the line, but we do have a display back here, if you haven't noticed it yet, and this is our display that we are now going to be bringing with us to all of these different partner events, and it definitely draws attention, and we will note that we had --

For a while, we had the longest line at Coast Fest, trying to get into our booth, and we were a hot spot, and we had Spud there, who was one of our celebrity guests who came by and hung out with us, but we definitely were a draw, and I think much of that is because of this display here. People could see us, and it was exciting, and it was interesting, and we worked with Marine Marketing Group, which is a marketing organization local to Charleston, and Brian Carroll, who owns that business, was incredibly helpful in designing this whole thing.

I am going to Vanna White here for a second, and what we've done is we've got these cutouts, which are also made by BeBe Harrison, and they're awesome, and we're putting people to work for us, and so they are hashtagged with some of our newly-coined best practices hashtags, and each one has a different one on the back and the front, and so folks can come up and pick it up, and, when they take a picture of it and post it to their social media, they are automatically doing our outreach work for us, which is great.

If it's coming from fishermen to fishermen, it's a lot more effective than it coming from us, and so we strongly encourage anyone in the room, council members or folks who are sitting in the audience, to please use these hashtags. I mean, it's hugely helpful to us. Use them on your Facebook and your Twitter, and your Instagram especially, but we haven't really picked this up a lot quite yet, but it's going to grow, and we're certain it will after we go to ICAST, because we're going to have this whole display set up, as well as these fish and some other fun, exciting things that people can promote on our behalf.

Then, carrying on a little bit further, we've also got some exciting new things coming out of a partnership that was suggested to us by Anna, and so we reached out to Fly Navarro, and Fly has been really great and excited about working with us. Just to see a show of hands, how many of you know who Fly Navarro is. Okay, and so that's a good number. Fly Navarro is somewhat of a fishing celebrity, if you will. He's got a large following on Facebook and on Instagram and across a whole other slew of social media accounts that many of us probably aren't even aware of.

He is rather prolific, and he is responsible for providing a lot of online content to anglers of all kinds of backgrounds, and he works with the commercial industry, and he works with recreational fishermen, and so we teamed up with him, and he's been generous enough to work with us and to possibly come up to Charleston and do some video shoots and create a video series on our behalf, which will feature best practices, showing people what devices are available and why they're important to use, and this is going to be something that's coming directly from a member of the community, as opposed to coming from a federal agency, and that's something that we could hugely benefit from, as well as our public, our stakeholders, could definitely benefit from that information.

We are looking forward to that, and that's in the works, and we discussed this a little bit back at the Executive Finance Committee meeting that we had a couple of months ago, but we'll be working on that over the next couple of months, to further develop that script with Fly and get it up and running, and we're looking forward to seeing what comes out of that, and it should be really great for everybody. With that, before I move on to ask some pointed questions, where I will ask for some guidance, are there any questions from you all?

For starters, we have come across this a number of times, and I understand that it's rather difficult to figure out how we want to go about approaching this, but venting has been something that we have talked about as a staff internally, in trying to figure out how we want to go about educating folks on venting, and so one thing that we had suggested internally, and we wanted to run it by you, is we were planning on not directly posting anything to our channels that encouraged folks to vent, but, if they felt comfortable venting, or wanted to learn more about it, we were going to point them to the Florida Sea Grant video that's available, and the Florida FWC videos that are available.

They are very helpful, and they seem like they would be a really great learning tool for us to just directly point people to, rather than us creating something on our own or the council standing behind some kind of venting protocol, but we wanted to go to you, before we moved forward with any of that, and see if you have any thoughts on what we should do relative to venting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am certainly fine with that. Some of those are FWC videos, and we worked hard on that, and we went through our commission, and the commission itself approved

some of those techniques and how we were going to present that in the videos, but I will look to other folks. Chester talked about those FWC videos at another one of the council meetings, but I don't know if anybody else has any thoughts here on the topic.

MR. WOODWARD: I think that's a good approach. I mean, it's obvious that we kind of put you all in a difficult position by not condemning venting, but recognizing that it has its place, and so I think that's a good solution, to send folks to the place where they can get the information they need, if they choose to do it, and we know that this is going to sort itself out, in terms of headboats and charter boats and stuff. If they're competent doing it, hopefully they'll keep doing it properly, but we'll continue to push the descending devices as the best choice for especially new anglers, and even for the experienced anglers, and so I think it's a good approach.

MR. BREWER: Cameron, a problem that I probably created, or at least helped create, is the notion out there with some of the headboat guys and charter guys that they're not allowed to vent and they have to use a descending device instead. I know that we've done, hopefully, a pretty good bit to quell that notion, but I'm wondering if there is going to be, or has been, any direct outreach, particularly to what we call drift boats, and other people call headboats, but the operators of those, to clarify for them that, in fact, they're still allowed to use venting devices, or tools, but they do have to have one descending device onboard, under the -- It hasn't been signed yet, but under what we think will be the rule.

That's one thought, and I agree 100 percent with Spud, and I don't think that we should be, quote, encouraging the use of venting devices, because there's just not a lot of people out there that really know how to use them, and so I think your approach is -- If you want to know about venting, go here and take a look. I am not sure that people like me would be able to take that all in and do it properly, and I don't think so, but, anyway, that's my thoughts, and thank you so much for the really good work, really good work.

MR. BELL: I just agree with Spud, and I think we sort of took a different approach in going down the road with suggesting that the descending devices are really the best option, but I think the materials I saw that you guys have are good, and, if folks want to learn about that, that's a good source, and we don't need to create anything ourselves to do that.

MR. GRINER: Cameron, like the Sea Grant catchandrelease.org site and some of these other sites, do they share, or will they share, any of their analytics with you, or with us, so that we can kind of get a feel for what kind of traffic they're getting, and is it growing, or is it staying the same, or just how many people are really going to these sites?

MS. RHODES: I would imagine that, if we asked for that information, that they would share it with us. Many of the folks who help to manage those kinds of platforms sit on our Information & Education Advisory Panel, and I would be happy to make that a topic of discussion for the upcoming AP meeting in the spring, or I could circulate that among folks in the new year, if that's what you would like.

MR. GRINER: Yes, I think that would be great, and I think it would be very interesting to see how the traffic is growing on those sites.

MS. RHODES: I think that's a great idea, and so I will add that in the notes, that we'll follow-up with them and see if they're able to share that with us. The other pickle that we kind of find ourselves in now is the timing of pushing out a lot of this outreach, and we had touched on this a little bit at the September council meeting, but it's just something that I wanted to bring up again and see if you all had any ideas on how we should go about structuring this, and so, with outreach, our language is going to be highly dependent on whether or not this is a regulation that is currently on the books or if this is something that is pending, and we had talked about putting together some brochures.

If that's the case, then we'll likely need to either do multiple different versions of that brochure, to indicate whether or not this is going into effect down the road or whether or not it's currently in effect and you must do it. I just wanted to get some thoughts from you all on how you wanted us to go about handling that. Do you want to see multiple different kinds of brochures distributed to folks, or would you rather us just maintain online versions of those things, so that we can actively edit them as needed, or do you want to see major pushes from us ahead of the regulation, or would you rather it happen afterward? We just wanted to get a feel for timing from you guys and what you prefer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to look around.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I think one thing with descending devices is we need to be clear that they are not required yet, and there still has to be a rulemaking and public comment on that.

MR. BREWER: Yes, I wouldn't put up any hard materials, you know print up stuff yet, and Roy is right that we don't know when it's going to become required, but certainly you could go online and continue with all of your online efforts, because those could easily be modified when descending devices become required.

LCDR MONTES: I want to actually hand these things out as soon as we get word that it's actually going to become a rule and a regulation, so we can start that outreach, and my guys are going to have that direct contact with the anglers out there during our boarding process, and so I think that's the best time to target the exact people that need to know about this, but, yes, I agree with everybody else. As of right now, if we started telling people that they're probably going to need this, the first question is going to be when are we going to need it, and, if we just shrug, which my guys will shrug, that's not going to help anybody out.

MS. BECKWITH: I assume that you guys have collected quite a bit of contact information for tackle shops, and I guess one suggestion I would make is to have a PDF version that you can just shoot out to the tackle shops and ask them to print it out, as they deem appropriate, because I think most of these guys probably have color laser printers, and they can just print it off, as long as it's a one-page and eight-by-eleven, and that's just going to be material that helps the tackle shops sell their descending devices, and so I suspect that that would be a great way of getting that out.

DR. CRABTREE: I know we've talked about this, but one thing to think about is normally our rules become effective thirty days after the final rule publishes, and I don't think, in this case though, that thirty days is adequate, and so we're going to have to figure out what ought to be adequate. Is it six months or whatever? But I have a feeling that, if you just say you've got thirty

days, then you're going to get a lot of people who can't find descending devices, because they're not in the stores and things, and so there's going to be a ramp-up period.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good comments and good discussion. All right. Thanks, you guys. Thanks for all the work on this and the compilation of what's going on and thinking outside the box to do some different things for us, and it's really exciting. Any more discussion?

MS. RHODES: Christina just reminded me that, since we have some influencers on the council, and sorry, Art, that I keep doing that to you, but it would be really great if we could get all of you, at some point, to get up with our display. Chip is currently -- Look how well that worked out. That's his baby right there, MyFishCount, and so, if you guys can get up there and would be willing to let us take some pictures of you all with some of those hashtags, that would be really great. It helps feed some of our content online, and, actually, Chris has been actively doing stuff on his Instagram account as well that we've been seeing, and so, if you would be willing to do that before the end of the council meeting, that would be great.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on best fishing practices outreach? Thanks, you guys. Now we're going to move over to the System Management Plan Workgroup Update, and that is Chip.

DR. COLLIER: The document that I provided you guys is just the minutes from the System Management Plan Workgroup that took place on October 8 and 9. This was our first in-person meeting, and I think it went really well, and what the group went over is they wanted to go over the system management plan -- They reviewed the spawning special management zone outreach webpage.

We worked on that quite a bit, and we were trying to finalize some sections, and they made some extensive recommendations during the meeting, and so it's going to take a little bit longer to get that webpage up, and I'm working on some modifications that they had recommended, and it was essentially changing the platform, the background platform, and so I'm having to adapt to that, but it's going to be hopefully ready by January, and we're working on it pretty hard, and it should be a little bit more accessible through not only computers, but smartphones as well, and we're trying to make a webpage that works across several different platforms.

Then, after discussing the special management zones, we went into discussion of the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, and this is a review that the council has asked for in the past, and it's generally that we try to get it done every five years, and so we have our different sections here that were going to be included in the document, and the group, the workgroup, is working on their sections, and hopefully we're going to have a meeting in January to discuss progress of this, and then we'll be providing you all a report, maybe later in 2020.

After that, we went into some research and information needed for evaluation of managed areas, and we went into our several different types of managed areas that we have in the South Atlantic region, and the group developed some research and information needs, and so this -- We're going to work on this a little bit more and prioritize it, and then this will be included in the research recommendations from the council, and it will come back to you guys more formalized.

That is just the update that I wanted to give on the System Management Plan Workgroup. It was a really productive meeting, and we got a lot done, and I look forward to working with this group in the future. Are there any questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've actually already gone over the sanctuary AP input, and so that brings us to Other Business, and so the Other Business item that I know of is landing grunts in whole condition, and so, Chester, I don't know if you want to start on that discussion.

MR. BREWER: This is an issue that I did not even know existed, and it has to do with grunts. A lot of people use grunts for bait, and a lot of people use grunts cut up for bait. When you have got short strikers working, you make smaller baits, and, because grunts are part of the twenty-fish bag limit, it is apparently illegal to cut up grunts and use them for bait, or to cut up grunts, period, before they are landed.

It is legal to take a whole grunt and put it down whole, and if, say you get a short striker that cuts it in half, it's still legal to use as bait, and, like I said, I didn't know this was a problem. In the years gone by, when we would catch grunt and use them for bait, I would cut them up, and I had no idea that I might be doing something improper, and the statute of limitations has run out.

Anyway, we have gotten an email or two about it, that people are concerned or confused, and some of the information that was in the emails was not exactly correct. People thought they were not part of the twenty-fish limit, but they are. They are, and so it's an issue that's out there, and I don't know whether it is something that the council wants to tackle or not, but we did get requests that the issue be clarified, and with the statement that, the way the regulations works right now, it really makes no sense, because the grunts -- Well, it makes no real sense that you can fish with a whole grunt, but you can't fish with a cut-up grunt. That just doesn't make any sense to me. I put out there, and there may be others that have gotten emails and have thoughts or want to go further with the issue than I have gone, but there it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Before we go to Mel, Myra has some additional background information that she's going to go over, and then we'll go to Mel.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for that, and so I just dug out some background information, just so that you all would have that for your discussion, and so, initially, this requirement was established in Amendment 4 in 1992, and so that's when the whole heads and fins intact went into place, and the amendment included the following rationale for that.

It says this action will increase enforceability of minimum sizes and no-retention provisions, and is being added at the request of the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement. It is the council's intent that the preparation of fish for immediate consumption onboard the vessel from which the fish were caught is not prohibited.

Then Amendment 9, in 1999, established the aggregate recreational bag limit of twenty fish per person, inclusive of all snapper grouper species that were not under a bag limit at the time, and it excluded tomtate and blue runners, and so there would be no bag limit on tomtate and blue runners, and the rationale there was that because those two species were being used for bait.

This year, in May of 2019, after council staff received several inquiries, and I see Cameron is at the table, and so she can probably give you more details on those, we went to the Law Enforcement AP and requested that they discuss this and tell us if this is an issue, when it comes to enforcement, or give us some recommendations that we could bring to you guys, and, basically, they said that there have not been any documented issues with anglers cutting up tomtate for bait, and that was specific for tomtate, and they recommended, however, that the council discuss this topic and clarify the intent, and so I will leave it there, if you have any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Cameron, do you want to say something before we go to Mel?

MS. RHODES: Sure. I just wanted to clarify that, since tomtate is excluded from the twenty-fish aggregate, many of the fishermen that I spoke to were very confused. Since there's no bag limit associated with them, why would it be an issue if they were using it to cut up for bait? Is it an issue that is associated with identifying those fish against other species, or what was the rationale for going about doing that, and I didn't feel like I had the rationale to provide him.

MR. BELL: I was trying to go back to the origin of the problem, or the issue at the moment, and were some people written up? Were citations issued, state or federal or -- I mean, what kind of got this -- I agree that there is some quirkiness to how it's set up over the years, and that presents some interpretation issues maybe, but, I mean, was this -- Did people get written up or something, or why did it come up?

MS. RHODES: I think this came about as dock talk, and some guys just started getting worried that they might in fact be doing something that was illegal, and they wanted to make sure that they weren't, and they were just checking all of their boxes, but, in doing so, they wanted to make sure that they fully understood what the rationale was behind the law.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I mean, the rationale is fish have to be landed intact, so that, when you hit the dock, law enforcement can tell what it is. That's where this came from, and it applies to all snapper grouper species, and I do recall that I believe I got an email from one individual. That's all the contact I've had about it.

LCDR MONTES: Over the last about three years, just to put it into context, following the violations issued in the South Atlantic by the Coast Guard, excluding the waters off of North Carolina, I think maybe two or three times have we issued a violation for not landing a fish whole, because that fish was being cut up and used for bait. Never once has it been for grunt, just to put it out there, but we have seen a couple of instances, and I'm talking about two or three cases over the course of probably 2,000 boardings, and so the occurrence rate is very, very low, and it isn't really even on my radar.

The people that we do catch this with are -- They say the same thing that Chester is saying, that we're all saying, which is I didn't know, and I've been doing this for years, and I didn't know, and it's one of those things that maybe it's an outreach and education thing, or maybe it's a regulation that doesn't make 100 percent sense, but I agree that the intent of it was to land the fish whole, for species identification, or, if there is a minimum size limit, to also see what the size of the fish was, because, if they're cutting the fish up into small chunks and using it as bait out there, my guys are going to have a much harder time trying to figure out what in fact you've caught.

I do, just to add fuel to the fire a little bit, think one of the instances was an almaco jack was cut up and used as bait, and I don't know if it was closed at the time, or if it was undersized, but there was some other issues with it, where it was a species that wasn't supposed to be caught, and so, instead of just tossing that fish back, they ended up cutting it up and using it as bait, and, again, that's one boarding out of thousands of boardings, and so I'm not saying that that's definitely a trend at all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Myra, did you say that it was Amendment 9, or there was an amendment that specifically excluded tomtate from the bag limits, so that it could be used as bait?

MS. BROUWER: Correct, and so the actual -- I am reading from the amendment, and it says tomtate and blue runners were excluded, because they are used for bait, and it says that there would be no bag limit for these species, and fishermen would be allowed unlimited retention.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That certainly never made its way into the regulations or the rules, because, right now, Roy is right that landing fish intact is all fish intact, except for the exceptions we have of if you fished in the Bahamas, essentially. It does say maintain, but it says that the operator is responsible for maintaining it intact through the EEZ to landing, and so, anyway, what I would like to do though is go back to that amendment that you talked about and look at it and see if it was an action and that sort of thing, to see if maybe we missed something in the rulemaking.

MS. BROUWER: I'm sorry, Monica, and maybe you misunderstood. This amendment created the twenty-fish aggregate, and so those two species were excluded from the aggregate, but there was no mention of them being excluded from the requirement to be landed whole.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Okay. I did misunderstand. All right. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we want to take an action here?

DR. CRABTREE: I think, Monica, it would take a plan amendment to make a change to this, if you want to allow an exception, I'm guessing?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think so.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do we want to take an action here? I see people saying no. I appreciate you bringing it to our attention, Chester.

MR. BREWER: Maybe we just tell folks that if they just don't cut those things up and use them whole that they're good to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That is definitely one way to go here. All right. Is there other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee?

MS. RHODES: I forgot to mention earlier that we have -- Do you guys remember the Fishermen's Forum that we developed a while back, the online platform? We discussed this pretty heavily internally, as staff, and this platform came about as a way for -- Initially, it was for commercial

fishermen, snapper grouper commercial fishermen, to communicate amongst themselves, with their peer group, about fisheries-related issues, and it was a site that was hosted by the council, but we were pretty hands-off with it. It was supposed to be a place where people could ask questions, and we could ask questions, but it wasn't a form of public comment.

We really didn't see many people engaging with that platform, and, in order to really develop it into a fully-functioning forum, it would require a considerable amount of staff time, and we felt that it would be best, at this time, to bring it offline, so that it wasn't a source of confusion, that people weren't getting on there and getting lost in past conversations, and so we went ahead and took it offline.

There is always the ability for us to bring it back, and so, if it arises again where we want to expand that forum and really put a lot of energy into it, it's definitely something we can do, but we have found that we have more engagement via our social media channels than we do in that forum, and there are so many other forums available to people that have many more freedoms than we could ever really allow on a platform that we manage, and so we went ahead and disabled it temporarily. If anyone has any questions about that, please come chat with me about it, but we just wanted to give you all a heads-up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? Then we are going to end the Snapper Grouper Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 4, 2019.)

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Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By:
Amanda Thomas
December 31, 2019

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