

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

Webinar

September 15, 2020

Transcript

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Additional observers and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Tuesday, September 15, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Next up is the Snapper Grouper Committee, and the first order of business is Approval of the Snapper Grouper Committee Agenda. Are there any changes or modifications to this agenda? Is there any objection to approval of the agenda? We will consider the agenda approved.

Next up is Approval of the June 2020 Committee Minutes. Any changes or modifications to those minutes? Any objection to approval of those minutes? We will consider the minutes approved. Next up is Status of Amendments Under Formal Review, and I'm going to turn this over to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I believe Rick DeVictor is going to give us that update.

MR. DEVICTOR: There is three amendments here, and the first one is Regulatory Amendment 33, and that has to do with the red snapper seasons. As you're aware, if NMFS projects the commercial or recreational catch limit for red snapper will be caught in three days or less, the season would not occur. Of course, this regulatory amendment would remove that requirement, and so we published the proposed rule, and that published back in May, and comments were due in June, and the final rule package is up in Headquarters, and so hopefully we hear something relatively soon here on that with an effective date.

Next is Abbreviated Framework 3, and this has to do with blueline tilefish, and this would put in an increase in the ACL for blueline tilefish that would respond to a stock assessment and an increase in the -- This final rule published on July 16, and regulations were effective in August, and so that's in place, and we can check that one off.

Finally, Regulatory Amendment 34, and this is the framework amendment that would implement thirty-four special management zones around artificial reefs on the coast of North and South Carolina. The council took final action on this in June, and we are preparing a proposed rule package now, and that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Next up, it looks like Review of the Red Snapper 2020 Season, and I'm going to turn it back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. What I'm going to do is give you a summary of how this year's recreational red snapper season unfolded, including preliminary estimates from Florida. I'm going to show you some information that was contributed by each of the states, and I will pause after I go through each state and invite the state reps to elaborate, as they see fit. I want to thank also the state personnel who provided the information that I'm about to share with you, and, also, after that, I will present a summary of the red snapper data that we obtained through MyFishCount.

I am going to start with Florida, and, first off, this information was provided by Bev Sauls, who is the FWC's Fisheries-Dependent Monitoring Program Lead. Here, we have the summary of the data collection efforts in Florida during this year's unusual circumstances due to the pandemic, and so, for the in-season private boat and charter surveys, there was reduced biological sampling and shortened interviews by anglers that were affected by the pandemic. As far as the year-round

monitoring, there were also reduced interviews, and the launch of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey on the east coast was also impacted by reduced intercept sampling.

Here is a bit more information about that State Reef Fish Survey, and so this one, in addition to special surveys that are conducted during the red snapper season, the FWC expanded it in July of this year to include both the Gulf and the Atlantic coast of Florida, and this expanded survey collects data directly from recreational anglers and spear fishermen with a state reef fish angler designation, which is like a free endorsement, and that is now required to harvest certain reef fish species, including red snapper, anywhere in Florida.

Here are the statistics for the four-day red snapper season this year on the east coast of Florida, and I will pause here a second for you guys to take a look at the numbers. There were eight inlets that were monitored each day, twenty-four intercept survey assignments, and you can see the red snapper that were sampled for biological data. The weather apparently was really good, and so lots of folks went out to get their red snapper.

I want to emphasize, before we get into the estimates, that these data are still preliminary, and so the bar graphs here show you how the 2020 season compares to the previous years' mini-seasons, in terms of private boats targeting red snapper, and that's on the top panel there, and boat trips per day, which is the bottom graph, and so that's showing you that there were about 3,000 targeted boat trips per day, which is very similar to last year, and, overall, there is no apparent impact on red snapper effort that was resulting from the pandemic.

In terms of catch from private boats, the estimated number of red snapper harvested in Florida during this year's season was 30,838 fish. On the bar graph, you have numbers of fish on the left Y-axis and season length, in days, on the right, and so you can see, on the graph, that, this year, there were no estimates of discards, due, again, to the abbreviated interviews.

Here are the charter estimates of effort and catch, again noting that these data are preliminary, and there were close to 600 boat trips that harvested a total of almost 3,000 red snapper, and these estimates are similar to those from last year. I would like to pause here, to see if Jessica has anything to add, or if anyone has any questions for her, before I move on to show you data from the other states.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. I don't have anything to add. I can't see the questions, the hands-up box, and I can only see the presentation right this second, and so I don't know if there are hands. Also, I believe that Beverly Sauls is on the webinar, and so, if people have specific questions, I feel like Beverly is probably the best person to answer them.

DR. COLLIER: There are no hands raised right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on, here is the information from North Carolina. There are no special surveys that are conducted during the red snapper season outside of Florida for private boats, and so carcasses are donated through a voluntary data collection effort and are, of course, not representative of landings for the recreational fishery.

North Carolina's state carcass collection program obtained 121 fish this year, and you can see the length range on the screen, and these fish were sampled for otoliths for ageing purposes. Again, the weather was good both weekends, and there were anecdotal reports from Marine Patrol that indicated high activity. Again, here I will invite Steve, and I'm monitoring to see if there is any raised hands for any questions, and there may be from Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Myra. I just want to just remind everybody that North Carolina doesn't have a snapper-specific survey. Our carcass collection program is all voluntary, and so these numbers aren't necessarily reflective of the catch or effort, but, anecdotally, it did seem like there was a lot of boats out on the water for the first weekend and the second Friday. The weather was beautiful, and it seems like seasons in the past, up our way -- We tend to only get one or two like really good fishable days, but both weekends this year were phenomenal. I myself was out for two of the days in the first weekend, and there was noticeably high effort out on the water everywhere I went.

The last I checked with our recreational statistics staff, we did not have any MRIP intercepts, but this was a few weeks ago, or close to a month ago, when I put this information together, and I am double-checking with them right now, just to confirm if there were any red snapper intercepted during regular APAIS sampling during that time. I really don't have a whole lot more to add, unless there's any questions.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Steve.

DR. COLLIER: I am not seeing any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Moving on then to South Carolina, again, the state's carcass collection program yielded ninety-two racks that were collected from nine freezer sites, and so this was slightly less than in 2019, and my understanding is that the state had one less freezer than last year. Here are the numbers from the state's trip-level reporting program for charter vessels, and so you can see what those numbers are on your screen, and, so far this year, 2,306 red snapper were reported as released alive and eighteen released dead, and those are inclusive of the release numbers during this year's season that are shown on this slide. Mel, if you have anything to add, please go ahead.

MR. BELL: All right. Thank you, Myra. Not a lot, and we'll say that what you're looking at there is just related to the particular mini-season, but we do have, of course -- Since we have a mandatory reporting system in place for charter boats, those are the numbers that Myra mentioned, in terms of releases and things, and so we do have those data.

I would like to thank Marcel and the MARMAP folks. The carcasses that we collect, we turn them directly over to MARMAP for use, and so that's pretty quick, and we do -- As pointed out, our freezer program is a freezer program year-round, but we do kind of do a public outreach push to try to really get folks to work with us for these small seasons, to make sure we can get as many carcasses as we can.

I do know that we had some MRIP positive hits through APAIS, and so it will be interesting to see how that turns out, when you bring in FES, but we did have some intercepts this year, and so that

will be interesting, but this is basically the same thing we've done every year, and I do appreciate the folks that manage the carcasses, the freezer program and all, because we were still operating under some fairly stringent COVID-related protocols for interacting and going out and about and driving and things, and so we do appreciate everybody's efforts there, but we did it safely, and that's what we have, and that's all I have.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Mel.

DR. COLLIER: No hands are raised.

MS. BROUWER: So Georgia, and 240 fish were harvested from twenty-seven charter trips during this year's red snapper season. Georgia collects data from the charter fleet through a telephone census of all federally-permitted snapper grouper charter captains, and letters and log sheets were sent out in advance to notify captains that they would be contacted. Staff then made phone calls the week following each weekend, to limit recall bias, and so you can see the numbers on your screen, and, here again, for the private mode, the numbers are totals of fish that were processed dockside and from donated carcasses. I will invite Carolyn, to see if she has anything to add, or to allow for any questions.

DR. BELCHER: Thank, Myra. Nothing really to add, other than we were lucky that all the days looked really good for folks to get out on the water and optimize their mini-season.

MS. BROUWER: Great. Thanks. That's what I have for the states, and so now I was going to show you what we have --

DR. COLLIER: Myra, before you go on, Kyle has his hand raised.

MS. BROUWER: Sorry, Kyle. Go ahead.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Carolyn, do we have any numbers for the number of private boat trips? I don't see the number of trips, and it's just the number of fish, and I was just curious.

DR. BELCHER: I do not have anything relative to private boat trips. I don't know that the effort had been calculated. I mean, Dawn pretty much just gave me what they had available to them at the time. I think, again, that's just part of how they would have been obtaining stuff through MRIP, but the carcasses, as far as the numbers, we don't have really a way to tie that back to trips.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Got you. Okay. I was just curious, because that was one of the ones that was on some of the information that was on the other slides.

DR. BELCHER: Right.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I see no more hands raised, and so I'm going to continue here. This is the information that we obtained this year from MyFishCount, and so there were the numbers on your screen. There were 129 red snapper that were reported this year during the four-day season, and I believe, last year, there were about 159 red snapper, and so about the same.

Here is the information on release treatment by depth, and so you can see how it compares to last year. This year, we had more folks using descending devices at shallower depths. Here is the information on release treatment of all species that we've seen, and folks that -- The release treatment just for red snapper is on the right, and so you're looking at the numbers in the blue, and so 14 to 15 percent of anglers used a descending device to release red snapper and other species during this year's season.

Here is the catch distribution by state, and over half of the red snapper that were reported came from Florida. Here, finally, this shows the lengths of red snapper that were reported through MyFishCount compared to those in the latest assessment, and I would like to wrap up by mentioning that MyFishCount data are being considered to aid in the estimate of discard mortality and release lengths for red snapper in SEDAR 73, and, also, I think information that is obtained through MyFishCount is also being shared to the Section 102 Workgroup that was established through the Modern Fish Act of 2018, and so that's the workgroup that's a joint effort of the South Atlantic and Gulf Councils to work on potential alternative management approaches to recreational fisheries. That concludes my summary, Madam Chair, and I would be happy to try to answer any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: You're welcome.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It doesn't look like we have any hands. Wait. Mel.

MR. BELL: Not so fast. Just, real quick, I noticed the 14 to 15 percent of the folks that reported used a descending device, and I don't know if we've -- Now you've got a data point, and it would be interesting to look at next year, or kind of track how that goes, but I know that the descending devices were not mandatory until that last Friday, in terms of having them onboard and all, but, as we kind of move forward, just any ability to track the use of the devices, and, of course, they are not always warranted, in terms of using it, but you -- Of course, after that Friday, you do have to have one, and you would think -- You would hope to see your usage go up, but that was interesting, I thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Chip was just asking me to raise my hand, because I'm on a couple of different pieces of the webinar, and so I did that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions about these two presentations that Myra gave? All right. Myra, is there anything else that we need to talk about on the 2020 red snapper season?

MS. BROUWER: I don't believe so, Jessica, and I think we're good, and I guess we're going to be getting -- After QA/QC of the Florida data, we'll be getting those estimates, and so we'll have those probably for the December meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great. All right. Then I believe we're good to move into the Wreckfish ITQ Modernization.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Madam Chair, you may recall that we wanted to have a discussion, because one of the recommendations that we have for this amendment was whether we wanted to take this out for scoping or not, and there was a question about whether the changes to NEPA requirements were going to affect the timeline for this, and I think you had wanted to have a discussion about whether having scoping now was going to somehow affect that timeline, and I wasn't sure, and so did you want to have that NEPA discussion now, or did you want to wait until we get to the end of wreckfish to talk about that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am good with you moving through the document, and then we can talk about it at the end. That way, maybe Monica or Shep or whoever could get ready for that question.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay. That's fine. Not a problem. Just to give you all a little bit of background, a year ago, at this meeting, you all approved the wreckfish ITQ program review, and then you directed staff to bring back to you -- Originally, you had said at the June meeting of this year, but, because we switched to the webinar approach, we cut a few things from the meeting agenda, and this was one of the things that did not make it to the agenda for June, but we wanted to get it started this year.

It's on the agenda now for September, to get this plan underway, and so the direction that was given to staff at the time was to come up with the ideas of what ought to be, perhaps, in an amendment that would look at the modifications that could be made to the wreckfish ITQ program, based on the things that came out of the review.

Also, one of the things that happened, independently of the ITQ review, was that the council needed to actually codify somewhere the changes that it had accepted as part of the visioning process, the changes to the goals and objectives to the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so what I have done here is we have provided an options paper at this point. We have got some ideas of actions and alternatives that are just really sort of in very draft form. We don't need to go through actions and alternatives at this point, and they haven't been reviewed by an IPT or anything yet, but it's just sort of a starting point.

Really, where it needs to go is a decision that needs to be made, about whether it should go out for scoping, but, looking at the ITQ review, these were the actions and things that the council will probably want to consider putting into an amendment at this point.

The first thing would be to look at the objectives for the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and so you've got a set now, and then you've had some that came from the visioning process that are in a table here that I believe that actually you've seen before, in a previous amendment, that I believe might have been Regulatory Amendment 29, I think, but, anyway, they are now appearing here, which is a full plan amendment, and so, at some point, the council needs to accept these.

It's not clear, and maybe Shep or Monica could weigh-in, but, right now, it's set up as an action and alternatives, and I'm sure that it necessarily has to be done this way, as an action and alternatives, and it could just be something that the council has decided that this is what the new action and alternatives -- Excuse me. The new goals and objectives are going to be for the plan amendment, but that's something that can be worked out later, through the IPT, and they can figure out what's the proper approach to this.

At some point, the council will need to go through these and decide whether these are the ones that, yes, we still agree with these, and decide to move on with accepting them, but the council spent quite a bit of time on the goals and objectives for the Snapper Grouper FMP, as part of the visioning process pretty early on. This is one presentation, but, if you all want to stop me as I'm going through, please do, and we can discuss the different issues.

Then we have the wreckfish ITQ program modernization, and I will go through it in the document, and this document is in your briefing book, and one of the things we thought that maybe the council might want to look at is that the ITQ itself has separate goals and objectives, and so what I did is I pulled those goals and objectives from the plan itself, which was in Snapper Grouper Amendment 5 that came out in 1991, and the council should probably look at the goals and objectives and decide are they the ones that -- Are they relevant today to the fishery, and they should decide if they are still relevant today, and, if not, decide how they want to modify them.

Then the next action would be looking at allocation for wreckfish. Now, there's been some discussion about allocation for wreckfish in the past, and there is some difficulty with monitoring recreational landings, and we know they exist. The problem is that they are hard to capture in MRIP, and I believe they have been captured twice in -- They are rarely encountered, and they have only been captured once time since -- Well, they were captured once in 2012, and I think it was just a couple of fish that were captured in MRFSS.

If you go out onto social media, and, for example, you can just like go on to Facebook, and, if you type in "wreckfish", you will find people showing recreational landings of wreckfish, and so we know they happen, but we just don't know, and so there's been discussion about wreckfish allocations and the proper way to handle them, and so there's been some discussion about it.

I do know that, in discussions with the wreckfish commercial fishermen, who have allocation in the fishery, they are not interested in cutting out the recreational sector altogether, but it's just that they're not sure that that 5 percent allocation to the recreational sector is really the appropriate way to go, and they would really like to consider other allocations, and so there's other things that could be considered, and I believe the things that the wreckfish, the commercial wreckfish, guys have recommended at one point --

Going back through their notes, they had recommended perhaps a 2 percent allocation to the recreational sector, saying that, if they could allocate more of the fish to the commercial sector, they could probably catch almost all of those fish, and, if 100 percent was allocated to the commercial sector, that would be a problem, because I would think, if they did that, that might make it illegal for the recreational sector to possess the fish, and I'm not sure exactly how that would work, but that would be something that would need to be worked out, or consider removing sector allocations altogether, but there might be other ways to look at this. This would be something, certainly, that could come up during scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Brian, are you wanting -- Can we stop you and add comments as we go through?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess that, when I was reading this and looked at it, the Alternative 4, remove sector allocations, while I have advocated that for other fisheries, I am wondering if it's really appropriate here, since we have an ITQ fishery, and you're going to have to hand out amounts to the shareholders, or to the quota holders, and I'm wondering if Alternative 4 is really something that could be done here, and I'm not sure that it is, and so I don't even know if we need Alternative 4 in this particular fishery, but I will just throw that out there.

DR. CHEUVRONT: That may well be true. I think this becomes all part of the discussion, in the long run, and, I mean, these are just literally put in here as ideas at this point. I mean, I don't think that I would consider these as real actions and alternatives, and these are just sort of suggestions, based on things that have come up in past conversation, and I think, really, once you get some scoping comments on this, then you would probably have a draft document that would be brought back to you that would probably have real actions and alternatives that are worked out by an IPT for you to consider, because this really hasn't been before an IPT. This is a couple of people who have looked at this, and it has not been thoroughly vetted by an IPT. There have been a few people from SERO, as well as from council staff, but it has not been a full IPT review of this document, and so removing Alternative 4 may be clearly the right thing to do.

Then another thing is cost recovery is something that has come up, and it's very unpopular with the ITQ program participants, but it is a requirement of ITQ programs, and so it needs to be fully considered and vetted, to see what would work out, and, right now, as far as there is no cost recovery program with the wreckfish ITQ, and the idea of establishing a cost recovery program. It would have to be how it would work or whatever, and that needs to be considered, and whatever details needs to be worked out, and our council really doesn't have experience doing a cost recovery program.

I know they've been done in the Gulf and in many other areas, and this is where certainly SERO experience would help in coming up with ideas for something like this, but it's something that needs to be considered at this point, and so I think we need to move forward on an action, probably, related to this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have some hands up, if you wouldn't mind, and I have a question too, and I see Mel's hand is up.

MR. BELL: Thanks. Definitely no experience with these things or cost recovery programs, and so, when you say it's mandatory, if we don't have it in place, then we have something missing that we need to correct, and is that right?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Mel, that's my understanding. We have talked with -- The NMFS folks know this better than we do. I mean, we don't have experience with this, and so this might be something that perhaps Shep or somebody could address, but, in the very first sentence, it gives the section under MSA where -- Monica has her hand up, but it shows where it's mandated under MSA, and with some of the requirements of it, and so I think it is required to be considered. They may want to address that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to go to Monica and then Shep.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thanks. Brian said it well. I mean, the Act requires it, and the Act required it before the revisions went through, the last revisions of the Magnuson Act that laid out all that Section 303A on the limited access privilege program kind of requirements, and so it's been a requirement for some time. Why the council hasn't done it before, I can't really tell you, and we could look at that in the IPT and come back with that, but absolutely it's required, and we have -- I know this council isn't familiar with it, but the Fisheries Service has done it with other FMPs in other programs, and so we could bring back a good explanation of how it's done with some options to the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, Monica, because I had questions about what all the cost recovery money could be used for, such as can it be used for enforcement, and so I would love to see a presentation on that. I'm going to go to Shep next, and did you have other things that you wanted to add here, Shep?

MR. GRIMES: No, and that's it. Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just going to mention what Monica stated, and we discussed this in the review of the IFQ program. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tony and then Mel.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. We've done cost recovery programs in the Mid, and I'm sure that our staff would be very happy to work with your staff as you develop programs for the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mel.

MR. BELL: That was just a leftover hand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. I'm going to turn it back to you, Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Just this cost recovery issue is probably going to be the most controversial thing in this amendment, and probably the most sought-after thing by everybody is the idea of a migration to an electronic system. Remember that the whole system of tracking is done by paper now, and the fishermen hate it, and I think the Fisheries Service hates it, because the migration to an electronic system could help with timeliness of reported data and improve data quality and reduce costs and time for management, provide additional flexibility, and it could help improve enforcement and monitoring, and so there's a lot of good things that could come out of this, and certainly I think there's a lot of support for this idea.

How that would exactly work, we're not sure, and we do know that SERO has already got electronic monitoring systems in place. In talking with some SERO staff members who have worked with that, they have indicated that it might even be possible to modify things that already exist to make it work for the wreckfish ITQ program, and so there is some discussion of this, but I think this is something that I think has a lot of support from probably most everybody in the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. We have a hand up. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks, Madam Chairwoman. I just can't resist lodging my regular complaint, as one of the few people who gets to sit for forty-five minutes and bubble in bubble letters on the coupons. My IQ level drops dangerously low when I do that, and it's such a pain, and I really hope that we can make this happen this time around.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Kerry, I'm sure it gets really bad when you're stuck with a lot of hundred-pound coupons and stuff, because somebody has run out of 500-pound coupons, and you've got to do like eight or nine of them, and, I mean, it must be awful.

MS. MARHEFKA: At the end of the season, I have to bribe my children to fill in the bubbles.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I have one of those money counters, like at the bank, and that's how I do it. Anyway, I spoke to some of the shareholders, and they seem to be fine with up to like a 1 percent cost recovery, which would be somewhere around a nickel or six-cents a pound, and as long as they made the move over to the electronic system.

I did have some questions about the cost recovery, and, since we're not real familiar with it in our region, and I'm familiar with other fisheries, but I liked your comment, Ms. McCawley, about using it for enforcement, and I didn't know if the cost recovery might just go into like the general government slush fund of the U.S. Treasury, so we could be paying off some debt, and I was just wondering if it could be used for anything, like just only specifically to the wreckfish ITQ or the monitoring and administration of the program and the enforcement.

I don't really know if the enforcement of the program -- If the program needs like more law enforcement on it, since there's just such a small number of shareholders, and these guys seem to be real stewards of the resource, and they police themselves, and it's their fishery, and that's one of the beauties of a LAPP program, is that there's a tight-knit group of people, and, if you don't follow the rules, they're going to come bust you up. Anyway, that's all I had, but I would like some answers to those questions. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chris. I see Roy put his hand up.

DR. CRABTREE: In the Gulf, we have cost recovery in the red snapper IFQ and the grouper-tilefish IFQ, and the money can be used for law enforcement, and it can be used for observers, and it can be used to pay for the administration of it, and we regularly send money to the law enforcement and to the Science Center in those fisheries. The cost recovery money goes into a special fund that we do get the numbers.

Now, I believe, in the statute, the cost recovery is limited to not exceeding 3 percent of the ex-vessel value, but, generally, my read of the statute is the goal is to try and recover all the costs that are there, and I doubt, in wreckfish, that you will have enough cost recovery to do that, and so I think it's more likely, Chris, that the cost recovery will be close to the 3 percent neighborhood.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Roy. All right. I don't see any more hands, Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay. Then the next action that would be considered is the elimination of the wreckfish permit requirement. When you look at all the different requirements, and the permits and things that the fishermen are required to have, the wreckfish permit requirement is pretty redundant, because they are required to have an SG1 permit and other permits, and so this one is - - It basically doesn't enhance NMFS' ability to track or monitor harvest requirements, and it's basically unneeded, and so NMFS doesn't need it, and the fishermen don't need it, and nobody is sure why people see the need for this, and so the idea was that it's really kind of redundant, and it's not helping with any kind of monitoring, and so the idea was, just to help reduce an unnecessary burden on the fishermen, let's just get rid of the wreckfish vessel permit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just wanted to throw out -- I guess that I would love to hear more about this at a future meeting, because some of the challenges, I will call them, that are happening in the Gulf -- I just don't want them to happen over here in the South Atlantic, and I thought that having the wreckfish permit requirement was maybe prohibiting just anyone from getting the IFQ shares and then leasing them back to the folks that really needed them, or something of that nature, and so I just wanted to hear more about this at a future meeting. I see Kerry's hand up.

MS. MARHEFKA: Jessica, to that point, that's the concern of the shareholders that I spoke to before this meeting. They currently, as they understand it, are in favor of keeping the wreckfish permit, because they see it as a barrier to entry from just anyone that has a snapper grouper permit joining, or speculatively joining, the wreckfish fishery, and I can't remember, and it's been a long time since I looked closely at wreckfish, and, if you don't have coupons, can you get a wreckfish permit right now? Is it open access, quote, unquote, just the permit, and I understand you can't catch the fish without the coupons, but I would love more explanation of that and a way to be able to bring it back to the shareholders, because they are very concerned about this one action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. I will go to Roy while you're looking, Brian.

DR. CRABTREE: I think the difference you could have -- I mean, the issue in the Gulf is that you can acquire quota without having any commercial permit. Here, you have to have the snapper grouper permit, and there's the wreckfish permit, and so you could eliminate the wreckfish permit, but you would still have a permit requirement, assuming you set it up that way, that you would have to have a snapper grouper permit to get into it, and so I don't think it would be a situation comparable to the Gulf.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: To answer Kerry's question, right now, the regulations state that, to get a commercial vessel permit for wreckfish, the applicant must be a wreckfish shareholder.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Right, and so you have to possess shares, and you have to have the shares to get coupons.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Right, and we could lay this all out for the council and give you some more explanation the next time you take up this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Thanks, Brian. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: That was an accident. I'm sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Back to Brian.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Okay. The other thing, the next one, and this is a request from the fishermen themselves, is to revise approved offloading sites and times. This is a holdover from when the program was originally set up. I believe, when it was originally set up, there were about fifty participants in the fishery, and, when it was set up, there were current requirements for offloading of wreckfish only at approved offloading sites between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. local time.

With all that many fishermen involved in the fishery, it was done to aid law enforcement, but the fishermen currently participating in the fishery, and I think there's like between five and seven folks participating in it, and they would like to remove the requirement for offloading of wreckfish between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., and sometimes they just can't get back in time, by 5:00 p.m., and they don't like the idea of leaving the fish onboard overnight, and so they would like to have that be removed, but they would also -- If there's an electronic monitoring system, the council could also have a hail-out and/or a hail-in requirement as an advanced notice of beginning and landing of trips, to let law enforcement or whoever know where they are and what they're doing.

If law enforcement wanted to meet them at the dock -- There is only a few places where the fish are being unloaded now anyway, and so there are ways to get that communication with law enforcement if they needed it, and so they're willing to work around that, if necessary, but it's mostly the hours of offloading that is really the problem for them at this point, but I think that they would like to have the council reconsider some of these issues, and I think this could be elaborated on more, certainly, in the development of an amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Brian, this has been something, in the Gulf, that we've been working with our law enforcement on for the Gulf fisheries, and just making sure that there are approved landing sites, and I know that there was a recent change to this process in the Gulf, and so I look forward to the discussions of this at future meetings.

DR. CHEUVRONT: One of the ways that it could be done, since there's so few participants in there, is there might be a way that a fisherman who is participating in the fishery -- There might be a process for a way that they can get their sites, where they typically want to offload their fish, so that they can get that site approved as an offloading site.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I was thinking the same thing.

DR. CHEUVRONT: There might be a process that could be added to that so that they could get that done, because, occasionally, the participants in the fishery do change. Then there's the idea of mandatory data, economic data, collection. This probably already could be done, but, right now, there is no systematic data collection for the wreckfish ITQ program, but this action would be more along the line of the council making it clear that they would like to collect economic cost data at a census level for the wreckfish ITQ participants, and, since it's a small number of participants, the council could state a preference, but this, I think, really is up to NMFS to run this, but the council could certainly state what their preference might be on this. We found that, in

doing the review, it would have been helpful to have a better dataset for helping us collect this economic data.

What we would like for the council to consider is providing guidance to staff on whether you would like to have further development of this amendment, or are there other actions that you would like us to consider, or is there anything that you would like us to remove? We have talked about some of the additional information that you would like to have, and then the other thing is the discussion about sending this out for scoping, and then I have a draft motion, if you do decide that you would like to send it out for scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Brian, and so I had a question. I guess I was -- Before we get into scoping and starting the clock for NEPA, et cetera, on the new NEPA requirements, I guess my question is -- I know that, in the past, we have brought all the shareholders together, and we did that at least once, if not twice, during the review, when we went through that process, and I was really hoping that we could bring all the shareholders together again, via webinar, before we went out to scoping.

Since there is so few of them, I would love for you to be able to meet with them one more time before you retire, and maybe with Christina, on a webinar, to have some of these discussions, and is it possible that we could do that before we scope this, or does it have to be done at the same time or what?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Well, Madam Chair, I think we could certainly do that, and, you know, if you really wanted to -- I think the bulk of the comments that you really want to get would be from your wreckfish ITQ shareholders, and perhaps what you could do, and I'm just throwing this out as an idea, and the council, obviously, can do whatever they want to, but maybe we could try to arrange to have a meeting with the shareholders between this meeting and December, and you just hold a scoping session as part of your meeting in December, and that could take care of all of that.

I don't know that you're going to get a huge amount of participation in scoping on this from outside of your shareholders, but you might, and so, if you decide -- You could decide in December. I mean, we could hold a scoping session at the December meeting, and then you could decide, in December, whether you want to hold additional scoping sessions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that that would be my preference, would be to bring the shareholders together and have you and Christina meet with them and maybe have an all-day or half-day or however long it takes webinar, prior to getting to the December meeting, and then I like the idea you suggested about it being scoped at the December meeting, but I see other hands up. Let me go to these other hands. Kerry and then Roy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Jessica, you read my mind, but I am just trying to think about it in different ways. If some of you recall, we actually used to have a wreckfish sub-component of the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, and I don't know what the proper methodology is, as far as whether that's sort of reinstated or we do what you suggested and just bring the shareholders in, although I would selfishly say, and not that I would participate, but that it's not just the shareholders, and there are dealers who are not shareholders who are also affected by items relating to wreckfish, and so that's why I wonder if going the route of having sort of an ad hoc advisory panel meeting, if that's the

name of it, so that it's not the shareholders that are there, but, without a doubt, I think, before it goes to scoping, we need to get the main players at the table involved.

I spoke with Jim Freeman, who is one of them, and Paul earlier this week, and I know Jim said he didn't have time for the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, but this is important enough for him that both of them indicated that they would stop and make time for this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think those are some great points. I think that -- I can't remember all the reasons why we got rid of that AP, and it might have been because there were so few shareholders that we just wanted all the shareholders to participate in the process, and so we actually have another closed session on Thursday morning, and we could have some of those discussions then, if we want to do something different than just bringing together all the shareholders, and you made a good point about there being some wholesale dealers as well, and maybe we can just bring the interested wholesale dealers and the shareholders together without having to create this particular AP, but let me just throw that out there. I appreciate those comments, Kerry, and I'm going to go to Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I guess my question has to do with -- In the Gulf, we put in place a VMS requirement when the IFQs went into place, and I am not suggesting looking at a broad VMS requirement for the snapper grouper fishery, but do you want to consider a VMS requirement for vessels participating in the wreckfish fishery, because it does provide a pretty good avenue for enhanced enforcement of the various rules.

MS. MCCAWLEY: In my mind, I think that that would be part of this discussion in going to this electronic reporting system. In my mind, a discussion about the VMS would be part of that discussion, and so that's another reason why I wanted to go to the people, the shareholders, and then maybe the wholesale dealers, just so that we can learn a little bit more about what folks think before we get too far down the road on this amendment, with analyzing all these different things, and I would rather hear from folks first, and so that's just kind of my take on things.

DR. CRABTREE: I think that's a good idea, Jessica, and so I think, Brian, VMS is something that we would want to at least consider.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, and we may have had a discussion on VMS in the past, and I can go back and look through the notes, but I did write it down for the fall discussion, to include VMS.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Then now, Brian, who do you think the best person is to talk about the new NEPA requirements, and doesn't starting scoping start a shortened time clock on how long we can spend moving through an amendment? Who is the best person to talk about that?

DR. CHEUVRONT: It's got to be somebody probably from SERO. I mean, I had a brief conversation last week with Rick DeVictor, but he might punt on that, if he doesn't think he's the right guy. Rick has got his hand up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see Rick's and Monica's hands are up, and so whoever wants to go first, and I will let you guys decide between Rick and Monica.

MR. DEVICTOR: Monica, do you want to go first?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: If you want me to, I can, but I'm not sure how much I will be able to -
- How much information. It kind of depends, I believe, and I'm still getting up to speed on the new requirements, but I look at this a couple of different ways. You know, scoping under the Magnuson Act is one thing, and I know we've kind of intertwined that with scoping under NEPA in most of our documents, but I don't know that it necessarily has to be that way, and so they're two different kinds of scoping.

As far as the new regulations, I think it depends what kind of NEPA vehicle we're talking about, right, and so, if we're talking about an environmental impact statement, which this could be, or maybe not, and I haven't looked into it, and I think that, for that, for the regulations, NEPA regulations, we're familiar with, I think we would probably have to put out a notice that we were going to prepare an environmental impact assessment for that to be considered under the NEPA regulations, and not the new ones, and I don't want to call them old, but I will just call them old, but the older NEPA regulations. If it's an environmental assessment, I think we have a lot more flexibility on which regulations that apply, whether it's the new ones or the old ones, and so I think it just kind of depends on the situation. Rick, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: The rule published in July, and then it was effective yesterday, and, of course, we're talking page limits, and so, for EISs, it's like 150 pages or fewer, and EAs are seventy-five pages or fewer, and then there's time limits, which I think you're asking about, and I believe it's two years for an EIS and one year for an EA, and so I think the big question becomes, again, what we're talking about here is when does the clock start, and so we are talking internally about that, and talking with Headquarters.

The CCC is going to be talking about this at your September 23 meeting, and so you'll find out a lot more then, but what we've talked about so far is that there could be kind of two triggers for the clock to start. It could be the IPT completes a NEPA threshold checklist, and that's usually at the first time that the IPT meets, and then we also report a major federal action to NOAA, and we do that later in the process, after the council takes final action, and so, obviously, if that was your trigger to start the clock, that would be later in the process, and the time limits wouldn't impact you so much.

Again, like Dolphin Wahoo 10, we already reported the major federal action, and so that's under the 1978 CEQ regulations, and so I guess what I think is that, whether you do scoping now -- I agree with Monica that, in my mind, it's kind of like Magnuson scoping and NEPA scoping is different a bit, but I don't think it matters if you take it out to scoping wreckfish, in terms of starting that clock, based on the two triggers we're thinking about right now. National Marine Fisheries Service is currently working on guidance for this, and so they're hoping to get that out and hit the streets pretty soon, and that will help with some of this, but that's kind of what I'm thinking right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Rick. What you and Monica said, that was helpful. Brian, I think -
- I see this draft motion here, but I would rather, instead of going to scoping next, I would rather staff do a webinar with the shareholders and the interested wholesale dealers, and, Brian, I would love it if both you and Christina could be there, because I think Christina is going to take this over

after you retire, and I would like for the shareholders to have this discussion before we get to the December council meeting, if that's possible, and then maybe we can do some scoping at the December council meeting. It sounded like Kerry was thinking something similar there, and I can't make a motion, and so maybe Kerry would like to make that motion, after you get it typed up there.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Madam Chair, I'm not sure that we actually even need to make a motion, because I think we can take that as direction to staff. I mean, I have written that down, that you would like us just to go ahead and do that, and what I would like to do, if it's okay, is find out -- Kerry, could you help us identify who those wholesale dealers are, or do you think I just need to go to the shareholders themselves? I mean, I have got the shareholder connections, but I don't necessarily know who all the wholesale dealers are and about getting them involved.

MS. MARHEFKA: Brian, I think, between myself and Chris and the shareholders, we can probably come up with a list pretty quick for you. I don't want to assume that I know everyone, but I have a good idea of most of them, and it sounds like Chris might know some that I don't as well.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Madam Chair, I think Christina and I could probably put that together, and we could start working on it pretty quickly, and the big thing is going to be to find a date very quickly, because of the Federal Register notice to get this thing scheduled, and we've got a pretty busy fall schedule for meetings and things, but I think we could probably fit this in, and my guess is that, really, this could probably be done as a half-day meeting, like an afternoon meeting or something like that, because we've got basically six or seven actions.

We've had these kinds of meetings before, and we can certainly record the discussions, and we would be able to bring that back to the council in December, and we'll bring back the idea of a scoping session in December. I just want to make sure then that -- Would you like to hold a scoping session in December, or do you want to wait until December to vote on sending it out to scoping?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I actually think that I would like to wait until December to vote to send it out for scoping, and I just would like to hear more about what comes out of that meeting, and I would like to be at that webinar also, but it sounds like we can learn some things from some of the Gulf programs, and so, at the December meeting, I'm hoping that maybe you can provide a little bit more information about some of these programs in the Gulf, like the electronic monitoring systems, et cetera, so that they don't have to use paper coupons, as we switch to this new program. I would love to hear a little bit more about that before we send it out to scoping, but I see that Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. You actually covered it, and I was going to pick your brain a little bit on what the intentions were for December and whether to have scoping there or to do it later, and I guess, the way you described it, that would be great. Also, the CCC will be in not too long, and maybe there will be a discussion, which might help with -- I know that Rick and Monica advised us, and I think we're okay, and we're not going to inadvertently trip a clock to start that we didn't mean to start, and so I think that will work out fine, if we just take the approach that you just described.

DR. CHEUVRONT: Madam Chair, it might be good if -- Working with our SERO counterparts, there might be somebody there who might be able to make a presentation to the council on some of these systems and things, somebody who is really familiar with it to make the presentation, instead of one of us, who is not as familiar with their systems, to try to interpret it for the council and potentially make mistakes in something that we're saying, and so I will work with Rick and the folks at SERO and see maybe if we can get one of those folks to make a presentation, if that works for you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great. Brian, do you think that you have what you need on this wreckfish discussion?

DR. CHEUVRONT: Yes, ma'am, I do, and I think we've got enough direction to staff, and I'm going to write this up, to get it in the report for Myra, and so you'll have a chance to review it, to make sure that everything is in there, and you can let us know whether we've captured everything as direction to staff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sound great. Thank you, Brian. Let's go ahead and take our lunch break, and let's come back --Instead of coming back at 1:30, let's come back at 1:45. When we come back, we will be going into the red porgy options paper. Thanks, everybody. See you guys on the webinar at 1:45.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that we're okay to get started. Next up is the red porgy options paper, and, Myra, I'm going to turn it over to you.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. Here is Attachment 3 in your briefing book, and it's the options paper for Amendment 50, which is the red porgy amendment. Since we're just getting started on this amendment -- Typically, when we're kind of in the middle of developing an amendment, we have a little orientation PowerPoint to get everybody up to speed on where we are, and I didn't prepare one today, since this is the very beginning of this amendment, and so we're going to dive right into Attachment 3.

What I have done here is, first off, a little bit of background on red porgy, and this was the first South Atlantic snapper grouper member stock that was assessed through the SEDAR process in 2002. At that time, the stock was found to be overfished and not undergoing overfishing. Subsequent updates to that assessment in 2006 and 2012 similarly found that the stock was overfished and not undergoing overfishing.

Then SEDAR 60, which was recently completed this year, showed the stock to be overfished and undergoing overfishing. The stock has not rebuilt, despite the efforts the council has made in managing it, in order to rebuild. The most recent assessment, SEDAR 60, followed a standard approach, and it used data through 2017, and it included the revised estimates from the recreational catch through the Fishing Effort Survey.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee reviewed the assessment at their April meeting, and they went through and certified it as the best available science and suitable for management. The council then received notification from the agency, through a letter dated June 12 of 2020, about

the status of red porgy, and so, when that happens, and the stock is overfished, and undergoing overfishing, the Act requires the council to develop a fishery management plan with actions that will end overfishing immediately and rebuild the stock. The council has two years, until June 12 of 2022, to put a rebuilding plan in place for red porgy, and this figure is simply from the assessment, showing you the exploitation status and the biomass status of red porgy.

So far, this amendment would include actions that would revise the rebuilding schedule for red porgy, and it would adjust catch levels, annual catch limit and annual catch target, revise allocations, and revise management measures. I see that Rick DeVictor has his hand raised, and so I will pause here and let him ask a question.

MR. DEVICTOR: Thanks, Myra. Sorry to jump in here, as you're going through the background, but I just wanted to speak to the letter that National Marine Fisheries Service sent to the council. As you all know, and like you mentioned, if the Secretary determines that a fishery is overfished or undergoing overfishing or what have you, we do send a letter, and we did send that on June 12. In that letter, we did state that it was undergoing overfishing and was overfished and was not making adequate progress, and we did highlight the rebuilding plan that was put into place beginning in 1991, and that was a ten-year rebuilding plan, and we also stated that the stock assessments done in 2002 and 2006 and 2012 and 2020, as you highlighted, resulted in overfishing and overfished determinations.

In the last few weeks, it's been pointed out to me that perhaps we left out some of the details in this, and, looking back, we probably should have put more in this letter, and so I just wanted to put it out here for the record, just so the council knows that NMFS does acknowledge that there was a more recent rebuilding plan certainly put into place, and that ended in 2017, I believe. Also, I believe that there was emergency action, at the council's request, to prohibit the possession of red porgy, and that was put into place in 1999, and then, of course, that followed with the rebuilding plan.

I just wanted to highlight this, and I know that this will be discussed at length by the council, and certainly, as you've shown in the document, we'll talk about this as we work on this action, but I just wanted to clear the record there and just say that NMFS does acknowledge this, even though this wasn't outlined in the letter that we sent you on June 12.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Rick, for that. We will proceed then, and so that's basically the list of proposed management changes in this amendment, and we don't yet have fleshed-out actions and alternatives, none of that stuff, and that's why we're here, and so the objectives for this meeting is for you all to provide guidance on options that you would like the IPT to develop to bring back to you at the December meeting.

On your screen now is the tentative amendment timing, and so we would look, in December, to review, as I said, a draft amendment and approve that for scoping. By then, you will have had some feedback from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, and they are scheduled to meet at the beginning of November. We could conduct scoping hearings in January and February of 2021, with the intent of the council going over those scoping comments in March and whatever preliminary analyses we've been able to produce by then, and give us some more guidance. Then we'll come back in June and modify the amendment and select preferreds, if appropriate, and approve it for public hearings, which would be conducted in the summer of 2021.

The council would review those public comments and approve all the actions in September of next year, and then either review the final amendment and consider for final approval in December of 2021 or March of 2022, and so that would put us in time to meet the statutory deadline for regulations to be effective in mid-2022.

The ABC, as I said, was reviewed by the SSC. They made an ABC determination, a recommendation, for the council at their April 2020 meeting. They reviewed the assessment and found that all the terms of reference were addressed appropriately, and they applied their ABC control rule and recommended what you see on your screen for the ABC and the overfishing limit for red porgy. The recommendations are, as you know, based on landed catch, since the discards are taken care of in the assessment, and so the table that you see on your screen is showing the recommendations that you have already seen from your SSC that were provided to you in June.

I have put in here, for reference, the current ABC for red porgy is 328,000 pounds whole weight, which is the same as the ACL, and those catch levels were established in Regulatory Amendment 18 back in 2013, and, as Chip mentioned yesterday, at that time, the ABC projections were through 2018, but the council chose to be conservative and adopt an ABC at the 2015 level and keep it at that level, and so that's what's in place right now. You can see the OFL recommendations through 2026 and the ABC recommendations, again, through 2026.

Here is where we start getting into the potential proposed actions for this amendment, and the first thing on the list would be to revise the rebuilding schedule. The current rebuilding plan was designed to rebuild the stock by the end of 2016, and this was not accomplished, and so we have to go back and revise that rebuilding plan.

Up on your screen is just a little bit more background on what is currently the guidance on how to define the upper and lower bounds of a rebuilding schedule, and these are specified in National Standard 1, and so T_{min} is the amount of time the stock, or the complex, is expected to take to rebuild to its MSY level in the absence of any fishing mortality, and so T_{min} is going to be one of the options that the council considers, and you also can look at -- If T_{min} for the stock is ten years or less, then the maximum time you have to rebuild is ten years.

If that length of time exceeds ten years, then you have the option of using other methods. You can use T_{min} plus the length of time, that one generation time, and that's the average length of time between when an individual is born and the birth of its offspring, and so this is calculated for the stock assessment, from the stock assessment. You can also look at the amount of time the stock would rebuild to the MSY if you maintained a fishing mortality at 75 percent of the maximum fishing mortality threshold, or you can use T_{min} times two.

These are the guidelines that we used to develop these options that you see on your screen, and so Option 1, of course, is no change, and we're still under an eighteen-year rebuilding schedule that actually technically expired in 2016, and so red porgy is not currently under a rebuilding plan at the moment.

Under Option 2, you would revise the rebuilding timeframe to equal that T_{min} , the shortest possible time to rebuild in the absence of any fishing mortality, and that would equal twelve years. That would put the end of the rebuilding time period at 2032, and that's if you start management

in 2021. I have a little note here just to make sure that you understand that this option assumes that fishing mortality is zero and that discards are eliminated, and so, of course, that's not very feasible, and so it can be expected that, under that scenario, that timeframe is going to be longer than twelve years.

Option 3 would revise the rebuilding timeframe to equal T_{min} times two, and so that would equal twenty-four years, again with 2021 being year-one, and Option 4 would be to revise the rebuilding timeframe to equal T_{min} plus one generation time, and that would be eighteen years, and the generation time was recently updated by Nikolai at the Science Center, and that is 6.64 years.

Then, finally, Option 5 would be to rebuild the stock to a level that would have a 50 percent probability of rebuilding success while maintaining your fishing mortality of 75 percent of that maximum fishing mortality threshold during the rebuilding period, and that would equal twenty-six years, and so the stock would technically be rebuilt in 2046, if management starts in 2021.

This is what we've come up with, and I should mention, just also, before I pause for questions, that this options paper -- We do have an IPT in place for this amendment, and we have not yet met with the full IPT, and so Frank Helies of the Regional Office and Jeff Pulver and Mike Errigo in our office and I have put this together, and so thanks to all those folks, and, here, I would like to pause and see if there's any questions or if you have some more guidance for us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. I am looking for hands. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been assigned -- Monica has graciously assigned me to be the lead for this, and I've been going over the stuff, and, as you can see, it's a fairly negative history on this, I guess, and I just want to say now, and I'll go ahead and lay this down, and I suspect you will hear it from me repeatedly through the development of this, but I think, given the facts, the failure of this stock to rebuild repeatedly in past rebuilding plans, that we should be approaching this with perhaps an added level of -- Taking a more precautionary, more conservative approach, in terms of rebuilding periods and the rest of it, and I just want to lay that out early.

The main thing that I wanted to mention, and, Myra, correct me if I'm wrong on this, but we have the ABC recommendation from the SSC, and the ABC recommendation would end overfishing, but we have a number of potential timeframes for rebuilding in here, and the catch that would be associated with meeting that rebuilding timeline is going to be different, and it could be much less, or less, than the current ABC recommendation, and so, while you don't have to go ahead and pick, or have an idea of which preferred alternative you would want on this, I think we need to identify potential alternatives, all the rebuilding timeline alternatives, so we can request that the Science Center do the analysis for us and develop the projections for what catch would be associated with each of these, and then we would move forward. Maybe that's not correct, but we need to figure out what the process is. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep. Mike E.

DR. ERRIGO: Shep is correct that there will be different levels of landings associated with a particular rebuilding plan. However, the level of landings that the SSC has chosen are actually particularly conservative, because they chose the projections at a low-recruitment level, whereas

all the projections for the rebuilding timeframes are at the recruitment level that was estimated in the model, the average recruitment level, and so just so you guys have an understanding of how this is working and why the SSC was able to give an ABC recommendation before the rebuilding plan was put into place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you. If I can follow-up with that, Mike, then so, as we develop this, and let's say we develop this FMP amendment, and it has the different rebuilding timeframes in it, and let's say we go with the longer one that would allow a higher catch associated with it, and presumably the SSC would review this later in the process and then potentially give a new ABC recommendation, or at least give feedback on the timeline and the catches associated with it, and, if we wanted to move forward in the interim, before this is final, we would have the existing ABC recommendation that we would operate off of.

DR. ERRIGO: If I could respond, yes. If the council wanted to possibly consider a higher ABC than what was given originally, then, yes, they could send it back to the SSC and say, under this rebuilding plan, this is what the catch levels would be, and would you consider this as an ABC, rather than the ABC that was given already, and they can talk about that at whichever meeting that came up. Of course, if the council wanted to set it at anything lower than the ABCs given, then there would be no problem with that.

DR. CRABTREE: This is kind of an unusual situation, where we've seen declining recruitment for a long time, and I think that recruitment has been low for twenty or more years, and so, really, the reason that red pogy is not rebuilding is because recruitment is so low, and, in fact, the stock will never rebuild unless recruitment goes back up to levels closer to what historically occurred, and so I think what the SSC did is appropriate, because it doesn't make sense to assume somehow that recruitment is going to start going up right away, because that just hasn't been what we've observed for a long time, but, when you did the rebuilding projections, you used the recruitment relationship that's inherent in the stock assessment model, and, because this is a relatively low steepness, that assumes that recruitment will go up as the stock rebuilds.

Now, that may or may not happen, and I think, if we go for I don't know how long, but, if you go another five to ten years and you don't see any improvement going up, then I think you've got to re-think whether rebuilding is possible or not, and maybe the carrying capacity of the ecosystem has just changed to the point that red pogy productivity is lower than it used to be, and then you would have to redefine the rebuilding targets, but I think, for now, what the SSC did is appropriate, to assume the levels of recruitment we've seen in recent years, and, until we get some evidence that recruitment is actually starting to go up, I think that's the appropriate place to keep the catches.

I do agree with Shepherd that this is a case where being conservative is probably what we need to do, but I think we need to understand that there are things going on in the environment and the ecosystem that are affecting the rebuilding of red pogy, and we don't really know if those are going to turn around or change or what's going to happen with that, and so there's a great deal of uncertainty in terms of when and if red pogy can be rebuilt.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Roy. Erik and then Chris and then Shep and then Tony.

DR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow-up on what Roy and Shep had to say, and I agree with pretty much everything they said, but I just wanted to make one point of clarification about sort of the history of red porgy recruitment. It has decreased, and it has been low for many years, but, according to the stock assessment model, most of those years can be explained by just reduced spawning stock size.

It's only in the most recent years, and starting in 2012 in particular, that we actually see recruitment estimates fall even below the stock-recruit curve prediction, and so that's where the real trouble lies, and, as Roy pointed out, we're not sure if that's going to recover or not, and we are actually starting to see this in other stocks, and so this is not a phenomena that seems to be solely red porgy. We are now starting to see several stocks that are showing this low recruitment, and, when I saw low recruitment, I mean below the expectation of the stock-recruit curve, and so that's a worrisome sign, but possibly another reason for the precaution suggested by Shep.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Erik. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I guess what I was going to say was similar to Roy, about things changing and maybe the number that we're going off of, the terminal assessment or whatever, that is telling us where red porgy used to be, and we may never ever get back there, and it looks pretty bleak, and so I'm just trying to figure out how we would clean the slate and come up with a new expectation for red porgy that wasn't so damn ambitious, so we could show some signs of doing okay with it, because, here in South Carolina, we have a ton of them, and they're all different sizes, and I sell a lot of them, and I catch a lot of them, and it looks pretty good here, and I'm just sure about the rest of everywhere, but it's just real unfortunate that we've been sucking on red porgy for so long, and it makes us look bad, and obviously something is not going right, and so I wish there was a way forward where we could perhaps, instead of cooking the books, delete the books and get it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify a little, I wasn't advocating in any way a higher ACL, or necessarily going back to the SSC, and I just want to see this keep moving forward as best we can, and I was thinking about sort of synchronizing our final catch levels with whatever rebuilding projections that we'll get out of the Science Center, but certainly the council could come in and have a catch level that was below the catch level needed to rebuild within the desired timeline, but I am just sort of trying to plan out the pieces.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tony.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you, Madam Chairman. One of the great things about being a liaison to different councils is we get to learn from each other. I mean, I enjoy being with your company and all, but I get to learn a lot and hear things that are very encouraging.

I want to back up or also comment on what Roy Crabtree was saying about environmental conditions perhaps not -- No matter what we do, despite our best efforts, some critters just don't want to come back, and we have the same situation in the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England, and winter flounder is one of them, and we just can't seem to get that stock back to where a recreational fishery exists anymore, and codfish.

Codfish were once the most plentiful fish in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and its first export product was cod, and codfish has basically collapsed in southern New England, on Georges Bank, and we're still trying to find out why. I am very happy to hear what Roy said, and I think the agency is going to have to start to look at what Dr. Crabtree was saying closer and closer, as some of these stocks just don't want to seem to be able to respond, despite our best efforts. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tony. Kyle.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Real quick, you had alluded to other stocks that you are seeing that are below the expected recruitment, and do you have a roundabout time or a year where you started seeing this, and I heard 2012, but is there a time period where you sort of saw the trend start and continue downward since then, and what other stocks are you seeing affected, just in a quick overview, and not a whole lot of detail, but just what other ones are you seeing with the same problem?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Who said that? Was it Roy?

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: I don't remember. I am not sure which one it was that said that.

DR. CRABTREE: It was Erik.

DR. WILLIAMS: Yes, that was me. Thank you. Kyle, it's a great question, and we're looking into it right now further, because the pattern is starting to emerge, so to speak, but I would say roughly around the 2010 to 2012 time period is when we've seen a drop in recruitment, and we're now seeing it in red grouper, black sea bass, red porgy, and even snowy grouper, in the most recent assessment, is showing signs of it. We're trying to figure out what the commonality is there, and that's where the research is coming in, and we're starting to look at other factors and trying to figure out what is causing this, but, yes, we're seeing it for several species.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Just to throw a question out there, and everybody knows this is coming from me, but what years did we start protecting red snapper?

DR. WILLIAMS: I hear what you're saying.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: I'm asking, and I don't remember exactly what year it was, but everybody knows this is coming from me, and so I'm curious if we're missing a relationship that we could have been part of the cause. I mean, we talk about the environmental conditions, and did we cause one of those, and a lot of people are thinking it, but everybody is afraid to say it, and so I will end it with that. Thank you.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I hear what you're saying, Kyle, and I don't think that anyone is afraid to say it. We've had these conversations in the Gulf for ages, and there is no question that rebuilding red snapper very low biomass levels to very high biomass levels likely changes the ecosystem in some ways, and there are probably interactions between all of these species, but, at the same time, there's a whole lot more going on than just that.

We're seeing climate change and water temperatures change, and fish distributions are changing, and we've had anomalous levels of red tide and a whole host of other things going on, and so it's

just not really clear, and you need to be careful before you make a decision that, well, a stock can't rebuild, because, I mean, I sat, twenty-five years ago, in the Gulf of Mexico and listened to people argue that red snapper could never be rebuilt, and it could never reappear down the coast of Florida, because everything is different now, and the data is all wrong, and it turns out that it could be rebuilt, and they could reappear down the west coast of Florida, and so you have to be really careful with all of these kinds of things, but no one is questioning the fact that, as we rebuild stocks from very low levels, it likely has impacts on other species. We're just not able to quantify or identify exactly what those are, and that's really the crux of trying to get into multispecies assessments and more of an ecosystem approach to things, so that we can better understand how changes in one species affect changes in other species.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: No, and I agree completely. In no way, shape, or form am I blaming our decision to close the red snapper season on causing all of this, but I do think it is a significant factor in what we have to consider, and it seems like we talk around everything but decisions that we've made as a council, and so I just wanted to bring that to the forefront, that I do think that is a significant problem, that they are eating a lot of what's down there now, and I think they are affecting the recruitment.

We saw black sea bass come back pretty good when they were protected, or the limits were decreased and the size limit increased, but now, at least on the Georgia coast, we're seeing a significant decrease in these in the past five to six years. It seems like, as certain species are getting more, we're getting less of others, and it's a balancing act. I mean, it's impossible to balance them all, and we don't manage in a vacuum, and I understand that completely.

DR. CRABTREE: That's fair enough, and I don't argue at all that rebuilding red snapper has impacts. In this particular case though, I think there are differences in where red porgy occur and where the maximum abundance and the real changes in red snapper have occurred, and so it's hard for me to say that this is really being driven by red snapper, because I think it's lot more complicated than that, but I think you make a fair point, and it is something that we need to consider.

DR. CHRISTIANSEN: Thank you. That's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you. I guess I just wanted to make a plea to get back on the task at hand. We have an options paper, and the goal is to figure out if there are other options to add to this. As you saw from the schedule, this is going to be probably an eighteen-month project, working out how we respond and how we address this rebuilding issue within red porgy, and so I think are there other rebuilding alternatives that anybody would like to put on the table?

If not, I think we probably need to move on. We had a lot of discussions about the state of this stock when we did the stock assessment, and I think we'll have a lot more, and I think we have a research question before us to look at some of these species that are experiencing bad recruitment, versus some that are experiencing good, and try to figure out what the underlying causes are, but that's going to take a lot more than we can accomplish here today.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. Myra, I am going to turn it back to you to keep moving through the document.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I guess my understanding is that you're okay with the five options that we have fleshed out for you all to bring these back to you in December with whatever analyses we can come up with by then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: They look good to me.

MS. BROUWER: Action 2 would revise the ACL and OY for red porgy, and so obviously we need new ACLs, since the SSC recommended new OFL and ABC values that are below the current ABC. One question that we felt that we needed to put out there is does the council wish to modify the OY separately from the ACL, and the council, at least for snapper grouper species, has been specifying OY at the same level as the ACL and the ABC for most of their snapper grouper species, and so just a reminder that NS 1 Guidelines state that, although a council can estimate an annual OY, it must establish a long-term OY, but, again, this is going to be a lengthy conversation, and so I'm just making sure that you're aware of that.

I have already mentioned that OFL and ABC recommendations are for landed catch, as discards are considered in the assessment, and other things to think about are how do you want to specify the sector ACLs, and you have done it in both pounds and numbers of fish for other stocks. Right now, for red porgy, both commercial and recreational ACLs are specified in pounds whole weight, and the trip limit for the commercial sector, however, is specified in numbers of fish, but, typically, it's reported as pounds of fish. The recreational bag limit is specified in numbers of fish and reported in numbers and pounds of fish, and then the projections from the SEDAR assessment include both numbers and pounds of fish.

Just, moving on with landings, like a summary of where we are, for the commercial sector in the South Atlantic, catches have averaged 81.7 percent of the commercial ACL from 2014 through 2019, and in-season closures for that sector have not occurred since 2013, and you see the numbers there on Table 2 with the percent of the ACL that's been landed in each of those years, noting that 2019 landings are still preliminary, and these are numbers that were pulled back in July.

On the recreational side, landings have averaged 64.5 percent of the recreational ACL during that same time period, and that's shown on the screen in Table 3. We also included the corresponding proportional standard errors, and, again, the percentage of the ACLs that were landed each of those years, and you can see there was an overage here in 2016, and we have some notes here that the dataset includes headboat landings, and estimates from 2014 through 2017 are based on that Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates, and 2018 and 2019 estimates are calculated from the current MRIP FES survey.

Then we have a figure, basically just a visual, showing you commercial and recreational landings by year from 1986 through 2019, and so commercial landings are in black, and recreational landings are -- The red ones are the new ones with the FES estimates, and the blue-dashed line shows the MRIP with the CHTS estimates. This does include headboat information.

Here are your options for developing a range of alternatives for this action. The current ACL and OY for red porgy are equal to the ABC, and that's 328,000 pounds whole weight. Option 2 is to

revise the catch levels and make them equal to the updated ABC, based on the results of the latest stock assessment, and that takes you through 2026, and that ACL would remain in place until modified. You can see what that would be in pounds whole weight and the numbers of fish for each of those years, and I have put a star next to 2021, because it's most likely that management will not be implemented until 2022.

Option 3 would revise that ACL and OY and set that equal to 90 percent of the updated ABC, and, typically, you have considered different buffers when you're setting ACLs, and so we have included Option 3, which is 90 percent, and then Option 4, which would be ACL equal to 80 percent of the updated ABC, again setting those fishing levels through 2026. Again, here is just some guidance as to whether these four options are sufficient to bring back to you in December or if you would like to see additional options developed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, do we also need to resolve the whole pounds or numbers of fish?

MS. BROUWER: I don't think you need to resolve that now. It's something to keep in mind, and you have done it -- You have certain stocks, like mutton snapper and some other ones, where you have decided to specify the recreational ACL in numbers of fish, and so we just wanted to make sure that is an option that you have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that explanation. I thought that the range of alternatives looked good, but I don't know if anybody else has anything to add here.

MS. BROUWER: I am not seeing any hands up. Okay. Here we come to allocations. As we talked about this morning, allocations is something you're going to have to think about, and they need to be revised, since the landings stream changed in this new assessment to include the new Fishing Effort Survey estimates, and so, as we heard about this morning, also, the allocations for red porgy were implemented through Amendment 15B, and, at that time, the council wanted to maintain the allocations similar, or closest, to status quo at that time.

The allocations looked at landings from 2001 through 2003, and that put the allocation at 51 percent recreational and 49 percent commercial, and so the council, at that time, decided to just go ahead and set the allocation at 50/50, acknowledging that, if they were to allocate more to the commercial sector, they were going to have to take into account greater discard mortality, since that catch comes from deeper water. Other things are for red porgy, of course, the current allocation formula that the council has been using for other stocks is not applied. However, you could potentially apply that formula to red porgy, and that has been mainly used for unassessed snapper grouper species.

Here are just the options that we have currently. Option 1 is to keep the allocation at 50 percent commercial and 50 percent recreational. Option 2 is to go ahead and apply that allocation formula, which, as you heard this morning, would be the mean landings from 2006 through 2008, half of that, and then the other half would be mean landings from 1986 through 2008, and, if you apply that, the commercial allocation would go up to 51.43 percent, and the recreational allocation would go down a little bit, to 48.57, and it's still pretty close to that 50/50 anyway. Then, just because it could potentially be within the range of alternatives, we threw in Option 3, which would be to remove the sector allocations and manage under a total ACL. Again, I will pause here for suggestions or questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Myra, I guess this is not really for you, but I was wondering if this is one of the assessments where a change in the allocation is going to result in a change in the model output. Thanks.

MS. BROUWER: I am going to look to somebody from the Science Center, or Mike E., to answer that question.

DR. ERRIGO: I can take a crack at it. Due to the fact that the commercial sector is catching fish in a different area than the recreational sector, in deeper water, then, therefore, there would be a higher discard mortality rate, and that might have an effect on the model outputs. However, the differences between the current sector allocations and the newly-calculated sector allocations are so small that it may not matter.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you. I just wanted to get that out there, and we'll keep that in mind as we move through it. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Anything else about these three options? Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: I just had a question, Myra. The Option 2 allocations are pretty similar to what they are now, and those are based on using the FES data, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and I believe that's the case.

DR. MCGOVERN: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I did want to mention that Clay had earlier been talking about realized allocation versus the theoretical allocations that are developed through these amendments. The realized are based on the catch rates that are observed, and so, with the commercial fishery pretty much getting to the ACL, that leads to an F rate related to the population size, and then the recreational side has not been getting to their ACL, and, therefore, they're not getting that full allotment of the allocation, and the realized ACL that they would be projecting forward is based on that historical catch and not necessarily the true allocation. Does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am not sure.

DR. COLLIER: It's based on the F rates and the catch that is associated with the F rates and not necessarily the allocation levels.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else here? Anything we want to add, or any more questions about the allocation? Otherwise, Myra, I assume we're good with these three options.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on then to revising the recreational ACT, again, here, the recreational annual catch target was based on the previous ACL values, and it's going to now

exceed the SSC's recommended ABC for this stock, and so we need to fix that. The ACT formula was established and implemented through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment. Also, a reminder that recreational ACTs are currently not used to trigger regulatory action in the South Atlantic, and so here are your options.

The ACT for red porgy currently is 117,555 pounds whole weight, and it was determined using the existing formula, which is ACT equals recreational ACL times one minus the mean PSE averaged over the previous five years. Option 2 would revise the ACT based on whatever recreational ACL is selected, and we would update that with the corresponding PSEs for 2015 through 2019, and then Option 3 would be to remove the existing ACT and not specify a new one for red porgy, and that one was included, as I said, because ACTs, so far in the South Atlantic, have not been utilized to trigger any kind of management action. I will pause, and I believe Roy has his hand up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Roy, go ahead.

DR. CRABTREE: It seems, to me, since we're not using the recreational ACT, there is really no point in having it, and so I don't know, Myra, if we could just take this action out or if we need to keep something in there to take the ACT off the books.

MS. BROUWER: That's a good question, Roy, because I don't believe that ACTs are codified, and so I'm not sure if we need an action to remove the current one or not.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay. Well, maybe we'll figure that out, Myra, but, unless somebody has some reason why they want to have an ACT and there's something we're going to do with it -- Based on how we manage it now, we don't use it, and so it seems to me that we would better off not to have it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, Roy, and I don't know if we even need this action and to remove it or not. I see Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just trying to understand it better, and I think Roy helped a little bit, and so I was just wondering -- We don't use ACTs because we just don't, or we aren't allowed to, and it sounds like we're allowed to, and we have one there, but we have -- But, if we're not going to use it, what's the utility of having this in there?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It doesn't trigger any regulatory action.

MR. BELL: Right, and so what good is it, I guess?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve.

MR. POLAND: I agree, and I think we need to take the ACTs out. We've had that discussion for a few other species in the past, and I can't remember off the top of my head, but the council kind of agreed that there's -- We haven't been using them, and there's really no need for us to have them, and so I'm fine taking the ACTs away for red porgy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: Use of the ACTs we also discussed when we were thinking about optimum yield definitions to differentiate between recreational fisheries that might be looking for sort of a higher abundance, rather than catch, and so like, when we talked about it in dolphin, we talked about potentially setting the ACT to 50 percent and tying that to the definition of optimum yield, and so where the meeting the ACT, as related to optimum yield, would show the recreational fishery's interest in having a high level of abundance, rather than focusing on catch. That would be the reason to use ACTs, but probably it's not particularly appropriate for red porgy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Then, Myra, I assume you'll figure out whether we need this action or not. Otherwise, I don't see any hands. Wait. Here comes Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think we definitely need to leave the action in, regardless of what we do with the ACT. We set an ACT, and it's out there in the regulatory ethos somewhere, and, if we need to remove it, then we need to go through the process and do so formally, I guess. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. All right. So the action stays in, and I'm going to turn it back to you, Myra, for Action 5.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. Moving on then to Action 5, this is where it gets a little complicated. It looks like you're going to have to think about modifying management measures, since the revised catch level recommendations are less than previous catch levels, and so what I've done here is basically just summarized what is currently in place, and we'll go through bullets of things that you may want to consider when you're thinking about how you want to modify management for red porgy.

Currently, the commercial regulations are a fourteen-inch minimum size limit and a trip limit of sixty fish from January 1 through April 30, and that regulation just went into place back in February, as a result of implementing the visioning amendment, Regulatory Amendment 27. Then, for the remainder of the year, you have a trip limit of 120 fish, and so from May through December.

You also chose to split the commercial season, as far as the ACL was concerned, and so you allocated the commercial ACL to 30 percent from January through April and 70 percent from May through December, and, again, you don't have carryover between seasons, and you also chose to remove the sale and purchase prohibition and the possession limit of three per person per day, or per trip, that is currently in place from January through April and retain the commercial trip limit from May through December. On the recreational side, again, a fourteen-inch size limit and three fish per person per day, or three per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

The total commercial hook-and-line discard mortality estimate that was used in SEDAR 60, and I thought that might be useful information for you guys to have, ranged from 45 percent to 64 percent, and the proposed midpoint value was 53. On the recreational hook-and-line discard mortality, that ranged from 27 to 53 percent, with a midpoint value of 41.

Other information that might be useful when considering new management measures is that red porgy are protogynous, with transition from female to male occurring between thirteen and fifteen inches in the South Atlantic, and this is based on fishery-independent data collected from 2012

through 2016. Red porgy are winter spawners, with the peak of the spawning season being January through March.

Here, we don't have any options for you. My recommendation would be that we see what the Snapper Grouper AP could potentially come up with, and, based on that feedback and whatever you guys can think of for December, or now, if you have any ideas, and we can bring that back to you in December, and I will pause for questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. I definitely would like to hear what the AP has to say about this, but it definitely appears that we need to do something like reduce the recreational bag limit, and possibly establish a closed season, and maybe reduce the commercial vessel limit, and I don't know, but I would like to hear what the AP has to say. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I did want to speak to the commercial management measures for just a minute. We just got this implemented, and so I really wouldn't be in favor of really changing any commercial measures right now, and I think it's working well, and I think it's going to work well.

Currently, right now, the three species that we were concerned with when we tried to split that season and allow some wintertime catch of it, it was because of the triggerfish and the vermilion snapper, which we are going to encounter the red porgy along with, and maybe this year is a little bit different, but, currently, right now, going into this late in the season, we have only caught 41 percent of the vermilion, 40 percent of the red porgy, and 41 percent of the gray trigger, and so it sounds like we've kind of gotten these aligned with what we had intended to do all along, and so, as far as the commercial goes, I think we just need to leave it alone and see how we come out after a year or two. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Others have other thoughts or comments or questions here? I don't see any other hands. What do you need, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: Well, right now, Jessica, I think just basically, as I said, just guidance of what you guys want us to bring back in December, and so it sounds like you would like the AP to provide their feedback on this amendment, and so I'm happy to put that on their agenda for November and bring their recommendations back to you in December, and we'll do whatever analyses we're able to do for December and go from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks. Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Thank you. Yes, and consulting the AP definitely makes sense, and I was going to ask about that, and would you envision kind of giving them a similar presentation, or can we pose some very direct questions to them, so we can get feedback that we need on certain things and kind of focus them a little bit on responding to specific questions, and then, of course, they can provide any input they would like, but I'm just trying to maximize the benefit from their input towards helping us make decisions pretty quickly.

MS. BROUWER: Mel, that sounds like a really good suggestion. Oftentimes, they get kind of bombarded with a lot of information, and it would definitely be a more focused and productive discussion if they had questions to respond to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel, did you have some questions in mind?

MR. BELL: Not anything specific right now, but I just thought that would be a more productive approach with them, perhaps, and we could look at this and draw them from what we were just presented, but we can take some time and give that some thought or something, but I just think we would get a better product if we could kind of focus them a little.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You mean on the management measures here?

MR. BELL: Yes, exactly. Sometimes you kind of make one of these presentations, and it's sort of broad, and then they will kind of -- You will get all sorts of input, or all sorts of discussion, and we just want to optimize their time together thinking about this and providing us with some specific feedback, if we could present them with some direct questions related to things that we really want their input on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would like to see some input on what they think about reducing the recreational bag limit and if they think we should have some sort of closed season for spawning, or something of that nature, because I think that, in the last fishery performance report, that the AP thought that the fishery was improving, and so I feel like we're going to have to ask specific questions here of what we would like for them to look at, since they thought the fishery was doing better. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Jessica, that's my recollection, and that's also what I hear at my house, that the vision out there is that it's, specifically to red porgy, improving. Myra, is it too much to ask, between now and when they meet, on you all's shoulders, if you were able to take the three options for the revised -- What we're looking at for the revised ACLs, and, obviously, do the math and figure out what the commercial landings, commercial ACL, would be under each of those and then show, based on historical data, when those would be met, so that the AP can at least look at, doing nothing else, here is when you would be shut down, and then let the AP sort of get creative with how they think they can stretch whatever pounds they are going to be allotted.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, Kerry, and absolutely. I think we can pull that together for them, and what I was thinking, in terms of questions, as Mel suggested, of course, is we could simply ask them is there a range of trip limits that might work, or what's the range of bag limits that you would suggest, and, that, way, you kind of would have at least some bookends to go with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's a great idea, Myra, having a range. I also like what Kerry suggested. Mel and then back to Kerry.

MR. BELL: Just an observation that it's interesting that it's not a very pretty assessment, and we've got some challenges here, but it may be that the perception, at least with some folks, is that things are improving, and so I guess they're really going to have to understand that the assessment is the results, and it's interesting that they might have some different opinions as to what's going on out there, but this is what we're dealing with, and we're going to have to respond to it, and so that's just something that I guess will be a challenge as we kind of engage the community on this.

MS. MARHEFKA: Mel, that's called reliving 1998 all over again, and I, for one, am not looking forward to it, but what I was going to say, aside from that, is that, Myra, can you remind me, back the last time we had the really bad assessment, when we did -- Was it Amendment 13, and I can't remember, and for red porgy, but what was the lowest commercial trip limit that we ended up with? I am just curious.

MS. BROUWER: My recollection is it may have been fifty or seventy-five, and I would have to look that up, and I know it wasn't that long ago that I came across it, but I can't recollect for sure, but it was -- I think it may have been Amendment 13C in 2006.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more comments on this? Anything else that you need from the committee, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: No, and I think I'm good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. So then do we need to look at the items for the Snapper Grouper AP as a whole and see if they need modification?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and so let me bring up -- In your overview, I included a little table with some options for items that we could put on their agenda for November, and so let me quickly bring that up. On your screen is the table that's in your overview, and so recall that the AP's meeting for the spring had to be cancelled, and, on the left column of the table, you have the topics that they were going to be addressing.

They were going to do a fishery performance report for gag and one for snowy, and they were going to look at recommendations to assist in evaluating the need for conservation and management for eight snapper grouper species that have been recommended for ecosystem component status by the SSC, and Regulatory Amendment 34 is done also.

The reason I have crossed out the FPR for gag is because they are taking that up next week, and they're going to have a special webinar just to do that in time for the stock assessment that is going to be underway, and there is no time to -- There was no time to do one for snowy, and that assessment is underway, and so it was too late to develop the FPR, and what we did is just ask the analysts if there was anything in particular they needed feedback on, and they replied that they did not.

As far as additional topics to consider for November, they would be scheduled to do an FPR for red snapper, to inform that assessment that is coming up, and recommendations on management measures for red porgy, and that's already on the list. We could ask them to look at recommendations on management measures for greater amberjack, but I realize that we're behind on that, and you haven't even seen an options paper for that amendment, but you did get the results of the assessment on that already.

Yellowtail is another one that there's going to be a joint SSC meeting on September 30 to make the ABC recommendation for that stock, and so you could potentially go to the AP and ask them for management measure recommendations for yellowtail, if we are ready to do that.

Other things that I thought you might want to consider, and I realize that some of these things have not been discussed, but there was if you had wanted to get input on the carryover or any changes to recreational accountability measures, and that's also coming up, and allocations and unassessed species, and any other items that you may want to put on their agenda. They are meeting November 4 through 6, via webinar, and so they're going to have two full days to discuss things that you want them to discuss, and I will pause here and let you talk about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, Myra, I have a couple of questions, while we wait for others to raise their hands, and I am trying to figure out, based on the timing of say the SSC meeting and others, is the yellowtail -- Should they be making recommendations on yellowtail, or should the council see that first, or Amendment 46, and I thought that the council was going to consider having a whole webinar on recreational items, and then maybe we go to the AP, and so the AP meets again in March or April, and I can't remember, but when is their next meeting?

MS. BROUWER: We haven't yet scheduled their spring meeting, and they normally meet before grouper opens, and so sometime in mid to late April, is when I usually schedule that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just trying to figure out if some of the items were premature, or is it better that they talk about them now, and I'm just not sure, but let me go to Spud, and he has his hand up.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Myra, I would like to get some feedback on implementation of Amendment 29 from the AP, if possible, just to -- Their experiences with obtaining and using descending devices and their colleagues and contemporaries and how available have they been and how many folks have been inventing their own and applying them, but just a general body of feedback on that I think would be useful to the council.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Spud. That's a great idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Steve.

MR. POLAND: I like Spud's idea, but I wanted to say that I agree with you on Amendment 46, and it might be better to hold off until their spring meeting, because there's a lot of us on the council that were not on the council the last time Amendment 46 was discussed, and that was kind of the reason why we were going to have that special recreational meeting and we were going to kind of get everybody up to speed on that and a few of the other recreational issues that have been on the back-burner, and so potentially, you know, there might be some changes to that, and so I think it probably would be premature to have them discuss it in November.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve, do you feel the same way about the recreational accountability measures? Does that need to come off this list as well?

MR. POLAND: Yes, I would say so, for the same reasons. I mean, we're going to be discussing that in November as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess we don't need the input on the carryover ER request, since we're not necessarily moving forward with that, and so then, Myra, remind me of the timing on the yellowtail

assessment, now that the joint SSC is meeting in a couple of weeks, and so the council will look at this again for the first time in December or March? I can't remember the new timing.

MS. BROUWER: I would assume it's going to be on your agenda for December. The SSCs are making that recommendation, hopefully, on September 30, and so I agree that it may be premature to go to the AP before the council has had a chance to discuss some of these things, but I was just sort of at a loss for what to put on your list, since the timing has just been so unusual lately.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am not sure what others think about that, but I think it's a little bit premature on yellowtail. The other thing that we could do is we could come back to this list when we get to Full Council, after the Executive Committee has met and looked at all the priorities. We could come back to this list when we do the committee report, and I guess that's another option here.

MS. BROUWER: That would be fine. I just want to give the committee a chance to make sure they've had input on the items that go on the agenda, and the Snapper Grouper AP, luckily, gets very creative with ideas for things they want to discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's an understatement.

MS. BROUWER: There will not be a lack of topics for their agenda, but that would be fine, if you would like to just come back to this, and I will clean up this table and put it in the committee report, and then you can have more discussion then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds great, and I don't see any more hands right this second.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Sounds good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra, do you think that this concludes everything that we have for the Snapper Grouper Committee?

MS. BROUWER: I believe so.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Then let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break, and, when we come back, we'll be going to the SEDAR Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 15, 2020.)

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Amanda Thomas
11/4/2020

SAFMC September Council Meeting

Attendee Report: (9/14/20 - 9/17/20)

Report Generated:

09/16/2020 07:39 AM EDT

Webinar ID

340-892-107

Actual Start Date/Time

09/15/2020 08:25 AM EDT

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00Sanchez	00John
Aukemam	Trip
Auriemma	Michael
BYRD	01JULIA
Bailey	Adam
Barbieri	Luiz
Bauer	Tracey
Beckwith	00Anna
Belcher	00Carolyn
Bell	00Mel
Bianchi	Alan
Bonura	Vincent
Brame	Richen
Brooks	James
Brouwer	01Myra
Bubley	Walter
Burgess	Erika
Carmichael	01John
Chaya	01Cindy
Cheshire	Rob
Chevront	01Brian
Clarke	Lora
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Corey	Morgan
Coutre	Karson
Cox	Jack
Cox	Derek
Dalton Harrison	BeBe
DeVictor	00Rick
Defilippi Simpson	Julie
DiLernia	Tony
Dixon	Michael
Dover	Miles
Dunn	Russell
Errigo	01Michael

Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
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Flowers	Jared
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Frens	Kathryn
Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Gentry	Lauren
Glasgow	Dawn
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Goodhue	David
Gordan	Alexander
Gore	Karla
Grimes	00 Shepherd
Griner	00Tim
Guyas	Martha
Hadley	01John
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Hawes	Rachel
Haymans	00 Doug
Heffernan	Katie
Helies	02Frank
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Hudson	Rusty
Iberle	01Allie
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Jepson	Michael
Johnson	Alison
Keener	Paula
Kittle	Christine
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LARKIN	Michael
LEWIS	SAVANNAH
LaMarre	Brian
LaVine	Britni
Laks	Ira
Lam	Elliott
Laney	Wilson
Long	Stephen
Lundgren	Ian
Mahoney	Andrew
Marhefka	00Kerry
McCawley	00-Jessica

McCoy	Sherylanne
McGovern	00Jack
Mckinley	Randy
Mehta	Nikhil
Merrifield	Jeanna
Morrison	Wendy
Murphey	Steve
Nee	Shannon
Neer	Julie
Nesslage	Genny
Norris	Kathryn
O'Cain	Elijah
Phillips	Charlie
Pieper	Nicholas
Poland	00Stephen
Porch	00Clay
Pugliese	01Roger
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Reichert	Marcel
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Rhodes	01Cameron
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Sinkus	Wiley
Smart	Tracey
Smit-Brunello	00Monica
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Spurgin	Kali
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Surrency	Ron
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