

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**The Beaufort Hotel
Beaufort, North Carolina**

December 6-8, 2021

Transcript

Snapper Grouper Committee

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Dr. Clay Porch
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Additional attendees and participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Monday, December 6, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going in the Snapper Grouper Committee. The committee members are the entire council, and so everybody is on the committee. We're going to go in order at first, and then we're going to start switching it up, because some of the folks are not ready for some of their presentations. We don't have everybody here, and so the first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. By the way, this is the revised agenda. Are there any changes to the Snapper Grouper Committee agenda? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I would like to propose, if it's okay with everyone, that the issue paper on blueline tile be moved to the Snapper Grouper agenda, if it can fit at the end or wherever is good for everybody.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, and I think we might actually take that up after we do a couple of administrative matters here. We might just jump right into that, if that's okay with you, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: That would be great. I appreciate it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other changes to the agenda? As mentioned, we're going to do some reordering here in just a minute, and so the same items, plus blueline tile, but then we're going to reorder them for this afternoon. Any objections to the modified agenda? Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

The next order of business is Approval of the September 2021 Minutes. Any changes to the minutes? Any objection to approval of the minutes? Seeing none, the minutes are approved, and so now we're going to jump into blueline tilefish, and then, depending on the remainder of the time and the will of our chairman here, I think we'll then go into updates of South Atlantic Red Snapper Count and Greater Amberjack Count and then possibly an Other Business item on the Fort Pierce Artificial Reef. Mike, are we turning this over to -- Well, first, can you tell us where this paper is located?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The blueline tilefish paper is in the late materials, and I am going to be passing the mic over to Rick DeVictor, and he's going to be walking us through this.

MR. DEVICTOR: I put it together, and thanks to Dewey, and he found there are some mistakes in one of the tables, and so that's why it's in late materials with those corrected values. If you recall, you all have been talking about blueline tilefish this year. At this past meeting, in June, we provided, SERO provided, a presentation, based on a request of the council, of the list of stocks that exceeded their 2020 ACLs, commercial and recreational, and the effect on AMs, and I think, at that time, that's when blueline tilefish came up, and we started to look at that further, and then the council talked about it under Other Business in September, at the Snapper Grouper Committee.

You acknowledged the overages of the recreational sector ACL, and, at that time, in your report, you said the reconsider of the AM may be useful to constrain harvest to the ACL, and you also

noted that consideration of changes to the AM could be added to the golden tilefish amendment that you had just started. Then, at that point, you said the council and SERO staff would put together a short summary to address buffers and AMs.

That's what you have in your briefing materials here that I will walk through, the blueline tilefish issues paper, the updated version, and so that is a little background on why we're going over blueline tilefish, and so I put in there that the topic is to contain a broad overview of the science, which is the stock assessments, the management, all the amendments that have been going on with blueline tilefish, landings and status determination criteria of blueline tilefish, to help address the issue of overages of the ACLs.

The issue is, in the last six years, landings of blueline tilefish in the South Atlantic region have often exceeded the sector and total ACL, and, as you talked about at the last meeting in September, the National Standard Guidelines contain the following language: If the catch exceeds the ACL for a given stock, or stock complex, more than once in the last four years, the system of ACLs and AMs should be reevaluated and modified if necessary to improve its performance and effectiveness.

Just to give a little background, and I won't go through step-by-step, but I've tried to give a little bit of timeline, because there has been quite a history with blueline tilefish since 2013. There has been two assessments and five amendments, basically, and the two assessments are SEDAR 32, which was completed in 2013, which indicated that blueline tilefish was undergoing overfishing and overfished, and then SEDAR 50 was completed in 2017, and that said not undergoing overfished. Of course, a large part of that was based upon the action that the council took through Amendment 32 to end overfishing. I would point out that there is an operational assessment that is scheduled for 2026.

That's what that timeline goes through, in terms of the stock assessments, and then I noted the amendments, and there has been one plan amendment, three frameworks, and one abbreviated framework since 2013, and a lot of those actions responded to those two assessments that I went over. The last action you took, of course, and that's on page 2, is Abbreviated Framework 3, which, in August of 2020, increased the ACL, based on the latest assessment. That also goes through the buffers, because you did talk about the buffers in September also, and there was the buffers between ABC and ACL, and those have changed through the years, also.

Moving ahead, and this is page 3, and here is where I just laid out some basic information again, and this paper is just to tee-up the discussion and where the council may want to move in the future, and so I provided the OFL, ABC, ACL, and the landings information, and, again, this landings information was all found on SERO's website.

Just starting off with the first table, with the OFL and the ABC and the ACL, 2016, 2017, and 2018 and 2019, you can see the OFL is 226,500. Again, those were all put in place through Amendment 32, which was March of 2015, and then it was updated in 2020, through Abbreviated Framework 3, and so that's where you had the increase, based on the latest stock assessment, and then you can see what the ABCs were and then the total ACL, and then you had designated the allocations as 50.07 commercial and 49.93 recreational, and so you can see how that comes out to be with the commercial ACL and the recreational ACL.

That kind of sets up -- That's your OFL and ABC and total ACL. Then in the next table are the landings, and so you have your total landings, and then you can see what percent of the OFL that has been, what percent of the ABC, and what percent of the total ACL. You can see the OFL is exceeded in 2016 and 2017 and then again in 2020, and you can see the percent with ABC and the percent with the total ACL.

Now, blueline tilefish is not undergoing overfishing and not overfished, the question may be why didn't the council send a letter in 2017 stating that blueline tilefish is undergoing overfishing, and, if you recall, for your snapper grouper species, you say in the assessment year that you use the F rate in comparison to the MFMT, and that's how you determine when it's undergoing overfishing. In non-assessment years, you compare landings to the OFL, and so, in 2017, we did exceed the OFL, but you got the results of the stock assessment that said not undergoing overfishing and not overfished, and so that's why we didn't send the letter in 2017, and you can see that you were below the OFL in 2018, at 93 percent. 2019 was 91 percent, and then you have exceeded the OFL in 2020, and we are working on a letter stating that blueline tilefish is undergoing overfishing, because landings have exceeded the OFL in 2020.

You can see the percent ABC and where the percent with the total ACL has been, and then I looked into it a bit further, and I wanted to look at the overages of the commercial ACL and the recreational ACL, and so you can see that we have gone over, for most years, the commercial ACL, but it hasn't been by a whole bunch. It has been, you can see in the beginning, 14 percent, and then some years as small as 0.04, and we have had closures every year. Some were in August, and some were in July, and some were in June for the commercial sector. There, you can see, in that table, what the landings have been compared to the commercial ACL.

Then it's the recreational ACL and the landings, and, of course, those overages have been greater than the commercial, and you can see where they have been as much as 335 percent in 2020, and I just want to point out 2021, and those are preliminary Wave 1 through 4 MRIP landings.

Moving ahead to -- I wanted to look into the PSEs on page 4 and where those have been, and so I have those, and those have been in the 30s and 40s and as high as 58.3 in 2020, and, of course, those are just MRIP landings, and they do not include the headboat survey landings. Then the next table looks at by wave, and Dewey can speak to this, and speak about the fishery up there, where landings are generally higher in Wave 4 compared to Wave 3, and so you can see that comparison in that table. Again, recreational, it's a four-month season.

Moving on to the regulations that are in place, right now, there's a split season, and so it's January through April, and that's a hundred-pound gutted weight trip limit, and then a May through December season, and that's a 300-pound trip limit, and that was put into place in February of 2020, through Regulatory Amendment 27, where you talked about, in the amendment, how the hundred-pound trip limit would help reduce snowy grouper discards and then the 300 pound, switching to that in May, would help people up north catch more fish later in the year.

The recreational sector, as I said, that's a four-month season, May through August, and that was established in 2015 through Amendment 32, the four-month season, and the bag limit has changed over time, but, right now, it's at three fish per person per day, and that was put in place in August of 2016, through Framework 25, and so those are your measures.

Then, looking at the AMs, these are AMs that we have in place for most of our snapper grouper species, where it's tied to the overfished status, the post-season, and the total ACL would have to be exceeded, and so there's an in-season closure for both commercial and recreational, and, of course, that's part of the challenge there, where you have a four-month season and you have this in-season AM, which you have talked about with snowy grouper and recently with red porgy.

As far as the post-season, the recreational sector, again, it's tied to -- It has to be overfished, which it isn't now, and the total ACL has to be exceeded, which the total has been exceeded. You reduce the length of the recreational season, and you reduce the recreational catch limit by the overage, and so, again, the challenges are there that we have that, again, that you've talked about with snowy and with red porgy, with those short seasons, and what do you do with that, and I think that's part of it.

You can certainly look at -- If you wanted to consider changing the AM to track what the preferred alternative now is for red porgy, where you took away the in-season and you just reduce the length of the following season, without tying it to stock status, and that could be something that you look into more.

The bottom of page 5, that's just the verbatim AMs, and I just put this at the end, the possible ways to ensure that landings are below the ACLs, and there is just a laundry list of possible things that you can look at, and one thing, of course, that I mentioned are the AMs. Hopefully that covers as to what you were looking for when you talked about this in September, just kind of teeing-off the discussion, and we can always come back with more information, if you want us to look into anything else. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know if it's questions or comments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right. There will not be another stock assessment for this until 2026, which is really frustrating. This fishery, and these landings, probably over 80 percent of them, come north of Cape Hatteras, in the same area where charter boats fish and the commercial fishing industry fishes, and we watched these landings be constrained on the commercial side, and we haven't watched them be constrained on the recreational side. The problem is there's too many fish.

Management, if you look back in 2014 and 2015 -- It used to be, when Amendment 17B came into place in 2011, and guys had to go fishing, and they went north and went fishing. If you look at 2013 and 2014 and 2015, 2014 and 2015, you had constrained catch, and management started taking place, and so then you look at 2016, and you look at where the catch has been constrained, but yet the stock is still producing. Last year, in North Carolina, they had the most citations that they've ever had, three-hundred-and-seventy-some citations, of blueline tilefish north of Cape Hatteras. This year, they upped it to twelve pounds apiece, and they are having 185 now, and they are still doing processing of the paperwork and everything else.

By your AMs, you're supposed to do something, and you should have already done something in 2016, and, in 2017, you got a pass, because you did a stock assessment, but it was still overfished, and then 2020 comes up, and it's overfished, and they hit the mark there for both the recreational and commercial together, but the frustrating thing is you're supposed to do something to constrain catch, but yet there's a ton of fish out there.

I think that the year-one preliminary, whenever the data is available for the deepwater stock assessment, it's going to show one to one-and-a-half fish per four hooks for this area north of Cape Hatteras where all these blueline tilefish are, and that was after your commercial season and your recreational, to still produce that, and so my frustration, as a fisherman, is why hasn't something been done, and, at the second time, there's a ton of fish out there, yet we've got to wait until 2026 for any stock assessment.

This fishery comes out -- The majority of it comes out of one inlet, and your PSEs are relatively good, and I suspect the 58 percent there has a lot to do with the recreational industry, and so it's like you've got a perfect little fishery here that this council is really having a problem with how to control it and how to do it, and it comes out of one inlet with limited players, three marinas, two parking lots, and that's your fishery, recreationally. Commercial, it's about eight or nine boats, and it has been reduced down from probably twelve or fourteen, when management took over, and so my question and interest in this is it's not only my livelihood, but what is this council going to do?

You've had ample opportunity, and it's past time for some action, but, at the same time, there's a lot of fish there, and is this something to go back to the SSC and say, hey, take another look at this, with all these other things, like year-one of a survey, and even though it's year-one, how about the increased catches and all these other different things, instead of -- We need some relief. The commercial fishing industry in North Carolina, particularly north of Cape Hatteras, deserves -- We need some relief from this council for blueline tilefish, and we deserve for the accountability measures to be the same on both sectors.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica, and thanks, Dewey, for your comments, and Rick for the presentation. I guess a question for maybe John, or even John Carmichael. In the Gulf, we've gone to using interim analyses, and I don't know if blueline has a sufficient index, where we could look at the index of abundance and potentially utilize that, in between assessments, to reevaluate the status of abundance, and catch limit for that matter, for blueline, and so I guess that's comment, or question, number one.

In terms of what Dewey is suggesting, a combination of abundance, but also the accountability measure, I agree that we have done our part at the Fisheries Service, in terms of evaluating landings and determining, obviously, whether or not the catch limit has been exceeded or not, but the accountability measure does not get triggered, because of the overfished determination, right, and so, if this council wants to revise and improve something, it certainly should look at that accountability measure and how that's handled.

It's a lot more difficult though on the recreational side, because you're dealing with a four-month window, and you're dealing with some uncertain data, and so that's kind of the third aspect, or

third prong, to this, is then, if we want to improve the accountability measure, how else can we improve that, beyond just making some regulatory changes, but actually improving the sampling that goes into actually making that estimate more viable.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Before commenting on that, just the next blueline assessment is 2024 and not 2026, at least looking at the Steering Committee report from our meeting in October, but it's still a ways, yes, and so I had the same thought, in thinking about this, as Andy mentioned, about the interim analysis. It's something the Science Center has talked about, and we haven't done one in the South Atlantic, but the general concept behind that is doing just as Dewey described.

You've got a situation, and we know that recreational fisheries respond strongly to abundance, and they're catching a lot of fish, which suggests that there's a lot of fish out there. The commercial fishery is catching the fish, and the survey is showing the fish, and I think that Dewey summed it up, and there's a lot of fish out there, and it's creating a problem, and, unfortunately, in this system we have, we have to sit here and wait until we get the numbers in an assessment that back up what everybody is showing, and the current plan doesn't give us those numbers until an assessment in 2024, and maybe the 2025 fishery, but we've got a problem that's been going on for a couple of years.

It would be nice if some type of interim analysis could be done to give the SSC some other information, so that they could consider reevaluating the catch limits and maybe look at the projections and what the stock was projected to be at and how the fishery is performing and think about the fishery is performing a lot better than projected, and why is that? If there's a lot of fish, we ought to be able to provide those to the fishermen in some way, and it seems to be the struggle we have all the time.

We have fisheries that aren't catching their limits, and we go, oh, great, we're doing a great job, when, in reality, we know that fishery might be in really bad shape, because the fish aren't there. Then, in a fishery that there is lots of fish, and they're catching them, we end up shutting them down in the very time that we should be giving back, but that's the point that I get on my soapbox all the time about the Magnuson and managing to these numbers without having the science to tell you what's really going on in the ocean, and I think an interim may be the only tool that's sort of on our horizon to do that kind of thing, if we can get the Science Center to be able to do it and have some information that they feel like they can do that type of analysis without going through the full assessment process, and that's kind of been the snag that we've had, but I certainly think that's an intriguing idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, and I like both of these comments here about this, and I will use another word called a management procedure, and it's something that I had given a presentation, about a month ago, on for what we're trying to do for bluefin tuna, where you actually manage the stock on an index, and so the interim approach is a bridge to that, and the management procedure is wholly managing on the basis of simply an empirical index, which could be quite effective and might be the path forward for a number of our stocks that are proving somewhat resistant to stock assessments, or for ones for which we don't have assessments, and I think we've got a number of those stocks here, particularly the dolphinfish, where we don't actually have a functional assessment.

Tilefish, that one is really intriguing, because we do have in place a survey that's got two years under its belt, the SADL survey, which I think, from what I am seeing on the numbers there, that's going to be really be a pivotal index to be able to manage these deepwater species, and it might actually bookend some of our shallow-water species, because it gets out as deep as they go. Once that survey gets a few more years under its belt, I think it's going to be the engine that can inform these interim approaches.

Now, as to whether we can apply this in the short-term, SADL, no, because we don't have enough years under it, and it's not in the assessments, but, for blueline, we're still probably a year or two away in developing an interim approach for blueline, based on the information that's in the assessment, and the problem is just that we have two competing objectives and needs, as an analytical team.

One, we've got to knock out as many stock assessments as people want as fast as possible, and so there is this throughput demand, but then, at the same time, there is needs to improve the process and the system, and developing the interim approach takes some development time and research time to be able to do that, and that's where we're constrained to do we want another assessment or do we want to build this process of the interim approach.

I will say that we, as a Center, have taken both approaches, and we're trying to do both, but we can't devote 100 percent to building that interim approach, and we've got a working group that we think is about a year away from being able to do that with our South Atlantic assessments. We're there with a lot of our Gulf ones, and that is actually what's giving the advice for red grouper and a few other species, and we need about another year for blueline, which might mean that we can give some updated information faster than that 2024 assessment, and I think it would just be good to hear the support from the council in these approaches, and I think we're hearing it here, and we're hearing the request, but, again, it's just a compromise between how much time we devote to the status quo assessments versus developing the research process for the interim. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: As Dewey well knows, this stock is a little bit different than most that we manage in the South Atlantic region. This one is managed -- It has the assessment at Cape Hatteras going down to the Gulf, and the Gulf and South Atlantic boundary, at Cape Hatteras, is where it breaks. North of Cape Hatteras, up through the Mid-Atlantic, it is -- At least the recreational side of things, it took a data-limited approach, and north of the North Carolina/Virginia line, there were no reliable estimates of recreational catch in that area, and so this one was an extreme struggle, in order to get an ABC for that area, and so any index of abundance is going to be a bit of a challenge.

Things are changing fast, and I hate that Jack is not here, but some of his dissertation work, when he was working out in Norfolk Canyon -- I mean, they did all kinds of trawls out there and never saw a blueline. I think they saw one blueline tilefish, and he didn't know what it was, which is a stretch for Jack. He knows all kinds of fish, and now it is -- In talking to Steve Ross and some of the research that's being done, it's the fifth-most abundant species out there in Norfolk Canyon, and so things have changed over time, and they have changed quickly, and it's hard to get an assessment that can really determine what's going on for a species that is moving and inhabiting the area pretty quickly like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. John.

DR. WALTER: I will just reiterate that, as we're seeing those kind of environmental changes that we didn't probably predict before, that's where a management procedure approach allows us to give advice, because it says that you adjust your ACL based on an indicator. If your ACL is too low, then your indicator goes up, your index goes up, because it says there is more fish out there, and so you bump up your ACL, and, if that's what goes on with an environmental change, where maybe nature is making more fish, then our index goes up, and our catch should go up commensurately.

What it does, however, from our standard assessment practice, is it's really challenging our assessments, because they need to rely on something being constant over time, and so I think that, as we confront environmental change, we're going to probably need to lean on these kind of empirical approaches to adjust the ACL in a more real-time manner, and so I think that's the process I would like to see us go towards, and it's what we're doing with bluefin tuna and a number of our species on an international front, and I think it's something that, domestically, we could begin to explore. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The interesting thing, talking about stock assessments and all these things is, if you go looking back, and you look at the landings in 2007 and 2008, it's 400,000 or 500,000 pounds, and so the stock, no matter what you all are doing, is out there, and the only thing you all have done is constrain the catch of the fishers, and you put in place a three-fish bag limit in 2014 or 2015, and I'm not exactly sure which one, and you've kept the same bag limit, and so are we supposed to believe that the fish don't grow?

North Carolina just upped the citation to twelve pounds this year, and so, while we talk about stock assessments and all these other things, the stock has grown in the same place, and it hasn't changed or migrated. In 2007 and 2008 -- You're catching the same fish now, in the same area, and you've done nothing but management and a few stock assessments, except constrain the catch of the commercial industry, and so, until you figure out -- Maybe it would be a good thing, is to cut the recreational industry to constrain their catch until one of these different methodologies around the table can figure out or has time to work itself out, to where you have equitable distribution of ACLs on a 50/50 stock.

The six-year average, for the commercial side, is 105 percent of the ACL, and the recreational catch is 188 percent. Andy made mention of MRIP a little bit and the PSEs. Well, you use MRIP for allocation, and you're using MRIP in a stock assessment, and so why isn't it good enough for management, and, if you looked at the 58 percent that came out of -- I'm not even sure what number it was or what year, but it was probably heavily recreational that skewed that.

The charter boats are the ones that are catching the fish, the majority, and they've got good PSEs of around twenty-some percent, and so, while we continue to look at options here, you need to constrain the catch, which has not been done, until they're a 50/50 thing, until you can figure out the different methodologies, but the fish, in 2007 and 2008 -- We're fishing the same places that we were in 2007 and 2008, and it is going to be interesting, with this deepwater survey, to look at

how the patterns of where the recreational industry fishes, because it's closer to an area and burning less fuel, and where the commercial fishes, and you're going to see a difference in sizes a little bit, and you're going to see a little bit -- I made requests earlier, in April, or made some mention about looking at the fishermen size, where, from 2008 to 2015, you had measurements that you got dockside port samples, and to look at the different fishermen's sizes.

These fish are distributed a little bit different, and it depends on who is fishing for them, but we need some fair and equitable distribution here, and, to date, we haven't got it, and so I think a frameworkable item is two meetings, and something could be done to give some fair and equitable relief for the commercial fishing industry in North Carolina, where you have a stock that's a 50/50 split, just about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. I was just curious, and so excuse my naivety on some of this, the processes, but this interim analysis concept -- So you're doing it in the Gulf, and so you've got some sort of process or procedure going on. Would this be a good species to try to go ahead and pilot a process? Since you're already doing it in the Gulf, there must be a process in place now, and is there something that we can take from the Gulf, in the meantime, to try to do this interim analysis right now?

DR. WALTER: The challenge we have -- Well, I will just illustrate the process. What you do is you've got a working stock assessment, and you've got the indices that go into it, and you determine which one of your indices is the most reliable, and you do that by simulation testing it and saying that this one is better than the others, and you look at whether it's got bad residual patterns or fits to it, and so you find out what is your best index, and then you use that in, basically, an algorithm that says, when the index goes up, the ACL goes up. When the index goes down, the ACL goes down.

There's a little bit of tuning parameters on how responsive your ACL is to the index, and sometimes you don't want it to go up and down very dramatically, and you might want to smooth through it, but that's the basic gist of it, and so we're using the NMFS bottom longline survey to adjust the red grouper ACL. In this case, I don't know whether we've got a reliable index for the tilefish in this assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: Because, right now, we only have two years in this index in the South Atlantic.

DR. WALTER: SADL, the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline, survey has only got two years, and it's not in the assessment, because it would have started at the terminal year, I think, of the latest assessment.

MS. MURPHEY: And there is no other assessments out there that -- I guess what were the other datasets, and I apologize for not being familiar with the stock assessment stuff, and I was wondering if there were other indices that we might could use.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Not really for blueline. It's one of the challenges we have in the South Atlantic, is having the indices that cover the stock well enough, with enough reliability to actually

drive the interim analysis in the way that John has described it, where the ACL changes are pretty strongly linked to the index.

We have some indices that give certain age structures of the fish in some cases, some age classes that maybe don't cover the whole thing, and there's been a fair amount of skepticism, I think, in being able to make that leap to really tie things strongly to the index, which is why, as John has described, they've had this working group talking about it and trying to come up a way, but, when we've looked at it for individual stocks, that's been the sticking point, as I understand it, analytically, is having an index that's strong enough.

The longline index in the Gulf has performed well for a lot of species, and through a lot of assessments, but that type of gear does not work the same in the Atlantic as it has worked in the Gulf. It's a different system, with a different environment and different currents and everything else, and so that's been one of the big challenges here in the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thanks, Jessica. I guess a comment on the whole index discussion. Specifically, for that portion of the fishery where a lot of the landings are coming from, as Dewey has talked about, north of Cape Hatteras, there is no index in that region. The only index that was used in the last assessment was for south of Hatteras, and that is the reason why the assessment got divided up, is because we had this portion south of Hatteras that was assessed using an index, and then we had the north of Hatteras portion, where we had to apply the data-limited methods, and that was based on landings trends and biological information, but there was no fishery-dependent nor independent index included for that region.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Trish, did you have your hand up again?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and I guess I was thinking, hoping, that we could maybe try to pursue some sort of pilot interim analysis, but I guess we don't have the data to do it, and so I guess, to ask what Dewey was asking, how difficult would it be to do what would be a framework to try to get some constraint on the recreational fishery, to constrain them to that ACL, or is it something as simple as can we change the AM, to just take out that overfished piece, so that we can at least do a post-season? I know you all have workload, but just trying to kind of figure out a solution to this, this quandary.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think we can do a framework to change things like the bag limits and the seasons, et cetera. The accountability measure might be a little bit tougher. The accountability measures could end up with some very short seasons. I think what we're seeing is the trouble with the existing accountability measure is that it allows for the season to be adjusted in-season, but the season is two waves long, and so, by the time you get the information that you need to adjust it, the season is already closed, and it's the whole thing about that NSA report, or whatever it was, that looked into the timeliness of MRIP estimates, and so that makes the AM a little bit of a challenge.

You could do it post-season, but that could have consequences far greater than potentially some of the things you can do just directly with the framework, like maybe lower the bag limit from three to two or something, which I think is what has sort of been hinted at, and Dewey mentioned the

three several times and alluded to the fish getting bigger. It's a poundage limit, and the fish are getting bigger, and so fewer fish gets you there, and I think that's sort of where Dewey was pointing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I just wanted to give a reminder that it has been brought up, the idea of potentially adjusting the blueline AM, as part of the golden tilefish amendment. That's something that was brought up, I believe it would have been two meetings ago, when that amendment was initiated, and so if that can aid in the discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: I am kind of with Dewey here. I mean, we're hearing loud and clear that we're not going to scientifically get any more data, and we're not going to get anything from the SSC that allows us to do anything different, and that's just not going to happen right now, and so what can we do? Well, we can manage the fish with a formwork, and that's absolutely what we need to do, and we need to do it right now.

I don't know why we're even debating what we can and can't do, but we have to constrain catch, and we have to make both sectors accountable, and that's the thing that we can do, and there's nothing we need to wait on to do that, and so I really think that we need to move forward with a framework to constrain catch and hold the sectors accountable and do it now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris and then Kerry.

MR. CONKLIN: I guess, for the past several years, we've been essentially breaking the law and not doing anything about it, and the only thing I see in the discussions that we're having is that all these numbers are based on the entire South Atlantic and not north of Hatteras. With one year of the NOAA longline survey under our belt, and we have another survey that does a lot more of the South Atlantic, and I am not familiar with the NOAA survey that's only north of Hatteras, but I do know that South Carolina runs a deepwater longline survey, and we've got a bottom longline survey, and we have a number of years under our belt with that, and maybe four, but I know you guys shut it down because you thought that we might catch a cough, but we didn't catch any fish either.

Anyway, I didn't mean that, but then, as far as the in-season closure, yes, but, these post-season AMs we have, they don't do crap about an in-season closure, and it seems like some of our other fisheries, if we overfish in one year, you pay it back the next, but we've got to get constrained without hurting the recreational sector too terrible either, but everybody needs to be held accountable.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: When you were talking about the last assessment and how you had to split it between north of Hatteras and south of Hatteras, north of Hatteras, you said that you used a limited approach, or not you, but a limited approach with the landings, and biological data was used, and

is there a reason why there can't be some sort of interim analysis using the landings and biological data just for north of Hatteras, to look at that situation now? I have a follow-up after that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So a difficulty, and I am not fully in-tune with the interim analyses and what has been used in the past, but one of the difficulties, from what I am understanding of it, is that you would need to have some type of recurring annual input, some type of thing like that, that would be that indicator that you would base your changes to the ACL, to base those on, and I am having difficulty, because I've been trying to think of it, but I am having difficulty coming up with a recurring annual data stream that we would be able to use north of Hatteras that would give an indication of the ACL, because there's just such a paucity of data that we don't really -- We don't really have anything, but that might be something to think on a little bit further.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip and then back to Kerry.

DR. COLLIER: Unfortunately, and to build on that, what they used to estimate landings north of the North Carolina/Virginia line, for the recreational side of things, was this approach called a Delphi approach, because they did not feel confident in the landings that were being estimated through MRIP, and, if you guys remember some of the discussions, the Mid-Atlantic has developed a required reporting for the recreational fishery for this sector, and you got an update on that earlier in the meeting, and so they are currently using that, but that hasn't been tuned in any way to MRIP, and trying to figure out exactly what that means, as far as landings, that could take a few years in itself.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Knowing that we have all admitted there is two issues here, and for the sake of moving on -- I am trying to think of the way to approach this. I want to address the issue we can tackle right now with the overage of the recreational sector, and the reason I feel strongly about doing it is because I worry that we're going to get down the road, and we're going to be looking at allocation, and it's a de facto allocation if there's not equal constraint on both sides.

I will start with making a motion that we add post-season accountability measures for blueline tilefish into the golden tilefish amendment that is already going through, but that was just one of a couple options that I had in my head.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so Mike is getting that on the board, which was to add post-season accountability measures to the golden tilefish amendment. Just to be clear, this is for blueline tile, but we would be adding it -- **Add consideration of changing post-season accountability measures to the golden tilefish amendment.** Is there a second? Second by Mel. It's under discussion. Mel.

MR. BELL: So this would basically be a vehicle of opportunity that's underway. I'm not sure what the timing on that is, but it might be the quickest way to get moving in that direction, I guess and do we have sort of a timeframe for tracking golden?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra is headed up here.

MS. BROUWER: Amendment 52 is scheduled to be approved for scoping at this meeting, and so it would be a good time if you guys wanted to add something new to it, and it would be fine to do that, and it wouldn't really delay anything, that I know of.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was going back and forth between that and possibly a framework to adjust the bag limit, but that feels a little more punitive. It might be faster, but it also feels a little more punitive, when we all kind of agree that maybe it's not an issue, but there has to be some equity here, and so that was my thought process behind that method, because we have to -- Dewey, I'm with you, and, I mean, we have to do something about that, until we figure out how many fish are out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I will speak in support of the motion. **I would recommend maybe making it a little more generic and just asking that we look into adjusting the accountability measures at this point and not being prescriptive about post-season accountability measures.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry is nodding, and she's good with that, and Mike is changing that up a little bit. Any more discussion? Sorry, Dewey. I didn't see your hand.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Just what is this going to do for 2022? I mean, when you look at the caveat, the commercial side doesn't get a chance to overfish, because we're held to our strict standards of our ACL. We don't get a chance to go catch an extra 100,000 pounds over our OFL, and so, basically, this is kicking the can down the road again, until a future time that an action can be done. This has been going on for -- If you look at going over the ACL, I mean, how many years does it take to get an action on something that's been sitting here right in front of you? This fishery up there -- It's not a bycatch fishery, and you do have co-occurring species of stuff there, and so I just see this as, maybe in 2023, we get something that's going to happen, and so what's going to happen -- The trend in the pattern is go over the ACL for six or seven years in a row, a continuation, and the commercial side doesn't get a chance to do that.

One of my last things, and then I will be quiet, is who stands up for the commercial fishing industry? Where's the legal part of this stuff, of going over the OFL, or the ACL, for all these years? It seems like that -- I just am really frustrated, and I don't see that part of here, when you look at the AMs and the way it's written, it doesn't say the council, and it says AA or SERO or different things like, and so how many more years is it going to take for this 50/50? Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. All right. We have a motion on the table, and we're under discussion. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Certainly I appreciate your frustration here, Dewey. If we proceed with a framework action, that potentially could be faster than an amendment, but you're still looking at probably a framework action not being done until the end of this year, and so it's not going to influence this season.

There is nothing right now, based on the accountability measures and how they're written, that can be done to influence this season, as best I can tell, and so you have the option of inserting this into golden tilefish or doing a framework action, or potentially doing both, and so, to me, it makes sense, and we're working on golden tilefish, and let's put the accountability measures for blueline in there, and I would also even encourage expanding this to consider other management options to constrain catch, and we talked about the bag limit, but we could look at changing the season as options as well for constraining harvest. It's up to the council though, and this is the body that would then need to make that decision, in terms of how to proceed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Tim and then Trish.

MR. GRINER: I guess, in my mind then, why would we not pursue the framework, so that this stands on its own, and we can add those accountability measures. We can add whatever alternatives and actions we need to, but would this not just, on the surface, or would it not absolutely be able to move faster, if it was on its own standalone framework, than be tied in with the golden tile, regardless of how far along the golden tile is right now, and we don't know what could come up with the golden tile that could just delay the whole thing, and now we've got blueline tile and something that we can get through, and we can make it happen, but we've got to start it.

It just seems to me that, if we went ahead and started a framework -- Yes, it's still going to take a year, but, if we tie this thing in with something else that is separate from blueline, then you're held hostage again, and so it just seems to me, regardless of how long it's going to take, that we start now with a framework that is a standalone framework that we're going to address blueline tile, and we work on the actions and alternatives that we see fit. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess I am sitting here wondering if we should consider a framework, and we don't have to -- It doesn't have to focus on just the recreational. I mean, the commercial guys have gone over their ACL, and not as much as they have, but, I mean, we could consider, in this framework, bag limits and seasons, as well as trip limits and seasons, and I don't know if there is other options that we haven't thought about that you can do in a framework, and I don't know. Since the discussion has been around Oregon Inlet, is there a way that we can do some sort of pilot at getting at the effort just out of there? If most of the landings are coming from that area, is there a pilot -- I think Tom Roller had mentioned a hail-in and hail-out and record what you're catching, just focused on that Oregon Inlet area, or is that beyond a framework? I am just trying to think of other ideas.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Trish. Chris, and then we're going to go to Chester.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks. I just wanted to ask Dewey, on the record, coming from your point of view, and I know this is your passion, but, in a perfect world, what would we do to fix this, from Dewey?

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I am not here for the perfect world, because we don't live in one, but it's obvious that you've got to constrain catch, and then you work on everything else that everybody else has talked about around the table. This has been going on for years, and it's the same thing

that I have brought up, and I've been bringing it up and bringing it up, and so here's where we're at, and I don't know what else to do, because I started bringing this up in April, on the 15th, when we saw the MRIP numbers for 2020, and we're still going down the road, and so I guess we'll just -- The recs will overfish their ACL again in 2022, and we'll be in the same place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Just to that point, when we have our 2024 stock assessment, those overages are really going to kill us, and we're going to be in the same boat, or even worse off than we think we are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester.

MR. BREWER: I have a question about the motion. Is it the intention of the council, or of the maker of the motion, that this motion would only apply to recreational, or does it apply across-the-board, to both recreational and commercial?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I believe the commercial sector already has accountability measures, in that, when we reach our quota, we're shut down for the season, and so I was implying, I think in this case, for the recreational sector, that does not have the same accountability measures.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Thank you. I cannot support this motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've had some discussion here about a framework action. Do we want to stick with this motion? We haven't voted on it, and do we want to stick with this motion or discuss a framework? Mel and then Tim.

MR. BELL: I think what we're trying to do is we're trying to find the quickest way to a solution that addresses the problem that obviously we have, and so I'm still unclear as to which would be quicker. Andy mentioned maybe starting in both directions or something, but I am still not convinced that the framework would necessarily be quicker than this, and the reason this seemed appealing is because it was already underway and moving, and Tim has got a point that, I mean, you could find yourself held hostage to a different species or something, but I think we're agreed that, okay, what is the -- We need to address it, certainly, and what is the quickest way that we can address it and work it in to get it through, and I'm still not sure which would work out quicker, and I just don't have enough experience with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I missed some of what you were saying, Mel, but I thought I would just clarify how I'm seeing things. So we have the golden tilefish amendment that's already been started, and you could add an action to that. The amendment is already -- The tentative timeline is for that to get approved in December of next year, and so, if you started a whole other framework amendment to do an adjustment to the accountability measure, it would still take about the same amount of time. We would have to create another IPT, and it would be another row in your workplan for a whole other thing that, eventually, you could also -- You know, things start getting added to amendments, once they exist, and so we know how that goes, and so I'm just putting that out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. That was helpful. Tim and then Andy.

MR. GRINER: That was helpful, and that is kind of my issue. I mean, regardless of whether you put this in the golden tile or you make it its own framework, you're going to have to go through that IPT, and you're going to have to go to developing these actions and alternatives, whether it goes into an existing amendment or whether it goes into a standalone amendment.

That time is going to be the same, and so you've got to go ahead and do the legwork to develop the actions and alternatives, but then, as Myra just alluded to, then you go and you stick it in this amendment that is in progress, and you never know what's going to come of it, but, if you do that same legwork, and you're saying that the timeframe is basically going to be the same, but you eliminate anything else that could come up that could hold it hostage or delay it, then you are better off going with a standalone framework, because it's going to take the same amount of time, but you take the risk out of it getting bogged down with something else. If it's okay with everybody else, I don't mind making a substitute motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you ready to make that substitute motion right now? We've got other hands in the queue, and so go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: Absolutely. **I will make a substitute motion that we begin to develop a framework to add accountability measures to a framework amendment for blueline tile.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we have a substitute motion, and I want to just try to clarify here and make sure that Tim heard the same thing that I heard from Myra. It sounds like, whether we do the framework or the adding these items to the golden tilefish amendment, they likely will not be approved until December of 2022, but, if you go the route of starting a brand-new framework action, if you think about our giant priority list, and it's not even on there at all yet, and golden tilefish is already in the queue, already in the priority list, and Myra just said you have to form an entire new IPT and everything else to work on this blueline-specific framework action, and I don't know why we would do that. It seems like it would actually move possibly a little bit faster, because blueline isn't even on the priority schedule yet, and we don't have a space for it, I don't think, until like September of next year. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Then I misunderstood. I thought she was saying that we would -- Regardless, you're going to have to have a new IPT just for this blueline tile portion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, the opposite.

MR. GRINER: Okay. Then I don't think it makes much sense then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I just wanted to make sure, before we got a second to your motion.

MR. GRINER: No, and I hear you loud and clear, and that wasn't clear to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then you want to withdraw that substitute?

MR. GRINER: **Yes, I will withdraw it.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I've got a lot of hands in the queue. I have Andy, Kerry, Chris, and Trish.

MR. STRELCHECK: This action will move as fast as we want it to move, I think is the point that I wanted to make, and so we're going to sit here, on Thursday or Friday, and we're going to go over the complicated spreadsheet and matrix and determine what is our priority, right, and so, if we want this to move quickly, we can put it at the top of that priority list and decide we're going to take final action whenever, in June, and we might be very ambitious in trying to get this done very quickly, and so I just wanted to make that point, that there is some control that we have of this situation, in terms of the work.

The other thing that will help move it faster is, the simpler the action, the better, right, and so, the less actions in it, the faster it can move. I actually have seen the Gulf Council do a framework in a single meeting, and I would not recommend it, but it's been done, and so there are pathways to actually go down and accomplish this in a semi-quick fashion. I still don't think it get to what Dewey wants, which is addressing the 2022 season, because it's going to come and be gone, but it could potentially address the 2023 season. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think maybe some of the confusion that's happening is terminology, and I was wondering if we can get clarification, and it's been a long time for me, and so I am asking on my own behalf, but the way I recall, from my days back on staff, is a framework is a specific -- It takes a specific regulatory path that is different than a plan amendment, and there are only certain things that we can do through framework, but also maybe the NEPA process is shorter, or something about it can happen faster than a full plan amendment, and so that might help clear up -- If we could get a little clarification on that, it might muddy the waters less and help us in the future, because we should probably know that anyway.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Your memory is pretty good, Kerry. There are certain things you have all set up in your FMP that you allow to be done via framework, which is supposed to be a more - - It's kind of a shorter, more abbreviated process, and you can do -- I am looking at it right now, and you can do bag limits or size limits or vessel trip limits or closed seasons or areas, gear restrictions, quotas, and what else? Adjusting fishing season, gears and those sorts of things, ACLs, and those are the kinds of things that you can do via a framework. You're right that the other thing is a plan amendment, which you're all familiar with, and it takes longer.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, the conundrum we're in, if I understand it correctly, is we cannot adjust accountability measures via framework, and so, if we want to do a framework action, then we're looking at doing management measures, like bag limits and seasons and such.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that you can. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think you can adjust an accountability measure via framework. Yes, you can. I'm sorry, and I was looking at a different section of your framework, but, yes, you can.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to go back to the queue. Chris, Trish, Chester, Tim.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure. What I wanted to ask was exactly what Monica said of what kind of things could we put into this, and to just clarify that and mention that we need to come to the table prepared to put some stuff in there. The only other question I had was, and I don't know that we need to look at the assessment or whatever, but, I mean, whatever fishing level we were given, did we go lower than the recommendation, and is there anything that's already been vetted saying that we could possibly catch more, and, if that was allowed to go into this, then would that be an option?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was going to ask -- Can we add, to the golden -- If we're going this route of adding this to golden tile -- Are we going this route of adding it to golden tile? Is that where we are?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, we haven't actually voted on this. We haven't voted yet.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay, and so I'm always confused, and so would it be possible to add to the golden tilefish amendment with doing the AMs and looking at trip limits and bag limits and seasons, and can that be added into this golden tile, so that we're -- If that would shorten it, or try to keep it short, that -- Because that might be something to consider, unless it's just workload.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it can, but I think Myra is coming back up here.

MS. BROUWER: We can certainly do that, Trish. I mean, we can do whatever you guys want, but, as I said before, the more actions you include in the amendment, the longer it's going to take, and so what I said earlier -- I think that, if we just add the one action addressing blueline to the golden tilefish amendment, we can have that ready for you by next December, but, if we add more things, then that's going to require some adjusting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chester and then Tim.

MR. BREWER: I just had my hand raised to ask a question about Tim's motion, which he has withdrawn, and so I put my hand down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chester. Tim.

MR. GRINER: This is kind of a follow-up to what Andy was saying, and I guess this is really for Myra. If we just did a framework, and we just had the one item in there, could that be ready in September? Would that be able to be ready -- If we decide to make it a priority, come Thursday or Friday, whenever we're doing the scheduling, could a framework with just one action in it be done in September or June, I mean any time earlier than December? I mean, it's a framework with one action. Thank you.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and you're asking, if we just take the modifying the post-season accountability and put it in a separate framework and can that be done by September, and we could try.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think part of that is you're saying "changing", and do you want to just remove the caveat that says post-season accountability applies when the stock is overfished, and just have post-season accountability apply, because even just saying changing could become a lot of things when we deal with accountability measures, and so I think that's why Myra is hedging a little bit, and we could try, because there are other things, and there are things on statutory deadlines, and it really comes down to -- I think Andy put it that, if it's simple, we can get it done. If it's a lot of things, and it's complicated, and there's a lot more items, then it's going to take more time, and so that's sort of where it stands right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Sorry, and if I could just add to what John said. What you -- We'll talk about all of this tomorrow in the rest of the Snapper Grouper Committee, but what you've done for red porgy, for example, is just uncouple that post-AM from being tied to the total ACL and then removing that overfished trigger, and so, if you keep the same kind of alternatives that you've done for red porgy, and I think maybe they're the same for gag or snowy, and I forget, but, if you keep that way, I mean, the analyses will be pretty similar. You know, it's all very qualitative-type stuff, and so I see that going fairly quickly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Are we ready to vote on this motion? **One more time, the motion is to add consideration of changing the accountability measures for blueline tilefish to the golden tilefish amendment, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 52.** Any more discussion? I am afraid to keep asking if there is more discussion. Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: I'm sorry, but I am having a dense moment here, a senior moment, and so it sounded like the framework, with as simple as it could get, just basically dealing with the offending word in the current accountability measure, just attacking that in a framework, is quicker than this, and is that what --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know. She is saying yes, I think.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, I think that would be the quickest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so then do we want to go back to the motion that Tim was trying to make from earlier, or you can -- Kerry, do you want to withdraw this? It's been seconded, and so it belongs to the committee. Okay. Let's vote. I am thinking that we want to vote this motion down and then start a framework action. All those in favor of this motion -- **Let's go to all those that object to this motion, raise your hand, eleven. We have eleven objecting to this motion. Any abstentions? Anyone in favor? There can't be, based on numbers. The motion fails.** I am going to go to Tim to offer that motion again.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. **I would make a motion to begin a framework to --**

MR. CARMICHAEL: **Make the accountability measures similar to those for red porgy.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so this motion -- **Again, it's a framework amendment to make the accountability measures for blueline tilefish similar to those for red porgy that are proposed under Snapper Grouper Amendment 50.** That's your motion? All right. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Kerry. It's under discussion. We've had a lot of discussion. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't know what the accountability measure for red porgy is, and is it decoupling -- Is this just similar that, if you go over your ACL, you pay it back the following year, and so overfishing doesn't have to be taking into place that is holding you to your ACLs?

MS. BROUWER: That's correct, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more clarification needed? All right. Chester, your hand is up.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Jessica. Following up on what Dewey was asking, would this be across-the-board accountability measures, such that, if one sector goes over, they pay it back the next year, and that would apply to both sectors? I am looking for some equity here, and so that's my question. Tim, maybe you can answer that for me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim has his hand up, and Myra is thinking.

MR. GRINER: Well, I guess that I kind of agree with you there, Chester, but, in reality, the only way that the commercial sector can run over is not due to anything the commercial sector has done, because we have an ACL, and it's monitored in real time, and so the commercial sector is not the one adding up, tallying up, the numbers, and so, I mean, the only way that the commercial sector could run over would be a few percent here or there, and that would be a function of really the data center, or somebody other than the commercial sector itself, because we don't tally the numbers, but we do turn them in on a weekly basis, and it's not any waves that come two and three and four months after the fact, and so, you know, it's really, really difficult for our commercial fishery to run over in any species an appreciable amount, and so I don't really see that as an issue.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Well, let me just follow-up, if I might, please. I have heard, several times, that the commercial sector has gone over their quota with regard to these fish, and so, I mean, how is that occurring? I am a little bit confused.

MR. GRINER: I am fine with it being for both, and you're talking about the commercial sector maybe running over 1 percent or 2 percent or whatever, and that's fine. We're all about being held accountable, right down to the penny.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and so the difference, right now, between commercial and recreational is that your rec AMs actually -- The post-season AMs come into play the year after an overage, because of the lag in the recreational estimates, whereas the commercial sector -- If they go over, they pay that back the next year, but that's the way the council has structured for all the snapper grouper accountability measures for the recreational sector, and so that's what I was

saying, and that's the way it's going to continue to be for red porgy and some of these other species as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are we ready to vote on this motion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Like in 2020, when the landings were 335 percent over, does that mean they don't get to catch any fish at all for the next three years then? I mean, how do we get to 300 percent over the ACL? How does that happen? How does it even happen? That's my question. If they go over by 300 percent, does that mean that they don't get to fish for the next three years? That might be enough to make themselves police themselves.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to go Andy and then Chris. Once we get this answer, we're going to vote on this motion. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: The first thing I want to say is let's be careful in terms of how we talk about recreational anglers and their own accountability here, because they are operating within the system and regulations that we have provided them. The recreational catch is done significantly different than the commercial catch, and it's based on a system of surveys, and those surveys report -- During the four-month period, one will report toward the end of the four-month period and another one will report after the four-month period, and so we don't have in-season monitoring occurring for the recreational sector.

The other thing to keep in mind is that this is more of a rare-event species, and so it's not intercepted as frequently as a red snapper or a gag grouper or some of those other species, and so that can then drive variability in the catch estimates, but you're exactly right that, depending on how we word the post-season accountability measures, it could have implications in terms of then what the following fishing seasons look like, and the severity of that, or the consequences of that, need to be deliberated under the council, in terms of discussing, obviously, what you want to do in terms of accountability measures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Chris. All right. Are we ready to vote? **All those in favor, raise your hand, we have eleven in favor. Is that right, or were there twelve in favor?** Chester and Tom, were you in favor?

MR. BREWER: No.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Yes, in favor.

MS. MCCAWLEY: **Okay, and so we have twelve in favor, and we have one opposed, and there are any other opposed hands here? Any abstentions?** All right. **The motion passed with no abstentions and one opposed.** Chester, it looks like you still have your hand up. Did you want to speak on this before we leave this topic?

MR. BREWER: No, and I'm showing a green hand, and so I shouldn't be up, but let me punch it a couple of times and see what happens.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I can tell this is going to be an awesome week for Chester. All right. I appreciate this discussion. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: One follow-up thing, to Andy's point about the recreational fishers and reporting to MRIP, and we also have -- We're probably in year-one of the for-hire reporting, with its mandatory logbooks, and so hopefully you can -- It's my belief that the majority of the catch north of Cape Hatteras comes from the charter boats, and so you can probably get some data from the landings, and you might have to do compliance assistance, but probably there is some avenue to get landings reports from where they fill out the logbooks, electronic monitoring, that would be very helpful and not just to rely on MRIP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are we good on blueline, before we leave this topic? All right. Now we're going to switch over to I believe an update on the Atlantic red snapper count and the amberjack count. Myra, over to you.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and so I don't have a whole lot to tell you guys. I am awaiting an update from Dr. Will Patterson, but one tidbit of information is there was a request for letters of interest, and the deadline was November 30, and that was to expand and kind of dovetail another project on top of what's already underway for red snapper in the South Atlantic, and so the full proposals are going to be due on that on December 15.

What I can do is, if I hear back from Dr. Patterson before Wednesday, I can give you more details, and I know John is also here, and I don't want to put you on the spot, John, but, if you have any more information on how that's going, but that's pretty much all I have to share with the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Myra. So that was on amberjack and red snapper? Okay. Just red snapper, and Chip is on amberjack.

DR. COLLIER: I get amberjack, and so amberjack is a little bit different research process than what's being used for red snapper in the Atlantic, and it's more or less following some of the same techniques as what were used for the Great Red Snapper Count in the Gulf of Mexico, and so they're just kind of setting things up right now, as far as the researchers, and they're going to be getting started soon on some of the research, and John is on that with me as well, and so, if I'm saying anything wrong, he can correct me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chip. All right. Can we go back to -- Any questions here? It doesn't look like any hands. John.

DR. WALTER: Just so people are aware, and I hope that the PIs for each of the projects will be briefing the council fairly regularly, but the red snapper count is going to operate quite differently and be primarily genetic-based, and so that's going to use close-kin mark-recapture, which is a relatively novel technique, but we think it has a lot of potential for use, and it will also be using some combination of similar methods of visual surveys and ROVs in more of an integrated modeling framework, but the primary engine for the total abundance will be genetically-based, which is unique and different approach, but just so people are aware. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're using that for goliath grouper. Just saying. Back to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thanks, and John pointed out something that I forgot to mention, but we do hope to get some updates going to the SSC in April, and so they're going to be at least being apprised of some of the techniques that are being used, and, that way, if they recommend any changes to the analytical techniques, it can start early in the process, and hopefully get these numbers integrated a little bit more quickly than might have occurred otherwise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Any more questions on this topic? All right. Myra, do you mind coming up and talking about the Other Business Fort Pierce artificial reef?

MS. BROUWER: Not at all, and so this is just a very quick update. The issue came up earlier this year, and it pertains to the Fort Pierce offshore SMZ, and so that's one of two SMZs that were created back in Regulatory Amendment 2, I believe it was, back in the 1980s, and the regulations that are currently in place are just for sea bass pots and bottom longlines, and, also, it restricts the gear that you can use, and so powerheads are prohibited and the use of like gear that's permanently affixed to the vessel, like a bandit reel and that sort of thing.

Earlier this year, a fisherman reached out to Cameron on our staff and wanted more clarification on why there was a possession limit, a recreational possession limit, at that SMZ, and that started us looking into when that went into place, if it in fact actually did go into place, and it turns out that what happened was, when South Carolina requested that the council put in place a restriction to the harvest in the South Carolina SMZs to the recreational bag limit, that kind of -- Like the Fort Pierce offshore reef SMZ got included when those regulations went into place in 2011, I believe it was, and so this restriction has been in place at the Fort Pierce offshore reef SMZ for about ten years without the council, or the State of Florida, intending for that to be the case. We had conversations with NOAA General Counsel, and they have determined that it was an error, and Monica can explain how that is going to hopefully be corrected.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes, it was an error, and we're going to try to fix it as quickly as we can, what we call the administratively least burdensome way possible, and so there might be something that we can do called a technical correction, which would be kind of a standalone notice in the Federal Register that we're correcting an error that we previously made, and so we're looking into how we can do that and working on it now, and so we didn't want any of you to be surprised if you got contacted by somebody that said, what is all this about, and what this is about is we're fixing an error that we made in the rulemaking for CEBA II that never should have been in there.

We're also -- I think, if you have ever looked at the special management zone regulations, which are at 50 CFR Section 182, there is a lot of SMZs, and there are a lot of coordinates, and there are a lot of restrictions, and there are a lot of a lot of things, and so I would like our office to look at all of those and make sure that there is no other error somewhere else, and so we'll try to do that, and then we'll let you know when we're able to fix it, but we hope to do that as soon as possible.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Monica. Any questions? All right. That is all we intended to cover this afternoon. I am going to turn it back to you, Mr. Chairman, to talk about what time you would like us here in the morning.

MR. BELL: I think we were -- Was it 8:30? Let's be here at 8:30, and thank you for sticking around a little bit longer. We wanted to make sure that we covered that adequately, the blueline thing, and then we kind of grabbed a couple other low-hanging fruit items, which will help us out, because we really would like to leave on time on Friday. That's my goal, and so thank you, and I will see you at 8:30 tomorrow, and we are recessed for the evening. Thanks.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 6, 2021.)

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DECEMBER 7, 2021

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Welcome to day two of the South Atlantic Council meeting here in Beaufort, and, this morning, we're going to dive back into the Snapper Grouper Committee agenda, and we are going to go back to the beginning, with the Ecopath project on the red snapper recruitment, and I am going to start by turning it over to Chip, who is going to introduce our presenters.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. Today, or this morning, we're going to get a presentation from Lauren Gentry with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. She works at the FWRI, Florida Wildlife and Research Institute, and, if you remember back, in December of last year, you guys were given a presentation on the Ecopath model. It wasn't really initialized to address any questions, and you guys had selected two questions to address, and one was the impact of high red snapper recruitment on the entire population out there, and so this is the results of that work, and Lauren is going to present that today. It has been presented to the SSC, and so you're going to hear some comments from Genny Nesslage as well.

MS. GENTRY: Thank you, everybody, for letting us present to you today, and so I am Lauren Gentry, with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and, today, I'm going to be presenting on behalf of your SAFMC modeling team. Also on the team from FWRI, we have Luke McEachron and Shanae Allen, and, from the University of Florida, we have the excellent Dr. Dave Chagaris from the modeling world, and we, along with a workgroup of SSC members, held a virtual workshop this fall to discuss and explore the red snapper high-recruitment situation sort of that everybody has been talking about recently, and see what the impacts are, and so I am here to show you all the results.

First, I wanted to give you all a quick overview of the modeling platform and how we're using it, to make sure that we're all on the same page, and so it's called Ecopath with Ecosim, and it's the most commonly-used marine ecosystem modeling software in the world. It consists of three

components, but, today, we're just going to address the two that we used, and those are Ecopath and Ecosim.

In Ecopath, we build what's called a mass balance snapshot of trophic dynamics, AKA we build a big food web of our ecosystem, and it represents just one moment in time, usually a year, and all the groups are linked via their diet, and so who eats who and in what proportion, and so, in this step, we define the groups and all of their diets, just like a traditional food web, and then we put in like growth data and fishery data and discards, everything like that, and then we can get a good sense of the key groups in the system and the key drivers in the system and look at some important ecosystem indicators.

Then this Ecopath, or like snapshot model, becomes the foundation for Ecosim, and, for Ecosim, we add time series of things like chlorophyll-a and primary productivity and catch and biomass from stock assessments, and then we can model biomass over time for each different trophic group, and so Ecopath is the snapshot of the ecosystem dynamics, and then Ecosim is those dynamics through time.

Models like this can be used and are used all over the world for like seemingly endless purposes, but, here, what we're doing is called scenario testing, and so you give the model two different inputs, and then you see how that affects the model's estimates, and that means that this kind of model that we've made uses those single-species stock assessments as an input, so we can sort of put them all together and work towards this ecosystem-level view, but, unlike those assessment models in stock assessments, we're not using it -- Like we don't use these models to suggest quotas or yields or anything like that, and we're just exploring what-if scenarios that we should be aware of and think about.

Let's hop right in, and this South Atlantic region model was in the development and refining and data collection process for over twenty years, championed by your very own Roger Pugliese and the modeler Tom Okey, and, after all this work, the model came to encompass 140 functional groups, and, now, that's single species and like groups of species, like herrings and things like that. It covers the entire SAFMC managed area, from North Carolina to the Florida Keys, and it includes 800-plus individual data sources, and so that's like all the diets and assessments and growth parameters for the 700-plus species that live in this area, and so we calibrated it for 1995, for Ecopath, through to 2016, which was intentionally done to give us a little wiggle room for data validation.

The entire model and its procedures were then reviewed over the last two years, by an SSC workgroup, a review workgroup, and the SSC. Then, the last year, at this time, the council asked us to explore what impacts the recent high recruitment of red snapper could be having on the rest of the snapper grouper complex, sort of the ecosystem as a whole.

To begin exploring that, the model team needed to make some adjustments to the model, to make sure that we were capturing everything we wanted to, and so, first things first, we added age stanzas, and those are just age-specific groups, for red snapper, to make sure that we could capture those different life stages, and so you've got age-zero, and age-one through three, and those are sort of small and juvenile, and then age-four-plus, and those are your full-sized adults, or at least fully reproductive adults.

Fortunately for us, SEDAR 73 had perfect timing, and we were able to add the newest landings and discards and biomass projections to the model and sort of build off of that, so that we made sure that we had the latest and greatest red snapper information, and good timing on that one, SEDAR folks. Then we recalibrated the whole model out to 2044, also to match how far out SEDAR was estimating.

Once we got this model built and calibrated and all out to where we wanted it to be, the first metric we looked at was called prey overlap, and this is a function that looks at how much of each prey item is in two different predators' diets, and so, for us, it's red snapper versus everybody else, and determines how much these two diets overlap, and you can think of this like a measure of potential competition. If you and I eat the same thing, if we end up in the same area, we might end up competing for food, and so, if you're doing really well, I might not do so hot.

Any two predators with an overlap over 50 percent is considered sort of, quote, of interest for potential competition, and you can't say it's definitely happening, but it's certainly something to look at, and I have shown here just a selection of the total list, and the whole list is in the briefing book, and in the final report, but you can see that age-zero red snapper have the highest overlap with red grouper, and that's actually like a 75 percent overlap right there, down to like a 50 percent overlap with black sea bass.

You can see that red grouper too has high diet overlap with all three age groups of red snapper, and there are other snappers and groupers and porgies, and kind of generalist carnivores make the list as potentially competing with red snapper for prey, and so, if red snapper is doing really well, all these groups listed in green could be hurting for food, if that situation were to arise.

Another cool tool in Ecopath then allows us to combine direct impacts, and so like directly being eaten by a red snapper, and so that's being in the red snapper diet in the model, and so that's direct impact, or direct predation, plus those indirect impacts, like competition from prey overlap needing a shared resource, and this tool includes those trophic cascades that we talk about sometimes, like the prey of my prey benefits from my success, the enemy of my enemy kind of thing, and it does this by adding a tiny bit of biomass to each group.

Here, it was each red snapper group got a little tiny bit of biomass, and then it measures the impacts on all of the other groups' biomass, and so, while this tool, and the tool is called mixed trophic impacts, because it mixes together direct and indirect trophic impacts, it doesn't actually predict the future, and it's not predicting what will happen, but it helps find species of interest when we're exploring questions like who benefits from or is harmed by red snapper, when red snapper is doing super well.

We can see here, and I sort of combined the different red snapper results here, but you can see that we have some winners, in blue, from an increase in red snapper, and so, when red snapper goes up in the model, at least in this one scenario, golden crabs benefit from that, and this is probably like release from predation, because red snapper eats golden crab predators, and then those other winning groups, like groupers and snappers, perhaps they have a prey that was released from predation by higher red snapper biomass, but, sort of more importantly, on the loser side, you can see black sea bass and red grouper and lionfish, and those are repeated again from the prey overlap, and so maybe, because of their prey overlap, now they have become loser in this scenario, or in this one tool here.

Red porgy is also a loser, interestingly, because, even though they're only a teeny, tiny percent of the red snapper diet, they do have a prey overlap with red snapper that's just under 50 percent, and so they didn't make the cutoff of interest, but, obviously, the model thinks that that's important, because they're there on that loser list.

Now, these impacts were not very large, and the actual numbers were very, very small, but it gave us a starting point to look at, to see if we were sort of on the right track, and this part is in Ecopath only, and so, as we moved into Ecosim, we really wanted to keep an eye on these species, and so these two tools together gave us an idea of what species might be harmed, either by competing with red snapper for prey, and that's the prey overlap, or by some combination of being eaten by red snapper or sharing prey and/or being the loser of some cascade of other interactions.

That leads us to scenario testing, and so our scenario testing started by creating our two different recruitment scenarios, and we just used the same two scenarios from the stock assessment, and so, first, we set the fishing mortality of red snapper to a relatively low amount for the future, which allowed the estimate to rebuild, or the biomass of red snapper to rebuild, and we were happy to see that we tracked the rate of increase almost exactly with the long-term mean recruitment biomass projections from SEDAR 73, from the stock assessment, and so our line is in purple, and their line is in blue. As you can see, we've got the same thing going on.

This is projecting what the biomass of red snapper might be if their recruitment stays around their historical average going forward, and we ended up in the same place for that final 2044 biomass, which is kind of the important part, is that we've got the 2044 biomass for long-term average recruitment, or mean recruitment.

Our second scenario then recreated the high recent recruitment projection from SEDAR 73. To do that, we set the low fishing mortality, and we increased the vulnerability of the youngest red snappers' prey to predation, and so, everything that those age-zero red snapper eat, we made their prey more vulnerable to being eaten more, or made them more vulnerable to being eaten by that youngest group of red snapper, and, because this is a trophically-driven model, if you increase the vulnerability of a group's prey, then that predator will have more biomass, and so this increases the biomass of this age-zero red snapper so that they recruit to older groups in a higher amount, and so this simulates that high recruitment that we're seeing out in the wild, and we were able to end up in the same place as the SEDAR projections for 2044 under the high recruitment.

That means that we could end up with two red snapper biomass scenarios, and each of those is going to have two different biomass, obviously, and higher recruitment is the pink line, and so you're going to have the high red snapper biomass. Long-term average recruitment is going to have a lower biomass, and that's the purple line, and you can see that they diverge as we go into the future, as we're projecting forward.

When we run those two scenarios side-by-side, nothing else changes in the rest of the model, except for the red snapper biomass predictions, and then we see how that changes the predictions of every other group in the model, and so, in this example, and we've got a fake example of other fish, and this is, I don't know, but some other grouper or something like that, and, in this example, when it was run at the same time, you can see that this hypothetical fish would be considered a winner, because, when the red snapper biomass is high, and that's the pink scenario, this fish's

predicted biomass was also high, and, when the red snapper biomass was a little bit lower, this fish's biomass was lower, and so this fish does better when red snapper does well.

These were the results, and this shows you the percent change in the biomass projections of all of these species that are listed here when red snapper biomass goes from long-term recruitment up to high recruitment, and so these are our biggest winners and losers under this high recruitment, as compared to low recruitment, and so, at high red snapper biomass, mutton snapper and large sharks benefit, while bank and black sea bass are losers, but notice the scale. They're not that big of a loser. The worst impact result is around 6 percent, with black sea bass just sitting there at under a 4 percent decrease, and so this means that sort of, A, all these groups listed by the orange bars are sensitive to increases in red snapper biomass, but none of them are really too terribly harmed. We're looking at 3 and 4 and 5 percent changes here.

This is what we expected to see, and this is a similar scale to other modeling results that other models that have looked at the impacts of big reef fish on the West Florida Shelf, and they got around the same numbers, single digits, for the most part, and this is because they are generalist carnivores, and they kind of eat whatever fits in their mouth, right, and so they can have a big impact, but not necessarily on one single species overall.

What we found, as we were working through this, and what we found when we started talking through it at the workshop, was we're getting a lot of results across the model, and you guys just saw, what, four graphs, back-to-back, and so we decided to put it all together in one table. Now, just to fit the screen, and for everybody's sanity today, I have only included the age-four-plus, or the adult, red snapper results here, but the full table, with all of the age groups, is in the briefing book as a zoomable PDF that you can like see all of the age groups all across.

The idea was to look for groups that were losers, quote, unquote, across multiple levels of impact, and so, on the far left, under the blue, those groups are directly eaten by red snapper, and they are actually in the diets, and so they would be harmed by red snapper doing really well. The groups under prey overlap share food items, and thus could compete with red snapper for prey, and then the next column is mixed trophic impacts, and that shows the winners and losers of a tiny little increase in red snapper biomass, due to those trophic cascades.

Finally, the last column shows the winners and losers from comparing the high-recruitment scenario to the long-term average, and, if you follow the groups that are in purple all the way across this, you can see which ones are repeated over and over again, and, thus, might warrant the most consideration going forward, when we're talking about, or discussing, the impacts of red snapper on the rest of this ecosystem, and so this can be a good reference tool if this question comes for any other fish and anybody just wants to pull up that graph and say, is this other species of fish on an impact list, and, if it is, is it because it's being eaten by red snapper or competing with red snapper or something else is going on.

This brings us to the workshop, and so, after going through all those results together, the SSC workgroup decided to explore some testing, to see how sensitive these results are to changes in the model. Obviously, if we can just lightly tweak something and get drastically different results, then we might not trust the answers so much, and so we increased the catch of black sea bass by seven-times, which is above the highest historical level, to see if there were any sort of synergistic, or

combining, effects of high catch and the high red snapper, and there were not. There was less than a 1 percent impact on the impact of red snapper on black sea bass.

Then we made black sea bass 25 percent of the adult red snapper diet, and so one out of four fish is going to be a black sea bass in this example that red snapper eats, and the negative impact on black sea bass increased by less than 2 percent, and so not that big of a change.

Then we reweighted the diets to favor South Atlantic diet studies, which all of the results that I've shown you so far were the ones that were reweighted that way, and we decided to just go with that, because we liked the favoring the South Atlantic diets more, but, when we did that, there was really only minor impacts to the diet composition, and nothing really big happened in the diet composition at all, and, finally, we doubled the vulnerability of red snapper prey to predation. Since that that's value that we tweaked to try and simulate high recruitment, we wanted to see how sensitive is the model to those tweaks, and so we actually just went ahead and doubled it, and still the impact of change was less than 3 percent.

This workshop exercise showed us that the findings of the model are really robust to realistic, and even some unrealistic, changes. We challenged it with some unrealistic things, and still it said I still think the impacts of red snapper on these groups is going to be about this amount.

That brings us to the conclusions of the workshop. The SSC workgroup concluded that the model properly addressed the question of the impacts of high red snapper recruitment, with bank and black sea bass and tomtate, or other grunts, being negatively affected. Red, gag, and scamp groupers showed minor negative effects, and then mutton snapper and large coastal sharks actually benefited. The workgroup pointed out that this kind of effort provides insights into that ecosystem-based fisheries management, and it could also help inform data collection needs, like monitoring those species that are of concern and also show up on the negative impacts list here.

They also liked that big table of impacts all in one place can sort of let anybody explore the results and look into the possible driving factors for these impacts, and like is it predation or is competition or is it something in between.

Finally, your model team would like to leave you with these take-away ideas. First, these results indicate that red snapper are not likely to cause more than a 5 percent decline in other species, and this is because they are generalist predators. They eat everything, from medium-sized fish down to zooplankton and crabs and other inverts, and they seem to be perfectly happy switching to a new prey when one prey becomes hard to find, and so they are unlikely to really hammer any one prey super hard, like at the stock level or at the population level.

However, we also might suggest keeping an eye on say like black sea bass and red porgy, sort of regardless, simply because, if the recruitment were to go up even further, and it's already been high recently, and, if it were to go up even further, or if we have all underestimated recruitment impacts or something like that, these impacts could be larger, and, if the species is already in peril, then that could become important, and so it's kind of a middle ground. They're not the worst, and they're not likely to cause major declines, but maybe, just in the future, as the red snapper population increases back to where we want it to be, just keep an eye on those species that might be on the worry list.

That's it, and I would like to thank everybody listed here, and so, so many more people and all these different groups for helping to make this model a reality. Just about every member of the SAFMC staff and council, all of you guys in that room there, have played some part in like tracking down this data and experts and decisions, and, without you all forwarding emails to people you know, and sending us down these rabbit holes to find the right answer, this wouldn't have happened, and so thank you for making this a truly huge collaborative project, and we're really excited to see where it goes in the future, and so, if you guys have any questions, let me know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Lauren. This was a really great presentation. Since my master's thesis was on red snapper diets in the Gulf, this is very near and dear to my heart. I am going to look around and see if we have any questions for you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I thought this was very, very interesting. One of the things that I was curious about is, when you looked at the age-zero and the age-one through three, the prey overlap, when I see golden tilefish and snowy grouper on there, is that because -- It's obviously probably not because they're living in the same area, but is it just because that their prey is found in both of those two different areas?

MS. GENTRY: Yes, and so the prey overlap just indicates that they are eating the same thing, and it doesn't necessarily mean that they're in the same place eating the same thing, but, if they were to be in the same place, they would be eating the same types of crabs, the same types of fish, the same types of plankton.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think I saw another hand. John Walter, did you have your hand up?

DR. WALTER: Thank you for the really nice presentation and the great modeling work. This is quite interesting. We have been seeing low recruitment for a number of our other species, particularly the groupers, and I was wondering whether the species resolution is that good for some of those other species that might be rarer, like a grouper in the gut of a red snapper, because it seems like the sea bass is the one that is primarily one that might be impacted, but probably a red snapper can't differentiate a small sea bass from any other small serranid, but we might not see it in the stomachs, and so do you think that there could be impacts on any of the other species of groupers?

MS. GENTRY: Certainly there were certain studies that had difficulty determining juvenile individuals and exactly what species they were, especially of groupers and snappers in particular, and they would just list out, you know, a genus level, or even just say juvenile grouper, but a number of studies have been done that use DNA barcoding to look at these diets, and so that was captured, even a brand-new 2021 paper by Kevin Spanik and them, and they have done a number of DNA barcoding studies, and I believe that they find some juvenile groupers in the diets, but I - - At least the model doesn't seem to indicate that those impacts would be big enough to really cause long-term large recruitment problems. However, it is a possibility, but I wouldn't say that the model really plays that out that much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Lauren. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Lauren, that was a great presentation, and I really liked the background images in your slides too, and they're beautiful.

MS. GENTRY: Thanks.

MS. THOMPSON: This talks about what the red snapper are eating, but what we're seeing is that the red snapper are not only eating baby sea bass, but they are taking over -- I'm sorry, the black sea bass, but they're taking over the habitat, just because of the sheer numbers of red snapper, and so does this study that you guys have done -- Does that take that into account, or is it just strictly looking at what's in the guts of the red snapper? Thank you.

MS. GENTRY: Great question. At this stage, we are just looking at everything in the SAFMC area as if it's sort of in a bathtub, as is everybody lives everywhere in sort of equal proportions. One of the next steps is certainly going to be to build, in Ecospace, which is that third component, and to look at some of these habitat overlaps, and I believe that is -- Not to give it away, but that is one of the next things that's on the list, is to look at the habitat overlaps for all of these species, but I don't know, necessarily, if we have enough resolution in our mapping right now of modern day, day-to-day mapping to know where red snapper are and if they are pushing other things out by living there. I don't know that that would necessarily be a modeling question so much as cameras or something like that on a reef.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions for Lauren? All right. I don't see any more hands. Lauren, I really appreciate you giving us this presentation. It's super cool stuff, and I believe that we're going to now go to Genny to talk about the SSC's review.

MS. GENTRY: Thanks so much, you all.

DR. NESSLAGE: While they're pulling up the slides, I will just start by saying that the SSC really appreciated the ability to be involved in the development of this project and reviewing the modeling throughout the development of this model for the South Atlantic, and the team was very responsive to our comments and reviews, and so we really appreciate that.

We had the opportunity, as a full SSC, to review this presentation, an even more detailed version of the presentation, from Lauren at our October meeting, and we were asked to provide a bit of a review of the product, and so, in general, I am happy to report that the SSC felt that this finding that increased high recruitment of red snapper has relatively minor impact on the biomass of any particular species in the South Atlantic seemed generally reasonable, in particular because this is a generalist predator, as Lauren mentioned, and they're not specifically targeting one particular prey item, and they're not reliant on one particular prey item, and so, because of that, the impacts of high recruitment seem to be kind of spread out over multiple prey items in the region.

We just wanted to point out that, of course, that, if you were to use this modeling tool to explore other questions for other species that might have a more niche diet, like wahoo, you might see a very different result, and so don't expect that, just because red snapper didn't -- This particular question didn't show a huge impact on one particular species, that that might be the same result if you were to explore the same question for a more specialist species, and so that's just something to keep in mind.

We also noted that, if the rebuilding schedule accelerates, and recruitment stays high, the implications of these EwE model outputs and how they might be applicable to your management decisions might be affected, and so we just wanted to point out, and I won't go into great detail, but the modeling team did a great job doing alternative sensitivity runs to this question, and so I would point you to the report and discussion of that in the materials.

We did highlight a couple of caveats and concerns about the overall modeling effort. This has already been brought up in some of your questions today, but the diet data are kind of the skeleton of these models, and the output relies very strongly on the quality and quantity of the diet data that's available for use and how applicable it is for that species and in the region.

We were concerned a bit that the data that's available for use might be limited, both spatially and temporally, and it was a little hard to tell, from the presentation of the data, exactly where all the data was coming from and from what time periods, and so we asked if perhaps, in the future, there could be some sort of spatial representation or tabling of the data that would highlight where most of the information is coming from on both a temporal and spatial basis, but we felt that this really highlights the importance of the long-term fishery-independent data sources that are continuing in the region.

Without those broader surveys, where they are collecting diets, we might just be relying on some more one-off studies that might be localized, or might be concentrated in one particular time period, and might not be as applicable to the whole region, and so we really felt that, if you want to continue using this sort of ecosystem modeling tool, we really need to keep supporting these long-term fishery-independent data sources to supplement the diet information for these types of projects.

Then we also noted that several of the prey items were grouped together, largely due to species-specific lack of information, and so we felt that that might affect the ability of the model, perhaps, to estimate species-specific impacts, something that is a data limitation, and the folks did the best they could, but it's something to keep in mind. If there's a particular prey item you're interested in, if it's within a group, you might not be seeing the exact impacts on that particular prey item.

Then we also noted that the team did a series of model validation exercises and ran several sensitivity analyses, but the model is extremely large, because they're trying to take into account the whole ecosystem in the region, and so, given it was so large, it was hard to complete a wide range of those exercises that we would typically expect, and so we talked quite a bit about exploring a reduced model, kind of like they have done for menhaden at the ASMFC, and I know that Dave Chagaris was in charge of a reduced model that was explored for that problem, and so that might be something that folks want to consider in the future, so that we can kind of kick the tires on this model even a bit more.

Then we just wanted to remind folks that -- We mentioned this in the past, but we still just wanted to kind of mention it one more time, that we felt that this was a great tool, a great modeling exercise, but we felt that, in the future, if you actually want to use this to provide quantitative management advice, it would need to go through the further refinement and the SEDAR process, and so an additional validation, but I think that's all I have for you, but, if there is any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Genny. Any questions for Genny? I don't see any hands. I think this was -- I am looking over here at Mike and Chip, and I think this was just an update for us, and there is no particular action needed. All right. Okay. Next up, we're going to move into Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Revisions, and I believe, first up, we're going to ask Jimmy Hull to come up here and talk about the AP comments and recommendations.

MR. HULL: Good morning, everyone. Your Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel met, and the first item was the AP discussed the council's questions and measures proposed to reduce snapper grouper discards. Many of the major conclusions of the meeting are listed here, and full details are in the AP meeting summary.

The first item of gear restrictions, overall, due to diverse gear fishing techniques and species in the snapper grouper fishery, gear modifications would best be accomplished through best practices, outreach, and education, rather than regulations. We need best practices to become normal public education. Outreach would be more effective for this than regulations. An example would be fish handling, venting techniques, descending techniques, net use, leader lengths, hook size, bait use, et cetera.

Next, we discussed spatial/timed and seasonal openings. Too much diversity for blanket management for all snapper grouper species. Not all snapper grouper species are discarded at high levels in all areas. Regional differences and complementary state management needs to be considered. We need more information on MPA effects, but some wreck locations could potentially be considered, with sunset provisions. An MPA might possibly be removed after a specified number of years or after an indicator stock reaches a status or reference point.

The commercial ACL closures are effective at limiting harvest to the ACL already, and we prefer no set commercial season. Further, for spatial/timed seasonal openings for red snapper, consider alternative recreational seasons and timing to reduce discards. Some suggestions were open with the red grouper on May 1 and a fall season for South Carolina and Georgia.

On the closure of recreational bottom fishing, it would not be supported by recreational stakeholders. They would prefer a focus on increasing accountability, a recreational permit, and increasing habitat and populations, through programs like stocking or artificial reefs, rather than reducing effort. There was mixed opinions on whether a recreational effort reduction is necessary or realistic. There was general agreement for increased recreational accountability.

As to the subject of a recreational permit and license, the AP continues to recommend, unanimously, a recreational snapper grouper permit and license and reporting mechanism. The council could poll recreational anglers to gauge overall interest in permits, as well as species to consider for catch-and-release fisheries. The saltwater state licenses could be a start for the population to be polled. Effort is an issue, but curbing effort may not be the solution. We need better stewardship and more responsible use of the resource. A big step towards recreational accountability is knowing the participants.

The next item was a red snapper slot limit. Comments were the slot limit does not address discards outside of the recreational mini-season, and so it may not make much of a difference. A slot limit could also create more discards within the mini-season and lead to additional handling with

reduced release survival. To reduce discards from high-grading, a recreational trip limit based on weight during the open season could be considered.

Some of the other comments on snapper grouper discard reduction are potentially consider requiring retention and no discarding, until the bag limit is caught, to reduce discards for high-grading, but this could be very difficult to enforce. Again, best practices. Potentially consider a recreational poundage limit for red snapper, to reduce discards and high-grading. That was, again, brought up for the snapper season. Best practices would encourage fishermen to release fish safely and move from fishing areas and depths where out-of-season or limited-out species have just been released. There is a need to find better ways than assessment information to motivate compliance. On discards, do we have any questions on that discussion from the AP?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, Jimmy. The two things that really hit home to me was the bold print in there about the unanimous agreement for a recreational permit and then getting to know the participants, and so I think that you guys have been telling us that for probably close to two decades now, and I know that, at our last meeting, we sort of -- A lot of people opened their eyes up and agreed that something needs to be done, and so, throughout the rest of this discussion in the next day or two, we all need to be brainstorming on some sort of way forward with that, and I think we're past time to begin that process, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. I see that Chester has his hand up.

MR. BREWER: Jimmy, just for clarification, when you're talking about a, quote, red snapper or grouper license, we already require a, quote, license, but are you talking about some sort of endorsement, or are they talking about some sort of endorsement, on an existing license that would -- I will use the phrase to help identify the universe of the number of people who are actually prosecuting, recreationally prosecuting, these fisheries? Thank you.

MR. HULL: Chester, thank you. Exactly. I don't know that any of us know the exact mechanism, but there has to be some way of counting, as you stated, the universe of people that are addressing the snapper grouper fishery on the recreational sector, and so, whether it's through a federal level, and it is a federal fishery, and so I think that most everyone on the AP feels like that it should be done at the federal level, with some type of whatever it is, a license or a stamp or a permit, and maybe it's a stamp that's on top of their state license, that they have to get a federal stamp or something.

I mean, we've talked about lots of different ideas, but the most important thing is that everyone agrees unanimously that it needs to be done, and that's the first step that needs to happen to try to address the concerns with the recreational accountability and effort. Does that answer your question?

MR. BREWER: It does, sir, and I was going to let you know, if you don't already, that the recreational workgroup that has been meeting separately from the council has pretty well come to the -- I won't say has come to, but has certainly -- It is certainly coalescing around a recommendation to do just that, and it will be, I think, making recommendations to the council at the next meeting, or maybe the meeting after that, but thank you, sir.

MR. HULL: Thank you. That's really good news, and I know everyone feels like, on the AP, and it doesn't matter which sector you're from or who you are, that that's the first step, and it should have been done, and it needs to be done as soon as possible.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we're going to talk about that, and Spud is going to give us an update here in a little bit, but we have a number of people in the queue. We have Andy and then Dewey and then Dale.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for being here, and thanks for the presentation. I am curious if you can expand upon your comments with regard to spatial area management, and so I wholeheartedly agree with the AP that there's a lot of diversity in this fishery, and we need to take into consideration regional differences, and it sounds like there's not necessarily opposition to that, but there is certainly concern, or consideration, that it needs to be that it's not a one-size-fits-all approach, if we pursue that, and is that a fair assessment?

MR. HULL: Thanks, Andy. Yes, I believe that's a pretty fair assessment of where it was. You know, this is kind of like the first stab, so to speak, of this idea of -- Well, you heard the AP, and they were basically opposed -- Of course, this is the private recreational sector mostly, their comments, and they were basically opposed to limiting effort, and so I tried to pull out, well, if you're going to not limit effort, or accessibility, and stock are declining, can you do anything, because, otherwise it's just a dead discard fishery, and so there were some others, and Mike reminded me that there were some that agreed that, spatially, that maybe that was a consideration that needed to be taken in, at least from a couple of the members.

Initially, I think they understand that, if you're going to have unlimited effort, you may have to give up something else, whether spatially or time-wise, to have that, I think, but, as I said, I think this is also the beginning of thinking about this for them, just like it's the beginning of maybe a permit or a license, and it's the beginning of something, but, initially, they were opposed to any reduction in effort.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Has anybody ever looked at, and when you're thinking about this, the access to catch these fish is by a boat, and the boat has to be registered in all the states, and so you already have an idea of the amount of boats that are registered, but we don't know the amount of boats that go fishing for these snapper grouper species, and so why -- The boats land in the states where they are registered or trailered or something like that, and so it's like you already have an idea, but it's not -- It's never getting compounded, or looked at, of how do you go about looking at the folks that have boats that are registered already and what they do with the boats, because until -- I mean, that's like a caveat of you're already starting to springboard somewhere, versus all this other polling stuff and different things that's just going to continue to take time, and you have that there already, and why doesn't somebody look, or something, at the boats that are registered and poll them, to where they go fishing, and have a -- You know, with the state and federal partnership of looking at how you start to do something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a good point. I can tell you, in Florida, our State Reef Fish Survey, we're looking at people that are accessing a suite of reef fish offshore by vessel, but we don't do

it by vessel, and each individual has to have that state Reef Fish Survey permit add-on on their license. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I would suspect that, by registering your boat, you have a wealth of information about the size, and maybe horsepower, and so a sixteen-foot boat probably is not going to go fifty miles offshore to the reef or something like that, and so you get a little bit of caveats of figuring something out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good thoughts. Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. Being as you all have that endorsement in Florida, this point might be moot, but the Louisiana Department of Wildlife has a program called LA Creel, and, anyway, LA Creel is one of the ways that they get effort information, and they do have an offshore landing endorsement, and they've been doing it for a while, and I think it's a really good program.

Effort is the problem in the Gulf too, and, I mean, if we could get effort, it would be so much better. We can get weights and lengths from the dockside surveyors already, and so I have often thought that it would be good if we could implement something like what LA Creel is doing throughout the Gulf, but, anyway, if your staff wants to contact some people that has got a little bit of history with this, and seems to be doing a really good job, I think for sure the Louisiana folks would be good, and, like I said, I did not know that you all had an endorsement, also. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dale. Next up is Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So I think it's pretty evident that, if the recreational industry wants unlimited access, they're going to have to give up something, and so we have a shallow-water closure for grouper down in our area during their spawning season, and it kind of makes sense to have a closure during spawning season for snapper, potentially, and maybe not -- Because I know they spawn in the summertime, and that's when most everybody is fishing on them, but maybe there could be some portion of the spawning season where you couldn't target red snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a good thought. I guess that my concern would be that one of the biggest problems is just the discarding of red snapper when you're trying to target other species year-round, even outside that season.

MS. THOMPSON: So then that makes the spatial closure look better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Are there more questions for Jimmy? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: My question was for you. How many years have you guys had that endorsement in place, and what did you guys think the universe of snapper grouper anglers prior to actually finding out, and I know there's some deviation or whatever, but you've got to have a better idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's been in place longer in the Gulf, and so it started as the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and we used oil spill money to get it in place. As you've heard from Dale, all the other Gulf states have some sort of program, and they're not the same, and so they're all quite different,

and what was formerly the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and now it's the State Reef Fish Survey, is kind of an add-on to MRIP.

They run side-by-side, and that's not how the other state programs work, and part of that was because we felt like, in Florida, that the MRIP is really sampling well those inshore species, but, really just a fraction of sampling on those offshore species and trips and all that information, and so that's why we designed the program the way that it is, as an add-on to MRIP, and so it's been in place since -- In the Atlantic, when we started it on that side, that only went into place in 2020, and so only two years of data on the Atlantic side, but a lot longer, 2015, on the Gulf.

I think we are targeting thirteen species, and so some other states in the Gulf -- Some are only looking at red snapper, and some are looking at all reef fish, and it just kind of depends on which state, which program, that you have, and you heard from Dale that not all programs are created equal, and so, in Louisiana, you only have so many access points, and so you probably have less than ten access points in Louisiana, and so, that way, you can have people stationed at every place that people would be bringing red snapper back.

In some place like Florida, there is no way. I mean, you're just going to sample a fraction of those trips and that effort, and so it's helping us, because it kind of gives you a phone book, if you will, but we are not calling people, like the old CHTS, and we're using a paper survey, and we're trying to get the information back a little bit faster than the MRIP information, and so it's not perfect. It has some limitations, but we felt like it was better than nothing, and we were using it in the Gulf in order to get state management of Gulf red snapper and help us track the quota better. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Are you guys able to forward that information on to the federal government and it's incorporated into our assessments and effort, or are they saying it hasn't been in place long enough and we don't know about that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We hope that, in the Gulf, that it one day soon will be incorporated in the stock assessment, including stock assessments of things like gag and red grouper that are primarily Florida species, but we are working on making sure that that data can be used for those assessments, and so we're in the middle of that process right now, and we hope to get there on the Atlantic side as well, but it just hasn't been in place as long on the Atlantic, but hopefully what we learn in the Gulf we can use over on the Atlantic. Kerry, did you have your hand up?

MS. MARHEFKA: I forget the terminology that each of you used, and I know your acronym of LA Creel, and I forget if you said that it was an endorsement, but, for both of you, in any way do these resemble sort of the way a commercial permit would work, in that, if you were found in violation, do you have the potential to have some ability to use that as a punishment?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so -- I don't know that I am expert here on what law enforcement does, but I believe that the first stop is a warning in Florida, and they also try to show you -- It's like let me show you how to sign-up for this and let me show you how to get this add-on on your recreational license, but multiple stops without it, when you definitely need it, and you're offshore and you might have those reef fish onboard, then, yes, that is a violation.

MS. MARHEFKA: Could you also lose it if you had it, but were found in violation of bag limits or size limits in an egregious manner? I mean, is it possible?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would have to look into the Florida state statutes, to see how many violations it would take to get to that point, and it might have to be in conjunction with other violations, in order to lose it, and so I'm certainly not an expert on that, but I appreciate the question. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Madam Chair, I would like to request that this comes back before -- The spatial issue of snapper grouper fisheries, having an area closed spatially and open spatially, come back before the AP. I recently saw a slide, and I'm not sure where it was, but it showed a spatial closure at 100 feet and all the different fleets and how it would affect them, and I thought that was very interesting, and it would be good to present this discussion back, so we can get different problems that may arise with that from all the different sectors on the AP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great idea, Jimmy. All right. Are there more questions for Jimmy? All right, Jimmy. You can either sit up here and stay with us here at the table, because we might have some more questions, and so you're welcome to sit up here, but we're going to keep moving through the agenda.

Next up was the Release Mortality Reduction Framework, but I'm wondering -- I see that Spud is back there, and maybe we can flip that and Spud could go ahead and give us an update from that private recreational workgroup that just met earlier this week, and then we'll go into the reduction framework item.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I have draft report, but, since it was draft form, we didn't circulate it, but I am going to just read some excerpts from the draft report from our most recent meeting, which was held via webinar on the afternoon of December 1. We had good attendance by the workgroup members, and we also had quite a few observers, since it was held in webinar fashion.

The first thing we did was look over a draft report from our previous meeting, which was held back on May 26 of this year, and we had several topic areas to discuss on our agenda, and the first one was permitting requirements, and so what happened is we had workgroup members representing each state that provided an overview of their existing recreational permit structure and their process for implementing permits, and the council staff gave a brief on the Atlantic Highly Migratory Species general recreational permit.

All states have a general recreational saltwater license, and the group discussed federal and state permitting options for the recreational snapper fishery. Florida, as you now know, if you didn't know already, is the only state with a permit for recreational snapper grouper fishing activity. North Carolina has licenses, permits, and endorsements implemented through the legislature and through their Marine Fisheries Commission. Legislative action would likely to be necessary to implement a snapper grouper endorsement.

Licenses in South Carolina are implemented through the general assembly, and there is no marine fisheries commission in South Carolina, as exists in some other states. In Georgia, licenses are also implemented by the legislature. Additionally, license changes would need to go through the

state wildlife agency, the Wildlife Resources Division, which manages freshwater fish and game animals, and they actually manage the license system.

The Highly Migratory Species Division of NMFS requires permits for possession of tunas, sharks, and billfish, and it was also noted that the Mid-Atlantic Council has implemented permits for mandatory reporting of tilefish, which was actually mentioned some yesterday.

State permitting and licensing processes are certainly varied, and, in many cases, require legislative action. New permits add costs, whether that be internal management by the responsible agency or contracting with outside vendors, which is what most states use now, is an outside vendor to manage their licensing systems, and so, any time you add anything, you've got to renegotiate a contract, and so there is costs that sometimes aren't offset by fees.

The gist of all that was that imposing additional permit requirements for a federal fishery resource through state systems is not considered very likely, and just the realities are that every state is different, and the political climate in every state is different, and so that's not seen as something that likely, certainly in the near-term, and so, at this point, and this is certainly not a final decision, and it's not a consensus opinion, but the workgroup suggested that a federal solution is probably the most appropriate course of action for a federal fishery.

In some ways, the discussion of a snapper grouper endorsement is a logical next step to the recreational angler registry, which was implemented many years ago, and to the state marine recreational fishing licenses, some of which were implemented to allow state anglers to be exempt from that state angler registry, and so the basic concept of a general permit supported by additional endorsements is a common thing in commercial fisheries management and other natural resource management areas, such as waterfowl.

The workgroup discussed a potential recommendation for the council to consider requiring a permit for snapper grouper fishing that is similar to the Florida reef fish permit, but is administered by NMFS, as is done with the HMS permit. This permit would be used to identify snapper grouper anglers to support dedicated survey efforts or specialized MRIP sampling for this specialized fishing activity. The permit would need to be accompanied by changes in MRIP sampling, or new sampling and survey programs, to provide the desired improvements in catch and effort estimates.

In essence, the permitting, the identification of those snapper grouper fishermen, is just one part of the process, and it is to improve the sample frame, but you've got to have corresponding changes in MRIP, so that your dockside surveys match up, and it takes a holistic approach to make this thing produce the outcome that everybody wants, and so we've got to work on both ends of it. The APAIS survey has certainly improved the dockside component of MRIP, but we've still got to consider across-the-board improvements to match up with the improved license frame.

The next thing we talked about was census versus survey approaches, and census sampling is certainly appealing, in a lot of ways, and you get absolute counts, but a true census is difficult to achieve, and it would add considerable burden to users, and certainly costs to the implementing agencies. In reality, multiple approaches may be required to provide adequate estimates of the wide variety of species in the snapper grouper complex, and so, going forward, we need to be looking at where is a census approach feasible and produces the best outcome and where do we

use a traditional survey, based on sampling some subset of those users, and so, really, in some cases, we may be able to do both to produce the best information.

The next thing we talked about was we looked at the council's recreational data needs, and, obviously, we've been talking about this for a long time, and Brian and I were just talking about it, and we were both on the council, maybe two decades now, and we talked about it then, and so this is certainly nothing new, and it's always been a great subject of interest to us, but I think it has now risen to the point that we have got to move forward and do something.

Some of the things that we talked about that need to be represented in the council data needs is that census approaches may be needed for some species, for example rare species with very low catch rates that traditional survey methods may just not produce the kind of information we need. Improved information on discards, and the workgroup noted that discard data are self-reported and unvalidated, and so observers, such as used in commercial fisheries, are not practical for evaluating and validating discards in the recreational fishery, and so there has got to be some other approaches, somewhat similar to what was discussed yesterday about the standard bycatch reporting methodology, and we've got to look at ways -- One of the things that was brought up was test fishing, I think is what Erik Williams called it, where you go out and try to conduct fishing operations in the same way that are being used across the area of concern, and you use that as sort of an indicator of what would be going on in the broader fishery.

Then the other thing that came up in those discussions is that fishing power, or catchability, if you want to call it that, has certainly changed since the beginning of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. I mean, we have a tendency, for lack of really any way to do it better, to compare a unit effort of fishing effort from 1980 the same as it is in 2020, and certainly, with all the technological advances and the advances in fishing tackle, and, I mean, things have certainly changed, and so that's an area that -- I don't know that there's an easy way to calibrate it, and calibrating, as we all know, has got its own set of problems, but it's something that we've got to at least consider going forward.

The last few things were talked about were the National Academies of Science study on the feasibility of in-season management of ACLs, and Dr. Luiz Barbieri is on the workgroup and served on that committee for NAS, and he gave us an insight, basically, that you really can't improve MRIP to the point to do the kinds of in-season ACL management that we would all like to see done, pursuant to the Act, and so that's just a reality check, and it just means that we've got to consider that when we develop plan amendments and go forward.

Then we talked a little bit about what's going on in the Gulf. As Dale mentioned, you've got different state permitting and licensing systems over there that are producing data in different ways, and, obviously, a lot has been learned through the execution of those programs over time, and so we're watching all that with great interest, to see how things flesh out over there.

Lastly, we decide that we need to hold a meeting in the first quarter of 2022 to finalize our recommendations and decide on a course forward. We will try to do that in February, so that I can come back to the council in March with a defined course of action, and that's the plan, and I hope that we can fulfill that, and so I will be glad to entertain any questions, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. We definitely have questions. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. That was very informative, Spud. Maybe this question is really for Andy, but we already have a federal mechanism for the charter guys, for the commercial guys, and we have a grouper snapper permit, and we have a king mackerel permit, and we have a dolphin wahoo permit, and the mechanism is already there, and it's online, and they've really done a great job of making it pretty darned simple to get this permit, to get these licenses.

How difficult would it really be to use the same exact system and just make recreational people that want to fish in federal waters go online and get a grouper snapper permit, get a dolphin wahoo permit, and just use the same -- I mean, we have the infrastructure there, and would it be all that difficult, really, just to use what we have and just require the recreational fishermen to do it?

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Tim, for the question. I can't speak to the difficulty, and, obviously, there is online systems that are built and used every day to apply for whatever you want to apply for. I will say, with the permits system that you're talking about, we're dealing with a universe of probably about 5,000 or 6,000 fishermen, in total, across the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. I have a staff of six people that runs our permits program, and so we're talking orders of magnitude larger, potentially, to run a recreational program.

With that said, I mean, the states do it with their license programs, and so it's certainly practical and feasible. The challenges we encounter with federal licenses is it's not that we can't require it, but it's that we can only charge the administrative costs of running the program, and none of that money essentially comes back to the agency to support the program, and so it goes into the General Treasury fund.

Unlike what the states have been doing to support and bolster their state survey programs, if we put together a federal permit and wanted to then put it towards snapper grouper management, that would be a separate line directive from Congress, rather than money that was actually paid for those licenses that are coming back to the agency to use them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Tim.

MR. GRINER: To that point, that's kind of what I was asking, because, I mean, it's becoming pretty clear, as Spud said, that getting this done on the state level is just not looking like it's going to ever happen, and so now we kind of know now that, on the federal level, it doesn't look like they're in much better shape to actually implement this and make it happen, from a fiscal standpoint, from how is this going to get funded, and, if we're going through Congress to get it funded, where are we, really, then? If the states can't do it, and the federal -- If we can't do it at a federal level, how do we come up with a license, and how are we ever going to get off of square one? To me, that's the real quandary, and I just don't know how we get started with something that we so desperately need.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So you think all of you state folks could get together and look at your program and everyone could just agree that that might be what we want to use? Then all the states take it back to their folks, and let's go ahead and get it done, or, I mean, could the council administer the license? You call the -- Or go online and print your license out, and we just keep a mainframe of information and forward it on to the appropriate people who don't want to mess with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: These are great questions, and I think that's some of the things that that workgroup has been struggling with. Spud, do you want to respond?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes. I mean, I think, in a perfect world, Chris, we could take the Florida model and spread it across the rest of the South Atlantic, but the issue there is getting it done through the state governance processes, and, frankly, and I will just speak very bluntly and candidly about this, going to a state legislature and asking them to take action to address what most people see as a federal fishery problem, especially with everybody's dander up like it is about that species that will not be spoken of, it's just -- I mean, it's -- If I was still working, and if I was in Carolyn's job, and somebody told me that I had to go to the Commissioner of DNR and say I need you to use some of your political chips in the game and do this, I -- That's a tough, tough place to be right now.

That's why we looked at the HMS model. I mean, I understand that it's a money thing, and I understand the predicament that Andy's in, but you've got something already established that's been proven to work that we believe could be adapted, and you would think that, if it takes money to do it, that there are some folks out there in Congress who could get that done. I mean, we're not talking about trillion of dollars, which is what they talk about now, and, I mean, we're talking about -- I don't know what it is, but it can -- There is an established way to do this, and I think somebody has just got to stand up and go, we're going to use what's already there, what's working and can get it done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris, a follow-up?

MR. CONKLIN: The HMS permit is extremely easy to get, and it seems like they could just change the algorithm and start some new numbers and put it in a different database and have a different URL or something, and let's bust it out, baby.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chester and then Dewey.

MR. BREWER: Following on with some of what Chris has been talking about, and what the group was talking about, one of the issues that did come up in our workgroup is the cost, and the question was, well, what does it cost Florida to do the present program on both the east and west coast of Florida, and a number that came back as -- It wasn't to the penny, but it was -- It's a number like three-and-a-half million dollars, and that includes getting the program set up.

If you take a look at the economic losses that have occurred as a result of -- I am not going to use the word "mismanagement", but I will say the economic costs of what has been going on with snapper grouper and our inability to get the data that we need to try to manage these fisheries properly, that's a drop in the bucket, and I agree with Chris. I mean, lord knows it's not a big number, and we need to have somebody stand up and say, okay, let's get some money appropriated to get this done and just get it done.

Also, a thought with regard to the federal registry, and I was around when that was going on, and what it did was, if you -- Well, this whole federal registry program was set up, but, if the states had a saltwater fishing license, and that license met certain criteria that were included within the federal registry program, then the citizens of the state would be exempted, and they wouldn't have

to buy a separate license, and so there is some uniformity right now with regard to the licenses across the states.

I remember that Florida had to make some modifications to its licensing requirements and rules and whatnot to come into compliance, which was done, and so now recreational folks are exempted in the State of Florida from the federal registry, and so we do have that uniformity, and we do have the model already of HMS, and we've got what the State of Florida has done, and now, admittedly, it's kind of in its infancy on the east coast of Florida, but it's been done, and it's not hard to sign up for this -- Let's call it a license or a permit or whatever you want to call it, and, in fact, it's quite easy. Certainly we probably ought to wait for the recommendation to come back from the workgroup committee, but I do think that the council needs to be thinking along those lines and moving towards that goal. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chester. Dewey and then Mel and then Andy and then Tim.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The HMS, I believe, is under 25,000 permits, and that is no reporting, and it's just having the issue of having a permit, and they haven't got into where they report or anything to that aspect. The Mid-Atlantic Council tilefish, to date, has under 900 people that have registered for that permit, and I believe that was built -- That system was built, and I don't know about the implementation, but the app itself, for \$20,000, is what I was told, and so there's a lot of different mechanisms out there, and it's just nobody has grabbed the bull by the horns and went with it, and so we're still kicking the can down the road until we figure that out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to keep moving down my list. Mel.

MR. BELL: Thanks. I haven't been around as long as Spud in this, but I have this feeling of déjà vu all over again and again and again, and we've talked about a lot of this stuff for years, but one thing that I guess we could put this to rest, and so, borrowing from our terrestrial friends, and so there's a federal migratory waterfowl stamp, and so the U.S. Fish and Wildlife manages that.

They have been doing that for a number of years, and, as Andy mentioned, when you look at like the charter boat community, there's only 5,000 of those folks, or whatever, and that's manageable, but, when you start looking at private boat anglers, now the numbers go crazy high. I don't know how many duck hunters there are in the whole country in the program, but probably quite a few, and so it's a much larger body that you're dealing with, in terms of data collection, but, you know, a model like that -- Of course, that would be totally separate and independent from MRIP, but is that -- Is there any utility in looking at how they manage ducks, through a program like that, and you still have to have a state hunting license, and so, in this case, you would have to have a state fishing license, and then there would be this completely different permit endorsement or stamp or whatever you want to call it, but however they -- A similar model to how they deal with ducks.

I don't know if that would work or not, but it's there, and everybody knows it's there, and it comes up every once in a while, and people point to us that, well, why can't you do like you manage waterfowl, and the other thing is, okay, we've got different ways that we've been talking about where we could build -- I call it building the address book of snapper grouper fishermen, or selected species, whatever it is within snapper grouper.

You could build the address book through some sort of -- Maybe even the states could help with that, by simply asking do you intend to fish for these species, and that's where we got kind of into the issue of, if you said do you intend to fish for these species, and, to do it, give us two-bucks or something, and that's where it gets tricky, if you start talking about money.

If it's a free endorsement, or a free acknowledgement, that, yes, I fish for these species, then, as we talked in the committee about, well, it's free, and then everybody will get it, but the point is that you develop this phone book of snapper grouper fishermen in the southeast region, and then what do you do with it? That's what I keep going, is we could figure this out, and then what do you do with it?

How does that interface back with MRIP, or do you use it separately, and I think we've kind of figured out, in the discussions we had last week, or whenever that was, that it's not real compatible with MRIP, necessarily, because they're using a different phone book and a different process, and so you would have to create something, again kind of independent from MRIP, but I think we need to be clear on -- We're trying to suggest different ways of acquiring a better universe of anglers for certain species, and what are we going to do with that universe when we get it? How do we intend to apply it?

Are we going to apply it somehow through the MRIP mechanism, or a completely separate mechanism, but it's -- You know, we could come up with -- That's probably the easier part, coming up with the universe somehow, and that's, again, where the states perhaps could help, and Florida has already got a handle on their reef fish endorsement, or whatever they call it, and we don't, but a simple, yes, I intend to fish for these species, and I think states could maybe handle that sort of thing, and, again, if it didn't cost money, it would be helpful, but I guess my two questions are is there any value in looking at what U.S. Fish and Wildlife does related to migratory waterfowl?

If that's just not going to happen, or isn't practical, maybe that goes off completely, and the other thing is, if we build this universe of known snapper grouper anglers, what are we going to do with it, and so those are my two general questions, I guess.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go to Andy, just a couple of points about the State Reef Fish Survey, and so it is free. If you do get it online, there is a convenience fee that you're charged by the vendor. You do have to reregister for it every year, even if you do not need a fishing license, and so, in Florida, if you're over sixty-five, you don't need a fishing license, but you are still required to sign-up for the State Reef Fish Survey.

It does give us that phone book, and we do get money, as you heard from Chester, \$3.5 million, to administer this program, and it runs side-by-side with MRIP, and, even though it's free, not everybody signs up for it, and so we have a mechanism, statistically, to account for that, and we did look at the migratory bird permit, the duck stamp, whatever you want to call it, and we did look at that, and other Gulf states did as well, before establishing their programs, and so definitely it's something that we looked at. I've got a lot of folks in the queue. I have Andy, Tim, Chris, and then Kerry.

MR. STRELCHECK: I wrote down some notes, but I guess, in response to that, I know that we are going to be working toward a response to the NAS study, and, to me, there may be some opportunities there, from an agency standpoint, as to how do we respond to that and some of the

challenges and issues that were brought forward there, in terms of recommendations and how we best address them as an agency, and so certainly we'll keep you informed as that develops.

What I wanted to say is maybe make a few more broad comments, and I really like how this conversation is going right now, and we're throwing out a lot of ideas, and so I think we need to keep the ideas coming. I think it's easy to get caught up in why an idea may not work, and I would encourage all of us to keep every idea on the table, even if it's not something that you feel like long-term might be supported or not, and let's slowly push them off the table, but after a significant vetting process and thought process.

We're centering a lot of the conversation, thanks to Spud and that group, around data collection, and I don't disagree that data is certainly an important aspect of this. I don't want to use data though as the only scapegoat here of kind of addressing the challenges we're facing not only with snapper grouper management, but federal management, and, to me, there's four focal areas, data being one of them, and that's going to help us improve management and the science that supports the management, but, in the other three, we have gear, or technology, right, and how do we use that to potentially avoid discards or reducing catch, and we have effort limitations, which certainly has been shared, by Jimmy Hull and others, as maybe unpopular, but it's certainly used in many other instances, and then we have avoidance, right, and that's essentially keeping people off of the fish in some form or fashion and taking into account the regional diversity of our fisheries.

I say all that because we have to keep in mind that this fishery -- Many of you have been involved in it far longer than I have, but it's dramatically changed in the last twenty or thirty years, and the same tools that worked twenty or thirty years ago aren't going to work today. There is more effort and more boats and better technology. I mean, I remember the days of LORAN-C, and many of you probably remember the days of LORAN-A and prior to that, but you can get on a site now within feet of where you're intending to fish.

I just wanted to provide that encouraging word, and I think this is great, in terms of discussion, and I think keep the ideas coming, and I certainly could sit here and say why it might be a challenging path to go down to put together a patchwork of state surveys, but I am also thoughtful in terms of thinking about how that could work in the context of building that program successfully and holistically across the entire South Atlantic and Southeast, and so thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Great points. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really agree with what Andy was saying there, but, at the end of the day, you've got to start somewhere, and I am still a little bit confused, maybe, on what is the purview of this council? What can we actually do? I mean, can we just, I mean, through some framework or some amendment, can we require a permit, and, if we do require a permit, and we have the ability to require a permit, who can we force to do that? We can't make the states do it, and so who do we require this of, and how do we make it happen?

Back to, I think, the real problem here, and Jimmy talked about it, and Andy talked about it, and the real problem here is effort, and, when we talk about managing a fishery, we don't manage fish. We manage effort, and that's really all we can do. We can't make a fish spawn, and we can't wave a wand and make recruitment go up or down. The only thing we really can do is manage effort, and the beginning of managing effort is to identify who is it that is creating the effort.

I am really just kind of confused on, if we've got to manage effort, but we've got to start by knowing who is creating the effort, but who do we go to, and what is our path forward? Where we do start to actually require this? What can the council do to require this of somebody? We can't go to each individual state and make them do it. We can ask them to do it, but, as a council, who can we make do this? Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know who that question is for. My recollection is, and I will look over here at Mel, but we had an amendment that started on this, and then we put it on hold to talk about what the states could do, and then we started this workgroup, but we had to put that on hold, because we couldn't figure out a path. You know, do we ask the states, and the workgroup has been kind of digging into that, and do we require a federal permit, and then how, but, yes, we had an amendment that was started, and do you recall?

MR. BELL: I don't recall numbers, if we assigned a number or if we started down that direction, but, yes, we started towards what we were thinking would be an action towards a fix, and then we realized that we needed to step back and utilize the group and kind of say, okay, what is that we're trying to fix, and how are we trying to fix it, and what are the boundaries and that kind of thing, and that's why we slipped over to the workgroup.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I think maybe looking back to the whole National Saltwater Angler Registry thing is kind of informative, because what happened is a decision was made to establish, in essence, an EEZ fishing license, and then states were given the option that, if they could meet, as Chester described, a set of standards, then their state licenses would substitute for those registry licenses in the EEZ, and their anglers would be exempt.

The creation of the National Angler Registry didn't force a state to do anything. A state had the option of taking action to have their anglers exempt, which is what we did in Georgia, and we created a saltwater information permit, a free add-on, to the license, and that kept our anglers from having to go buy a, whatever it was, twenty-five-dollar National Saltwater Angler Registry, but it is my understanding, and Monica and Andy can correct me, but we could promulgate an amendment, but we can't make a state do anything, and there's got to be an incentive for a state to take action to support federal fishery management, if you want that state to do it.

Somebody has got to create something, under federal law, and then possibly give a state the option to do something to make their anglers exempt, and so that's kind of the way I understand how the whole governance process would work, and is that feasible or applicable in this situation? I don't know. I mean, that's something that I think we've all got to -- We've got to decide, but writing it in a plan amendment and telling Georgia and South Carolina and North Carolina -- That's not going to happen, I don't think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go back to you, Monica put her hand up, and so let's go to Monica, and then we'll go back to the queue.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just real quick, to Tim's question, the Magnuson Act gives you authority, if you think it's appropriate for conservation and management, and if you can create

such a record to support it, to require a permit, and it talks about a fishery permit, and it doesn't say whether it's commercial or recreational. I think it's geared, ideally, toward commercial, because of the way it's set out, but you can require the permit for any fishing vessel, the operator of any such vessel, or United States fish processor. As has been said before, there is a recreational permit in the HMS fishery, and so, if you build the record, you could require, I believe, a recreational fishery permit of some sort in your FMPs. Now, there are other things, other laws, that might kick in along the way, but that's kind of down the road, but right now, Tim, the Magnuson Act gives you the authority.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am going to go back to Tim, and then we'll go to Chris and Kerry.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, and, to that point, that's kind of where I was trying to get, because this state registry never got us where we needed to be, and so I think the path forward here I just as Monica said, and we have the ability to do this.

This council can, through our FMP, instigate an amendment to require this permit, and then, at that point, after we have built the record and we have this amendment in place, then, at that point, as far as I know, it's going to kind of fall back to the National Marine Fisheries Service to actually figure out how to implement it and how it's going to be paid for and how long that takes for it to actually happen, but, as far as what this council can do, we have to use the Magnuson to get this started, because we do have the ability to require this of an angler who wants to participate in fishing in the EEZ, and so I really and truly think that we can talk about it until we're all blue in the face, but we really need to start an action, an amendment, to these fishery management plans that requires this, and we need to do it now, at this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tim. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: It sounds like the Magnuson Act is telling us that we can only do a vessel permit, or can we do an individual angler permit? That's my question, but then I had a comment as well.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I will look into it further, but, right now, I can read you what the Act says, and it says any fishery management plan, which is prepared by any council or the Secretary, with respect to any fishery, may require a permit to be obtained from and fees paid to the Secretary with respect to (a) any fishing vessel of the United States fishing or wishing to fish in the Exclusive Economic Zone; (b) the operator of any such vessel; (c) a processor.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and so the other comment I had was, if we want to collect data and try and use more than that, then we would need to align with -- Sort of like Spud said, to align with the MRIP or whoever to say what -- To validate our process, because what I don't want to see is like in the Gulf, and we've had several people come here and present from each state, and they have all come up with their own ideas, and they're all trying to get validated, and they're working the hell out of the federal government and trying to go through four or five different systems, and it seems like one blanket approach that could be instantly plugged in and transitioned alongside, for data collection, if that was the route we wanted to go, other than just getting the universe, would be the appropriate route.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thanks. Out of respect for letting the workgroup finish their work, I am not going to do what I am inclined to do, which is just to plow through and say let's just start an amendment, because what I'm hearing from you, Spud, is that where you all are now is that it's going to be a federal issue and not a state issue, but I know that you all want to have one more meeting, but I think absolutely we're well within our right to go ahead and start an amendment, where we require recreational permits.

I think that -- I just was going back and reading Amendment 4, where we required commercial permits, and the justification is exactly the same justification that we're dealing with now, and so that's the beginning of a record.

Second of all, from what I can tell, and I just got it, and so I might be mistaken, but, from what I can tell, the permit was required for the purpose of data collection, but, in that amendment, I don't believe that's the amendment where the data collection steps were laid out, and so I don't think we need to have everything figured out in order to start this process, as far as what we're going to collect and how we're going to use it, and I think we can get a permit out there and go from there, and I think that it's going to have to be on NMFS.

I hate to do it to them, and I think it's going to put them in a tough spot, and I get the financial aspect of it, but I don't know how we do it any other way, and I think we need to do it at our next meeting, at the very latest, because I can't imagine looking that AP in the eyes again and telling them that we're still talking about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree with everything you're saying, Kerry. Before I go to Spud, a couple of ideas. We could maybe pull that existing amendment back onto the schedule, and maybe bring that back in March and start looking at it, and, in theory, if I understand the timeline from Spud, the workgroup would try to meet again maybe in February, before the March council meeting, but I agree with what you're saying, Kerry, that it seems like we're kind of getting to a place where it's going to have to be some type of federal permit, through a council amendment process, whoever is going to administer it, and, if I'm not mistaken, we talked about, at the workgroup, that the Mid-Atlantic just established, in a year, a blue-line tilefish permit, and wasn't that one of the things that we talked about? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and that's -- I don't know all the specifics of it, but, yes, they decided that we needed this, and they implemented it. A couple of things, just to throw out there for consideration, and the NMFS S&T staff that administer MRIP are working on this rare-event problem, and so there are efforts underway to couple together with a potential license frame, a mechanism, to improve the dockside sampling and that sort of thing.

I mean, we talked about private docks remain a problem, and there is a lot more private docks than there has ever been, and a lot of your most efficient and effective fisherman never go to a publicly-accessible place. They go back to private docks, and so that's going to remain a problem, but it's not a fatal problem, but it's just a problem that has to be dealt with.

Monica did raise an interesting question in my mind though, and the way she read that language, and it talks about the operator of a vessel, and so that makes me -- I am trying to think back, and what enabled the creation of the National Saltwater Angler Registry, because that language you

read doesn't talk about a fisherman, and it talks about the operator of a vessel, and so what enabled that to be created?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Congress. When Congress -- I think this came in with the 2006/2007 reauthorization of the Magnuson Act, and they created, under Section 401(g), and it talks about -- 401(g) states Recreational Fisheries, Section (1) Federal Program, the Secretary shall establish and implement a regionally-based registry program for recreational fishermen in each of the eight fishery management regions. The program shall provide for the registration of individuals who engage in recreational fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone, for anadromous species, or in the continental shelf, and, if appropriate, the registration, including the ownership, operator, and identification of the vessels used in such fishing.

Congress got a lot more specific, in terms of going to the individuals, as opposed to the previous section that I read to you about your authority to require fishing vessel permits and those sorts of things, and I will look into this further, because it is a very interesting issue, but, yes, it's the language of the Act that Congress used.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Certainly that's helpful, and I don't want to bog us down in the minutia of this, but I think this will be important for us at our next workgroup meeting, because that raises the question of is that authority created by Congress applicable to the situation that we're talking about here, and is it -- Basically, we're talking about a variation of the registry, and so I'm just trying to make sure that I understand, because, when we talk about this next, we're going to really get into the details of how do we go forward with this and what governance structure is supporting it.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: To that point, I will try to get you more information, and the one section I read about 303(b), it's a discretionary provision. If you deem it's necessary for conservation and management, the council puts this in their FMP, that they want this for these reasons, and they build the record, and then that gets sent to the Secretary in the usual process of your FMP amendments. This section that I read in 401(g) talks about the Secretary shall establish and implement the registry program, and so there's a little difference there too, but I will try to get you more information by the time of the next workgroup meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just curious, because I feel for the money issue that's going to happen, and has it ever been bantered around, when Magnuson was being reauthorized, and is it through Magnuson, and I know the collection of fees part is through Magnuson, but is the fact that it goes into the General Treasury and not back to you all ever tried to have been addressed through Congress?

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't know definitively, and I assume it has, and we can't lobby Congress, and so that's the challenge. I guess, with this conversation, I've thought a lot of ideas, in terms of potentially ways to minimize costs, if we go down this path, and so I want to explore those, obviously, before bringing them back before the council, but I will say, and Monica can certainly

add to this, there is an anti-deficiency law, and so, if we can't afford it, and the council took action, we wouldn't be required to implement it at that point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to try to wrap this discussion up a little bit, and then we'll take a break and then come back to the framework action. I am looking to Kerry maybe to help me a little bit here, and so maybe this is direction to staff to hold the next workgroup prior to the March council meeting, to make sure it's before the next meeting, and then maybe to bring that amendment back in March, so that we can look at it and start talking about this. That way, we could already have it ready to go and start reacting to what the workgroup is coming up with, which is also this discussion.

I am wondering if we need a presentation about what the Mid-Atlantic did with the blueline tilefish, that maybe that comes back to the council, instead of just only going to the workgroup. I see heads nodding yes, and I'm looking over here, and what am I missing? Kerry and then Chris.

MS. MARHEFKA: It's clear that my intent to is, when we look at the spreadsheet later in the meeting, is to try to move the Rubik's Cube, so that that new amendment floats high, and I'm just putting that on the table now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks for bringing the presentation thing up. I started daydreaming, but what I was going to ask was if we could perhaps get someone from the Fish and Wildlife Service in to -- We had them come a few years ago, when we had other council members, to educate us on their duck stamp and waterfowl reporting. Since Florida looked at it, it may be of utility. Also, if someone from FWC, from your office, for a brief presentation, the Mid-Atlantic blueline tilefish, and someone perhaps from HMS that is already doing that. That may be essential, and I hate presentations, but I believe that out, of those four, that we could really get something good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I'm going to try to help Mike get this typed out, and so presentations about Mid-Atlantic blueline tilefish, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with the waterfowl, FWC's State Reef Fish Survey program, HMS. I see that John has come to the table.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I just want to, I guess, make sure you're prepared to make the appropriate changes in your priorities for March, because we already have a full meeting, really, with things planned, and this is entirely new, and we know, with this level of presentations, you're probably looking at half a day. Would the council be interested in doing a webinar meeting that just knocked out these presentations?

The workgroup has talked about a lot of these things along the way, and they've certainly talked about the Mid-Atlantic situation, and they started out focusing on how the Mid-Atlantic has used that for reporting, and we've heard about the large pelagic survey, which is the data collection component of the HMS permit, and so the working group has been through a lot of this stuff in a fair amount of detail, about the Florida program, all of the Gulf state programs, and so maybe a meeting that's webinar, where we can knock this stuff out in advance of the March meeting, and I know it's another thing to put on everybody's schedules, and I'm thinking, for staff, we're not making these presentations, and we're just needing to set this meeting up. It may really help too

those other people to participate if it's remote like that, and it may help our workplan, and so that's kind of the only practical way that I can see of pulling all that off.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would throw out another alternative could be if folks felt like we needed to see those presentations and then have the discussion in person, assuming that we're going to be in-person in March, and then maybe there's something else that was listed for March and that that could go to the webinar. Just maybe there's a way, when we look at the priority, what is the thing, or things, that could go to a half-day webinar, if people really want to have this piece at the March meeting itself, because, first, you've got to get the timing of the workgroup, and then there's a small window before the March meeting, and so just another thing to think about, and we'll look at it, I guess, when we get to the priorities later in the week. Mel and then Laurilee.

MR. BELL: I was just going to -- John covered it, but, when we started going through the list and building, I started getting tunnel vision and thinking about the multicolored spreadsheet, and that's the practical concern, that, as John mentioned, when we add this very important stuff in there, that's fine, but then something else has to move, and so I think, if you kind of let us work through what's the best way to do this, then it will probably have to have some sort of separate web-based meeting, but it's just does this stuff go in that, or does something else go in that, and maybe we'll have a better idea when we get to Thursday, or whenever we're going to talk about the spreadsheet, but, yes, that's the -- It's definitely important, and we definitely need to get this thing going, but it's a balancing act.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Another route, depending on how quickly you need the presentations, would be if you wanted to do them possibly as part of the council seminar series. It would take longer, and there would be several iterations of that to have these different presentations, but you may not need all four of these presentations in order to take the action that you want to take in March, but you would still be able to receive the information as those actions are moving along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like that mechanism. However, for me, seeing all those things kind of back-to-back, almost side-by-side, that has some utility for me, as opposed to seeing one every three or four weeks, and then I kind of forget what I learned about this particular thing, and so, yes, I like the thought, and so that's just another mechanism. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Do we need to also have a presentation from someone to talk about MRIP and how this fits all in with MRIP?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Laurilee covered one of the things that I wanted to mention, and I would agree that, based on Mel's comments and my thoughts of, okay, we do this permit, and how are we going to use it, and so it would be good to have Science and Technology speak to us. The other thing I think we need to keep in mind, and it goes to what John was saying, is, with the prioritization schedule, I think we've jumped into some of the long-term strategic thinking here, in terms of broader snapper grouper management, which is good, but how do we prioritize that relative to some of the shorter-term needs of ending overfishing and reducing discards in red snapper, and

where is the urgency with those relative to this, and so I see this as all important, and we all need to move on it and get to it, but it's a matter of sequencing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great points. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just FYI, looking at the doodle poll responses, it looks like we'll be having our next workgroup meeting on February 9. It looks like everybody checked that box.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else here before we take a break? We've got a number of items there, including the date of the next workgroup. Anything else for this discussion? Okay. Let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Next up on our list, because we kind of flip-flopped some things on the agenda here, is we're going to turn it over to Mike, and he's going to talk to us about the release mortality reduction framework action, and he is going to use the discussion document, and then we will react to that. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to be going through the document that was included in your briefing book. Just kind of as a reminder of what brought this document up, this project started in response, initially, to the red snapper stock assessment, SEDAR 73, but it's really addressing kind of a longer-standing and longer-discussed issue that goes beyond the red snapper fishery alone.

The council decided to respond to that assessment, and red snapper, of course, are overfished and overfishing is occurring, according to that. The council decided to respond to that in a two-step approach that included a framework amendment that would quickly implement changes that could reduce discard mortality in the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, in the short-term, and then it has also a co-occurring longer-term project to develop a more holistic approach to manage the entire snapper grouper fishery in some manner, and so this doesn't necessarily mean uniform management, but it does mean some type of complementary management, where species regulations are developed kind of in cooperation with each other, to the extent possible, and that's something that you will hear about a little bit later on in the agenda, kind of the updates on that longer-term project.

For the shorter-term, this discard reduction framework amendment, kind of the bones that started it were recommendations from the Snapper Grouper AP in April of 2021. The council, at your last meeting, you all directed the AP to discuss the recommendations that they had given previously and provide a bit more detail on how those would go actually, potentially, into effect, and Jimmy went over the AP's comments regarding those issues.

From the staff end, in the interim, what we've been doing is we've looked at some of the questions that have been asked both by the AP as well as the council, in your last discussion, on information -- Kind of previous discussions where these issues have come up and some of the previous actions that have, in some way, addressed discards for the fishery, or tried to address, or considered addressing, discards in the fishery, and we compiled that information, along with putting together

some information on landings and discards for a few select species that have been recently assessed.

I am not going to go into extreme depth, because I know that there is a lot of discussion to be had, and what we're really looking for, at this point, is some direction on what this framework is going to look like moving forward, but I do want to just direct your attention for a little while to the figures that were included in the document.

We looked at three species, red snapper, gag grouper, and greater amberjack, and we didn't want to bog down with the entirety of the snapper grouper fishery, but we did want to look at some species that were recently assessed and that each had kind of different stories going along with them, as far as where they are in terms of discards and landings and stock status, and so red snapper -- Looking at the recreational fishery, you can see here the discards are shown in the black-dashed, and the landings are shown in the red-solid line. This is, again, for the recreational, and you can see the huge disparity that there is between the number of fish that are landed and the number of fish that are discarded.

Scrolling down to gag grouper, you can see that those things are much more tightly coupled, and there's not that giant gap that you saw at the end of red snapper, and they kind of follow a similar trend, and gag grouper, of course, also is overfished and experiencing overfishing, but we've talked about some different issues associated with that, having difficulties with recruitment, and we don't hear the same reports, anecdotally from fishermen, of high abundance of gag grouper that we hear about for red snapper, and so that's another species within this management plan that has a little bit of a different story.

Then, looking at greater amberjack, where you have discards that are at a much lower level compared to the landings, and we have a different stock status for that fishery, and that fishery is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring for that fishery.

One of the reasons for kind of taking a brief look at these different things are that all of these are included in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and, as the AP pointed out in their comments, this is an incredibly diverse management plan, with the sheer number of species and the different depths where these species reside and the different areas of the water column where they reside, and so that's something to take into account as you all go about developing how to tackle the issue of reducing discards. It may not be that you are reducing discards throughout the fishery by a policy that is put in place for the entire fishery. You may be targeting that towards a particular portion of the management plan.

The other thing, and we also, just for comparison, we included commercial information here, and, really, the big take-away, as you look through the commercial figures, and I am not going to go through them in as much depth, but, if you look at the scales of the commercial figures, there is orders of magnitude difference between the recreational discards and the commercial discards, and that is kind of saying, if you're going to address the big driver of the discards overall in the fishery, you're going to be looking primarily at the recreational sector, and so that's something to also take into account as you all discuss where you want this framework amendment to go.

After putting together kind of that landings discard information, we also looked into the specific recommendations that the AP previously had and that the council wanted to look a bit further into,

and the first of these is gear modifications, and what we did for each of these is we looked at the previous discussions related to these, and so some of this came from past minutes, and some of this came from previous amendments, not all necessarily in the snapper grouper fishery, but just trying to find some type of precedent where the council has been talking and where we can kind of pick up conversations that have been previously had of how to address discards in the fishery or these specific types of regulations.

For gear modifications, the council has previously discussed things like single-hook rigs or larger hooks or leader modifications, in one way or another, and the leader modifications has been more discussed at the state level, and North Carolina has some state-based specifications for leader length for red drum, but there is some level of precedent around the table to talk about these type of things.

Then there's kind of a host of other gear modifications, and we tried to make a point of including the references for these, so that you can go back and look at these different actions in greater detail as you need to, but I just wanted to outline that the information is out there, and the discussions have been had, many of these previously, and so we can kind of -- Hopefully you all can recall some of what's been discussed in the past as you move forward.

The other thing that we did, in looking at these and compiling this information, is we looked into other regions, but, really, the only one that fit similar to the South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Management Plan, as far as being a multispecies federal management plan, is under the Pacific Fishery Management Council, their Groundfish FMP, and that's another one that has a pretty diverse array of species that, kind of similar to the Snapper Grouper FMP, they reside in different places in the water column, and they are separated in different areas throughout the region, geographically, and so there is a little bit more kind of like the regional aspect of management with those types of fish as well.

Looking at some of the gear restrictions that they have there, one of the things about their setup is that they divide up their region into the waters off of the specific states, and so you will have different gear restrictions in the federal waters off of California than what you will off of Oregon, and some of those gear restrictions are outlined there in the document.

Then, scrolling down, and we'll kind of follow a similar format for the spatial and timed seasonal openings aspect, and we included some of the comments from the Snapper Grouper AP in the document, but we'll also look at what previously has been discussed. The council has talked about these types of issues via Amendments 14 and 16 and 17A, and those are all places where there have been seasons put in place or closed areas discussed, considered, or implemented. We also have Amendment 17B, Amendment 36, and Amendment 43 and Regulatory Amendment 30, and so this has been another issue that has kind of recurringly been discussed at the council table that you all can hopefully take some note of your previous actions as you move forward here.

One thing that is a little bit outside of that, and this is still under development, is the snapper grouper vision blueprint. The vision blueprint was developed, but the amendment corresponding to that is still paused at this point, but one of the goals that came out of that visioning effort for management was suggested consideration of species or area-specific quota-based management on a state-by-state or sub-regional basis, and then there were several other notes that were looking -- This could also consider region or state-specific landings limits or quota, region or state-specific

openings and closings, consideration of fishing seasons for co-occurring species, aggregate bag limits, and a specified number of days allowed for fishing.

Then, coming back to kind of what's been done in the Pacific Council, they have -- I felt like this table really was descriptive of how they operate in different areas off of the Washington area of their coast, but what you can see is they divide up their section of it into different marine areas, and you have specified openings and closings throughout the year. All openings occur in mid-March, and closings occur in mid-October, but, within that, you have different groups of species that are open are different times of the year, and that's something that is being done at another council. If the South Atlantic were interested in that, not necessarily following the exact model, but something that is adopted more to the South Atlantic that the council could consider.

Then, finally, we included notes about the red snapper slot limit, or maximum size limit, that was brought up, and this is something that the AP has -- They have their comments brought up, and they weren't heavily in favor of. With red snapper, one of the issues for that that kind of came up at the AP, and has been coming up, is that a slot limit only addresses the discard issue within the three days that the recreational fishery is open, but, the rest of the year, it wouldn't really be addressing that as much, and so there are some notes related to that, but the general impression was that the AP wasn't in favor of that response to this issue.

Then, finally, there were kind of comments that were given at the AP meeting that are noted there, and that Jimmy noted, and there were a couple of other amendments that we noted related to some aspect of discard mortality that wasn't -- It didn't really fit in with the other topics, and so, for Regulatory Amendment 4, this allowed for the retention of incidentally-caught fish on commercial black sea bass trips, and so that would talk about incidental retention, not necessarily in the commercial fishery, but talking about that in the aspect of the recreational fishery as the discard reduction type of mechanism, and then Amendment 46 has been postponed and got brought up in the private recreational workgroup discussion that is looking at recreational permits and reporting, and we just got the report from that workgroup in the previous agenda item.

That is kind of a bunch of information that we put together for the council to review, and what we're looking at -- From a staff perspective, what we're looking to the council for is guidance on how we can further develop this framework amendment to reduce snapper grouper dead discards. What is the next step that the council would like us to take in developing this, and what does the council want included in this framework amendment as it moves forward, and, with that, I will pass it back to you, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Mike, and so do we have any questions? I feel like we're going to have a lot of comments, but any questions for Mike about something that he said or something that you saw in this document? Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to add that, from the Snapper Grouper AP meeting, one of the most viable suggestions that I heard, with regard to reducing red snapper dead discards during the season, was to get away from the trip limit of one fish per person recreationally and go with a weight, so that -- The one-per-person issue is that they're just high-grading. I mean, if you tell somebody they can only catch one red snapper, they're going -- If they catch little red snappers, they're going to keep fishing until they catch the biggest one, and they're

going to stay out there all day anyway, and they're going to fish, fish, fish until they get the biggest one.

I thought that maybe, and the suggestion to me would work, is if it was by weight. A big red snapper is eighteen pounds, and most people are going to try to catch somewhere in the fifteen to eighteen-pound range. If you had that, yes, there will still be some cheating, but most people are going to -- If they're catching these little fish, they're going to weigh them, and I've got my eighteen pounds, or I've got seventeen pounds, and so you reach a -- Instead of discarding all these little fish that they're going to encounter, a total weight per person, by weight rather than by a number of fish, and so they're going to try to catch that eighteen-pound fish either in one fish or they're going to catch it in little fish to add up to eighteen, and that could be -- Because the high-grading is the issue during the season. I mean, everybody is high-grading.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy, I thought that the AP also was talking about a by-weight vessel limit, and did I miss that? I thought that you guys had a discussion about that.

MR. HULL: I don't remember that. I remember that it was an individual weight, instead of a one-fish limit, because it's just they're going to high-grade until they catch the biggest fish they can catch, and so, as I said, most of the fish -- You can figure out what the biggest fish are that are coming in from the intercepts, recreationally, and it may make more sense, but that's only for the season. Now, if you get down the road and you have some seasons, by doing some other things, then it would really be beneficial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. All right. After this, we'll be discussing not only the two-for-one, but the more holistic, longer-term look at the snapper grouper fishery management strategy evaluation, but that is going to be, if you've looked at the document that was in the late materials, a multiyear process, and so we need to do something sooner rather than later, and there are a plethora of actions here inside this formwork amendment of some things that could move faster, and I would like to have some discussion on some ideas of some things, because, ultimately, what we're trying to do here is, yes, we're looking at the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, but, for red snapper, we're trying to reduce the discards, primarily outside the season. Who would like to start? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Some of the ideas I think that stick out to me are I think we need to look at some depth-based closures, and I think we need to look at some gear modifications, and we talked about single-hook rigs or how many lines can even be fished off of a boat, and I don't know enough about hook size, but I know that there's been some discussion about whether or not hook size can help with discard mortality, and start there and see how that goes, but it sounds to me, if I'm not mistaken, that it's really important right now that we as a council get a reduction in recreational discard mortality in order to preserve what ABC we have, and am I correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would say so, yes. We had some things thrown out there, and I see that Tom has his hand up.

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to concur on the idea of gear modifications. Specifically, at the North Carolina State Commission level, we looked at hook sizes recently, in terms of requiring circle hooks, and we have an excellent white paper that the Division of Marine Fisheries developed, and there's a lot of difficulty there, because there's no standardization of hook sizes.

When it comes to single-hook rigs, I think that's a potential viable option. Angler productivity, particularly in the bottom fishing world, has just gone up astronomically the last five to ten years. Specifically, the use of trolling motors and whatnot to do GPS anchoring has just made anglers very, very productive and able to fish small areas of bottom very, very quickly, and so I am curious to see if we can do some of that through something like single-hook rigs, which seems like more of a viable option to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tom. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess my perspective is that I think that we should focus on those things that would yield a demonstrable change to the satisfaction of the SSC, because, ultimately, they're going to be the group that decides whether or not we're going to be able to get credit for the reduction in discard mortality that will in fact translate to either an increase in the ABC, or at least maintenance of the existing ABC, and I think that's the real challenge with gear modifications, is having the before and after work that's been done to show that you actually do effect change and then having that change be able to stand up to some sort of rigorous review.

I mean, I listened to the struggle they had about descending devices, and there is a wealth of information about the efficacy of descending devices compared to some of these other things that we're talking about, and so I think that we need to really keep that in mind and not stop us, but focus on the things that we believe that we can get some demonstrable credit for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Also, I think outreach, and I think the AP discussed that as well, some outreach on best fishing practice methods, and I think that that would be great, but it's just hard to get a credit, if you will, for that. Are there other ideas? Andy and then Chris.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I wanted to first speak in support of Spud's comment just now, because I think that's the challenge before us, right? We need to make sure that, whatever we move forward with, we can demonstrate how that's going to reduce harvest. I like what Kerry and Tom were saying with regard to looking at gear modifications, and I really that that wasn't necessarily supported by the AP, but, between hook size and quantity, and I don't know if there is research with regard to position of the hooks, and I know, years ago, when I was actually doing science and research as a graduate student, I always remember the larger fish that hung out above the bottom, and the small fish were on the bottom, and so potentially there are some opportunities there.

With spatial area management, and the conversation earlier with Jimmy and the regional differences, I think there might be some opportunities to start looking at the SEFIS and MARMAP and headboat data and other data sources, to see if that could be utilized to identify hotspots or areas where we might want to try to keep people off the fish, while still giving plenty of opportunities for fishing outside of those areas, and then I also like the idea of, obviously, depth-based management and considering that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Chris and then Mel.

MR. CONKLIN: If we did want to go a depth-based route, we do have a line that's been vetted through the black sea bass pot amendment that could still allow for plenty of opportunity. It

doesn't go all the way south, but certainly in the majority of the heart of the red snapper country, and so that may be able to save us some time, and I remember, a meeting or two ago, and I believe Chester brought up an idea of a season, much like a hunting season, for snapper grouper species, which I don't know, and it's worth talking about, but time and area is certainly more appealing, but, the depth line, I think that would be a good way to start, I guess.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Mel.

MR. BELL: Kind of following up on Spud's point, I think try to focus on things that we feel that we can get a sense of a demonstrated reduction, and so gear modifications and anything just -- When we kind of start thinking through those things, just always keep in mind that, if we can keep it very simple, very black and white, then, when we eventually interface with discussions about enforceability, the simpler it is, the black or white, as black or white as you can keep it, it just makes it more practical for enforcement.

Then, to the depth thing, yes, I think, obviously, there is an issue with post-release mortality the deeper you go and that sort of thing, and so depth is a logical thing to consider. Again, the black sea bass line that we went through -- Our original concept was we were trying to work around depth, and we basically -- We basically took point to point to point to point to point and put that in the federal regs, to define kind of that depth, but we've done it, and so, you know, you can develop that line.

It might not work to say a hundred feet, or some X number of feet, but we might still have to define a line, and we could play off the line that we already have, maybe, or something, but I am just saying, as we -- I am not trying to shut anything down, but just kind of always keep in mind, whatever we do, particularly if we start tinkering with things that enforcement has to look at it and be able to go, yes, no, yes, no, the simpler we can make it, the better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like that. Mike, I was wondering if maybe you could start typing for us, there on the screen, some of these ideas, and maybe capture some of that, and so some of the things I have heard so far were depth-based closure, gear modifications, which included possibly the single-hook rigs, leader length, and the hook size. Also, how many rods can be fished say on a private vessel per person, or per vessel, and I also heard identifying hotspots, and so not a gear modification, but identifying hotspots. What else, folks? Now that you can see some of this going on the screen, are there things to add to this list? Did we leave anything off here? We're adding another one there for the weight. Chris, what have you got?

MR. CONKLIN: We need to look at seasons, to keep the hooks out of the water, one wave or two waves or no waves, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I also think that, once we start diving into this, that we might be pushing some of these things, and seasons might be one of them, and we don't know yet, over to the longer-term amendment, the management strategy evaluation, but, yes, let's keep those types of things on the table right now. Chester, I saw you put your hand up. Go ahead.

MR. BREWER: Chris covered it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chester. Tim, what have you got?

MR. GRINER: Well, I was just -- I keep going back to when we did the circle hook thing, and has the SSC weighed-in on any of these things that would give us the most bang for the buck? I mean, if, at the end of the day, they don't buy into it, and they don't use it in the model, what have we really accomplished?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am not sure what the answer is, and I'm also wondering if we need to develop a list and then send it to them for them to have -- Even if they've had a prior discussion, think about it in the context of red snapper discards, but it looks like Chip might be coming up here to offer some insight.

DR. COLLIER: In the development of some of these stock assessments, information such as circle hooks is being used for red snapper, as well as the use of descending devices. If you look back in SEDAR 41, there was changes in discard mortality associated with potentially using circle hooks, as well as dehooking devices, and just better overall outreach to the fishing community, making sure that they were going to get the fish back in the water, and, if you remember back from -- Was it SEDAR 23, Jimmy, or 24? 24, but there was really high discard mortality for red snapper. I believe, for the commercial fishery, it was in excess of 50 percent, and, for the recreational side, it was around almost 40 percent.

It was decreased based on the usage of circle hooks, as well as people getting the fish back in the water, and, now that we have a regulation for descending devices, that's also being incorporated into the stock assessment, and, yes, it wasn't a huge reduction, like people are talking about, but even just a 1 percent change in the discard mortality -- I mean, that's almost the ABC, and so think about it in those terms, of the kept ABC. You know, you're looking for small, incremental changes on these discards, and it can be -- It's dramatic changes for the stock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that reminded me that we had a discussion about outreach and if we need to ramp-up or do something differently on outreach, and can you capture that too, Mike? All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I really like the drawing and concept that's in Appendix 1, and I know it's long-term, but I think that's well put together, but we need to do something that is going to have a major impact, and I think keeping the recreational effort focused in less than a hundred feet will have a great impact on the amount of dead discards that happen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Jessica. Just back to what Tim brought up. It might exist, and, if it does exist, it might be dated, and that would be a compendium of the work that's out there on gear and how gear has been used to effect conservation changes in bottom-fish fisheries, because that's the first thing is the SSC is going to need. They're going to need to look at what's out there for peer-reviewed literature, because they're going to draw their conclusions from that, and so I think it would be helpful for us to have that too, so we could, on an individual basis, look for some of this information and go, okay, and so what's -- Because that is the filter that we're going to ultimately have to run everything through anyway, to decide whether it's feasible or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great idea. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: If we do some sort of a season or a depth area closure, we may need to revisit limited access in the charter/for-hire snapper fishery for the snapper grouper charter permit, because, if you close the season, you can't tell somebody that they can't go to work, and so then all the recreational private anglers would go get the charter permit and go fish like they were charter fishing, and it wouldn't do shit for us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a good point, and I don't know what to call that, but it looks like Mike is capturing something there. What else? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think this is understood, but I just wanted to reiterate it, and, in looking through this, I think we need to take into consideration, obviously, differences in sectors as well as regional differences, right, and we have a huge latitudinal change in the South Atlantic. One of the questions I think I have is what's the southern boundary of this? The northern boundary is maybe more obvious, but the southern boundary is maybe less clear, in terms of does this take us all the way through the Keys, or are we looking at snapper grouper management entirely, or are we focused more on red snapper and everything kind of surrounding red snapper, and so thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Those are great points, and I don't know if you want to capture that, Mike, about consider how these apply to the different sector, as well as the regional line, like you were just typing. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just a question on the depth, and would you be following a depth contour? I guess I'm kind of -- Maybe because the appendix is a straight line, and depths aren't straight, but would you follow a contour, and I guess I'm kind of wondering about enforceability and how realistic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: That's what I was getting at earlier, and so, when we were having this discussion with black sea bass and trying to define a line that would work for the right whales and all, we got into this discussion about depth, and it sounded simple of let's just make it a hundred feet. Well, then you apparently have some enforceability issues with that, which is why that line that Chris described is actually point to point to point to point to point. You can end with sort of the same thing, but you just have to define that line very specifically, and it's not necessarily a nice straight line, but that's what we did then, and so you can still kind of -- You can create a line to approximately the depth that you're trying to achieve, and that seemed to work in the case with black sea bass.

MS. MURPHEY: That makes much more sense, having point-to-point. That makes more sense. Thank you.

MR. BELL: It's just a bear to -- All those latitudes and longitudes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: That's a great point, Mel, but, actually, that did cause some problems. If you remember, originally, we did set that bass pot line on a contour, which everybody bought into, and

it made perfect sense to us, because of where these fish and the entanglement issues, but then we went back, like you said, and, all of a sudden, we came up with this point to point to point. Then what ended up happening is, instead of being outside of a depth level that everybody could buy into, because we knew where the fish were, now, all of a sudden, we had a line that was supposed to keep us one side of a contour, but now, on the other side of a line, you're in a depth where the fish really are, and so, now, where you should have been able to fish, you can't fish, because this line puts you outside the fish, and so now the bass potter can't go to the other side of the line, where everybody can rod-and-reel fish and that's where all the fish are.

You have to be very careful with this, and, in my mind, with today's technology, like we're talking about, I don't see that it could be any more difficult to enforce a depth, and everybody has a depth finder, and so you're either in a hundred feet of water or you're not in a hundred feet of water, and you don't need a line to tell you where you are. You're in a hundred feet of water or you're not in a hundred feet of water, and, if OLE pulls up on you, they know how deep you are too, and so I don't really -- I am having a hard time buying back into that line thing, because it did cause problems in the bass pot fishery. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I suggest that we not get bogged down in sort of enforceability and all that, and all the points are valid, but I can tell you, with my experience with marine protected areas and everything, we're going to get there anyway, and pretty much everything we do is questionably enforceable anyway, and so I think what we really need to focus on is sort of what our timeline is, and our objective is not to take the hit with the lower ABC, correct, and I forget sort of how that timing works.

In order not to do that, we need to get hooks out of the water in the most effective way possible as soon as possible, and so, for me, I think we look at this list, and I think we, using our best judgment, hit one or two things that we think are the most -- That are going to get us the bang for our buck, and then hopefully it goes to the SSC and we get our credit, quote, unquote credit, and we maybe worry about enforcement and all that -- I hate to do that, but we could be here all day talking about enforcement, and lots of things are unenforceable, and we still have laws for them, and so let's figure out biologically what here is going to get us where we need to get.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with all of that, Kerry, and I guess let's talk about the timing or the next steps here. I am a little concerned about trying to narrow this list down before say the SSC has a discussion about all of these items, because what if we take something off the table and they're like, well, if you had put this on there, we could have gotten onboard with that, and so I'm just a little cautious about removing some of the things, but I guess I would look to staff about what you think the timing is, and I thought the SSC didn't meet until April, and so that's actually after the March council meeting, and is that right, and so what would be the timing on this framework action? Have you thought about that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If you all waited until after the SSC discussed this in April, that means the next time you all would give direction on this would be in June, and that would essentially be kind of the -- Thinking of the times that you have initiated previous framework amendments, that would be your starting point, because, at this point, a framework amendment has not been officially

initiated, and it's just been more done on direction to staff, but we've kind of penciled in a line on your priority chart that this is going on, but it just hasn't been given a number and a name yet.

That would be the starting line in June, and, for a framework amendment, I would need somebody else to help me with the timing, but I believe a year, or a year-and-a-half, and is that about the right timing for that? Myra is going to help me.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I was just thinking there is really no reason why the council -- If you wanted to scope some of these things in the spring, I mean, we are going to be holding scoping for some of your other snapper grouper amendments, and so this could just be added to the list, very informally, just like what do stakeholders think about these ideas that you guys are discussing, and so we don't really need to wait until some kind of official start, until June, and we could do some scoping and go to the SSC and go the AP and take this back up in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What do we think about that? Kerry, you were the one that brought up the timeline. What do you think about that?

MS. MARHEFKA: I am unclear what that means sort of legally and what happens then with the next red snapper season, and maybe I missed that. I forget how that all works, because it's not a species that I deal with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good question. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I was having an important sidebar conversation, and so could you restate the question again?

MS. MARHEFKA: I guess I'm trying to figure out -- If we do the timing that Myra just discussed, and I'm not sure if you heard that, but basically scoping -- Getting this ball rolling now, but knowing that we have the limit of the SSC not meeting until April, to sort of figure out the biological credit we'll get, and where do we stand legally, and what happens with the red snapper numbers next season?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So that's a great question, and I was kind of waiting to hear, and I assumed that maybe I would ask these questions after the next presentation about developing holistic management for the snapper grouper fishery, because I think that talks about some red snapper kinds of things, but what I haven't heard is an amendment to change the ABC in your FMP, because now you have a fishing level recommendation, right, the ABC from the SSC, that is much lower than the ABC and ACL in the FMP, and so reading the minutes from the last meeting was really good, because you're in a very tough spot, right?

You have the restriction, or the requirement, under the Act to end overfishing immediately, and ending overfishing, in this case, is probably not a simple matter of reducing the amount of fish that could be harvested, because it appears the driver of the overfishing is the discard problems. However, you do have a requirement, under the Magnuson Act, to not exceed the fishing level recommendation of your SSC, and the Act has several different sections, including in the National Standards, to end overfishing.

One of the sections in the Act says to end overfishing immediately, and so, kind of looking at this and looking at the guidelines and the discussions you're having, I mean, I think you're on a good path, but I would feel a lot better, I guess, risk-wise, in your legal risk, if I heard some kind of direction to staff to start an amendment of some sort to change the ABC.

From what I understand, you're hoping to put modifications in place that would get you, and I will call it credit, with the SSC in their analyses, so that you could get a higher ABC. That's in the future. We don't know if that will work or if it won't work, but what we do know that you have is a concrete ABC that your SSC gave you, and so I think you've got a framework approach, right, and we're kind of calling it short-term, and you've got a longer-term approach, with the MSE, the strategy evaluation, but maybe you need a mid-term, a middle approach, in which you're actually looking to change the ABC, because I think, if you -- Let's say you don't get credit from the SSC.

Then I think you're in a much more legally-vulnerable position if we haven't started an amendment at least to look at revising the ABC, and that will probably necessarily have you look at allocations, because now you've got the recreational fishing estimates from the Fishing Effort Survey under MRIP, and so there's a lot of things at play, and what I haven't heard so far is you have a kind of vehicle to amend your FMP to change the ABC.

I think you have some latitude in how long that will take. In fact, when they were putting some of these requirements into the Act, I read a different thing by the Senate that Congress envisioned some pragmatic flexibility on the timeframe for ending overfishing, because, necessarily, it takes time to develop an amendment and to get it in place, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess let me ask another question, and then I think Mel has some questions. My question would be -- I guess that the amendment that has the management strategy evaluation, it's going to be a longer-term, and, in theory, the SSC would have already looked at these items, and there would be some council discussion about which ones can you get credit for, if you will, and so I'm assuming that what you're saying is that the long-term amendment that has the management strategy evaluation in it is too far away to put this item in there, and then we wouldn't know whether we had the credit or not to do it in this. It seems like you're saying that the MSE amendment is too far away and there must be something in between.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes. When I look at -- This is kind of jumping ahead to what I think is the next presentation, and we're talking about the holistic approach for the snapper grouper fishery that talks about the MSEs and all that, and the first part of this talks about a multiphase public input process that will occur from June of 2022 to June of 2024.

Well, if you're looking at not changing your ABC until a year after that, June of 2025, I mean, that's just much too long to wait. That's definitely not immediately, and it's definitely not, I think, envisioned in Congress's flexibility on the timeframe. You're in an odd position as well, and you've got a rebuilding plan, and it apparently is rebuilding, but you've still got overfishing, and so this is very difficult, but, yes, I think that's too long to wait. Definitely it's too long to wait.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Monica. Mel.

MR. BELL: I think what we were trying to achieve here is to, in the spirit of the law, end overfishing immediately, and so we are taking what I would consider immediate action to start

moving in that direction, and I guess what you're saying is -- I get it, and even this framework is going to take some time, but it's designed to help end overfishing by reducing that discard mortality, and so, even if we come up with a list of things that the SSC says, yes, these three things or whatever, and that could work, it will still take time for those to actually go into law, but that's still moving towards -- That's moving immediately, in my mind, towards ending overfishing, and that's what we were trying to accomplish.

I get the, at some point, we've got to deal with the ABC, but I was thinking that we're moving in the right direction, and we're underway, and we're taking the actions, and, I mean, it's obvious that we're not ignoring it, and we intend to get to that, but we're moving to end overfishing immediately, and so you're saying that not really, I guess.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, you are moving in that direction, right? The problem is you have a fishing level recommendation that is lower than the current recommendation, or the current ABC and ACL that's in place. What you're hoping for is a new ABC, I think, that gives you -- That is at a higher amount than that. You could turn this framework into a plan amendment which also addresses ABC and ACL actions from the SSC, and I guess, if you -- Depending on if the SSC gave you a different ABC recommendation, that could be incorporated into this plan amendment that's not a framework, right, which will, yes, take a little bit longer to get into place, but, realistically, I'm not sure it would take that much longer to work on than a framework would, or you could do a separate amendment that starts changing the ABC.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That was some good discussion and some things to think about, and so we've got some hands. Andy and then Chris.

MR. STRELCHECK: With regard to ending overfishing immediately, unlike the requirements of if the stock is overfished and not rebuilding adequately, you're not to your time clock with the rebuilding plan. You're not on that with overfishing, and you just have this generic statement about ending overfishing immediately, and so what does that mean, and I think that's important for the council to be thinking about, in terms of how quickly we move forward.

I don't see the ABC and ACL change as necessarily mutually exclusive with what we've put on the board today. I think they can go hand-in-hand, and we certainly will have an alternative that will be status quo. We'll have the SSC-recommended catch limit and ABC, and we also could potentially, if we're really successful and figure out a way to reduce discards, maybe be looking at a change in the ABC where it could go up, right, but that would be part of the SSC deliberations and whatever solutions that we come up with.

I would recommend that the action include that, and then we be very thoughtful and careful in terms of figuring out scaling back what we put on this list, in terms of what's kind of reasonable and doable in a shorter period of time to address the overfishing, and it could be a combination of changing the catch limit as well as some of the changes on that board, and it might not require a catch limit change, and it could be just what we're proposing there, but that needs to be done immediately, and I guess, in my view, immediately would -- It would be good to get this done next year right, so it influences the 2023 season. The sooner, the better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to clarify, if you add say the ABC to this, or some other mechanism, then it has to be a plan amendment and not a framework. That's what triggers the plan amendment status, right?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I think you can change an ABC via your framework. The problem is this gets into necessarily allocation issues, because it uses the FES information, just like all of your other snapper grouper amendments that you're looking at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Then that requires a plan amendment. Thanks for that clarification. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, just to that point, I think we need to talk further about allocation, because Monica is exactly right that it uses FES data, but keep in mind that a majority of the landings, which is what we're allocating, come from a survey done by the State of Florida and not from the FES, and so there might be reason to believe that we wouldn't have to change the allocation based on that, but I would want to look at that further.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Great points. Chris and then Spud.

MR. CONKLIN: It's our intent to provide this document to the SSC, or this list of things that we're developing under the committee action, and would this become sort of like the tail-end of this paper, with more elaboration, or is this what we're going to give them?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know the answer to that.

MR. CONKLIN: Because I know sending stuff to the SSC that looks like this -- They don't want to -- Like seasons, and what do they mean, and we'll send it back, and, a year-and-a-half later, we're finally telling them what we want, and we're five years down the road, and they're like, well, you didn't tell us that, and so I just want to make sure that we're explicitly clear in giving them what they want and asking a clear ask and not to where they are trying to draw conclusions, because I've seen it too many times. I mean, we need to be clear and direct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to Monica, and then we'll go Mike.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: You've had great discussion, and it's my understanding that the next SSC meeting will be after your March meeting, and so you could further refine this in March and get to Chris's point, and I agree that you want to be as specific as you can when you ask these questions of your SSC, and at least you've been more successful in getting specific answers back, right, and so you could look at it again in March.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris, to that point?

MR. CONKLIN: Just for my knowledge, since Steve is gone, who is our new liaison to the SSC?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay. Fantastic. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess the thought that I had, in trying to translate what's here and move it to the SSC, would be the question to them would be that they look at this list and say is there anything on this list that the SSC would foresee that they couldn't have that comparison, that before and after comparison, or develop an estimate of what the reduction in the mortality would be, because, if they can't estimate the difference in the mortality, then it's one of those things that's not demonstrable, and they're not going to change their recommendation based on that. We don't need, at that stage, how much of a change it would be. We just need to be able to get an assessment of is this something that we could actually look at what the difference would be. That's what I envision, and I'm not sure if anybody else has any thoughts regarding that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. People chime in with that. I have some folks in the queue. Spud and then Mel and then Kerry.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The SSC doesn't need a framework amendment, or a full amendment, to revise their catch level advice. They can get new scientific information, and they can modify that at any time, but I think what we're struggling with here is that, for them to be able to analyze the efficacy of an action, it would have to be in an amendment, so that it would become in effect, and so we've got a little bit of a chicken-and-egg thing going on here that I think we're struggling with a little bit.

I think, like I mentioned before, if you can amass a compendium of what's out there and get it in the hands of the SSC as soon as possible, and say can you analyze whether -- Like Mike was describing, and can you tell us, to your satisfaction, whether there's a benefit from Action A, Action B, or whatever, and then -- Because we don't want to put things in a framework amendment, or a full amendment, that aren't going to yield fruitful results, but we want the SSC to have the earliest opportunity to possibly revise the catch level advice, and so, I mean, that's what I am trying to figure out here, is how do we make that happen in the most efficient way, because it's already been mentioned that they want specificity.

I mean, I don't blame them, and that's kind of like saying, well, I want world peace. Well, how do you want world peace to happen? Give me some ideas, and so, anyway, I think that's kind of what we're struggling with, but I understand what you're saying, that we've got to demonstrate that we're addressing overfishing, because the only way to address it is a two-pronged approach. It's to deal with the catch level advice and it's to deal with the discards, which is what I think we're trying to do. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud. John has come to the table. Let's go to John, and then we'll go back to our list.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thanks, Jessica. Just a little clarification of sort of who does what, and the SSC is a review body. It's the staff's responsibility to analyze the impacts of the actions that you choose, and then the SSC can be asked to review that, and they can give you recommendations that are considered as part of your deliberation, but they don't actually analyze stuff, and we have to be careful about that, because they will tell us.

What I envision us doing is you guys are going to potentially come up with some actions, and staff is going to go through and do -- You know, we mentioned the research and everything else on

gear, and we'll do the evaluation and come up with potential effects of those regulatory actions in the fishery, and then we ask the SSC to review it. You consider their review, and you consider the AP review, and you consider the public comment, and then you apply your collective judgment to what you think is the appropriate action. Then the final step is the agency reviewing it against BSIA and everything else to decide to approve or reject what you put forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Then I'm going to read between the lines here, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like you're saying that staff would need to do an analysis, and then the council would need to possibly review that in March, so that it's maybe a little bit more refined or pieces are thrown out, et cetera, before it goes to the SSC, so that they are reviewing kind of the specificity of what we want them to review, et cetera, and is that what you're saying?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and I'm kind of thinking that would be a good way to keep this moving ahead and have something for the SSC to actually review.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks. That was helpful. I am going to go back to the queue here. I have Mel and then Kerry and then Chris.

MR. BELL: I am just going to point out something, from a practical standpoint, and I realize there is no way to sort of measure credits you get for this, but, on our list there, we have outreach, and don't underestimate the power of effective outreach, in terms of influencing behaviors, because that's what this is about. We're regulators, sitting around here trying to solve a problem in a regulatory manner, and that's what we do, but the individual fishermen with conservation values can have an amazing impact.

Maybe it's not measurable upfront really quick, or something you can take credit for, but I think we really need to saturate the outreach efforts, in terms of the issue that we're dealing with of discard mortality and the need for them to -- You know, if you're kind of wishy-washy on your descending devices, or wishy-washy about your practices, you need to get serious, because that's how serious this is, and it's really up to them.

From personal example, in South Carolina, and other coastal states, going back to red drum, we had trouble with red drum years and years ago, and I watched anglers adopt conservation practices and take that seriously and turn that fishery around, and it wasn't just because we put some bag limits in place and that sort of thing. It was effective outreach and them embracing the true power they had in adopting these conservation practices.

We really need -- That's something we can do now. We can do outreach anytime, but we really need to focus on that, and we really need to make sure that folks understand how critical they are to the solution, because we're just regulating behavior through the law, and they need to regulate their own behaviors, and I think we really need to focus on the outreach part now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's great. Let's go to Myra, and then we'll go back to the list.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Jessica. To Mel's point, I just wanted to remind you, I guess, that you've already been told that there's a Sea Grant fellow that's going to be starting working in January, and the focus of that position will be outreach on best fishing practices, and so we are looking at having a very targeted approach there, and so just for the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Love it. Okay. Kerry and then Chris.

MS. MARHEFKA: I want to make sure that it's really clear what you all need from us at this meeting to be the most productive moving here on out. That listing is really not fleshed out, and would you like more specifics, more discussion, about the depth issue? Do you feel like you have enough? Do we actually need a motion to start a plan amendment, because, right now, we don't even have a vessel to put it in, and what's the quickest way to get this done? I mean, we know that we need to do something, and I don't think we need to dither on about it, and I don't mean not have the discussion, but I just mean let's come out of this meeting giving you guys everything that you need to move fast.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks for that, Kerry. I am trying to remember, and I know that you gave us direction to begin this work back in September, and I can't recall if it was done in the way of a motion or just direction to staff, but -- Mike is saying that it was direction to staff.

In my mind, we don't really need to go through a motion to actually begin work, and it was very clear that you intended for this work to begin, and that's why we're having this conversation now, and we've assembled what we thought would be useful for you at this meeting to give us a little bit more of what we can do for you going forward, and so I think the list is comprehensive. I guess, over the next couple of days, before Full Council, if you come up with more specific questions, and we'll put our brains together as well, as staff, to try to come up with more specific questions that you want to go out to scoping with, and that will generate better information for you all. Does that help?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was helpful. All right. Excellent. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, looking at this, the SSC, or whoever -- I mean, we can discuss -- We know what's going to be most useful and demonstratable, and, also, as far as the seasons, I wanted to make sure that we included what may be a three-wave season or a two-wave season, something in that realm, and I wanted to make sure that was captured.

Then, also, I have been part of these stock assessments and stuff, and the lab has run other sensitivity runs, by turning something on and turning it off. Well, if you took the hooks out of the water for a wave, you can run -- You can probably run some sort of a run and see what we're going to get, and you can do it for two, and then we can see it, and we don't have to ask the SSC to mull it over, and we could get some real-time numbers and say well, shit, these people have got all this fish to catch now in a shorter amount of time, and they might be a lot happier than sitting here doing what we've been doing for the past thousand years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's good, and so let me -- We added that to the list there, Chris, and so let me see if I can sum up here, so that we can try to wrap this discussion up before lunch. Based on what Myra and Mike said, it sounds like we've already directed staff to start this -- We'll call it the short-term action, and we've already directed staff to do that. What we're doing here is we are pulling out the items that we would like staff to analyze, and it sounds like it will come back to us in March with some more specifics, and, that way, we can remove things, add things, modify those things, based on what staff brings back. Then, after that March meeting, it will go to the SSC and the AP, but when does the scoping occur? Can you clarify that, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: Well, so that's up to you. One thing that I was hoping to discuss at some point during this meeting, and maybe now is the time, is some modifications to the scoping process that we've had so far, which is not really working to get you a whole lot of information from stakeholders, the way we've been doing these webinar meetings, and it seems that we kind of need to just shake it up a little bit and do something different to generate a little bit more interest and maybe make it less formal and less prescriptive, in a way.

Like stakeholders -- My feeling is they're thinking that the council already has their mind made up about the things they want to do, and these things look like actions and alternatives when they come to us, and it kind of doesn't really engage them and ask them, hey, what do you think about these things, and what are some of your ideas, and so we're hoping that, with your approval, we can try out some different ways to approach scoping, and so I am seeing it more as an extended type of thing.

Scoping would include feedback that you receive during advisory panel meetings, during SSC meetings, which both of those meetings include dedicated public comment periods within the meeting and prior to the meeting, and that can generate information that counts, I guess, as scoping. Then, the four items that you want more specific input, we can always utilize the tools that we've been using already, which include recorded presentations and opening up a more official comment period for scoping that has beginning and end dates as well. That is kind of, in a nutshell, how we're sort of hoping to approach scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then one of those scoping mechanisms could be receiving more online comments or something, and that's what you mean?

MS. BROUWER: Absolutely.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mel.

MR. BELL: This is to something we talked about earlier, but, if you've participated in a lot of the online or past scoping meetings, it's just -- It's not necessarily very productive, in terms of the amount of effort we put into that and then the number of people that show up, whether it's in-person, when we were doing in-person, or even online. I have gone online, and it's staff talking to each other, and so I think allowing them to basically kind of figure out what works and adapt, and we'll get more effective information that we can use, because the current -- We're just doing it the way we've been doing it for a long, long time, but we allow staff to basically retool a little bit and adapt, and I know we'll get more information, but it's just I think the way we've been doing it is kind of not working real well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Lots of hands are going up, as I was trying to stay at a timeline. I saw Dewey, and I saw Chris, Kerry, Tim, Trish. Let me go to Dewey first, and then we'll come over to this side of the room.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I've been involved in a lot of comments over my years and scoping parts, and now webinars, and it's good, when you go out to the public, to be as specific as possible of what the problem is, and it's very similar to turning the key on your boat and it doesn't start. You've got to be specific, and the reason here for looking at the red snapper, particularly, is you

go out to the public that we have to reduce our discards, and what do you want us to do, and not all these fishing expeditions and some of these things that I see here that are probably going to get no bang for the buck. The specific, the hardline question that can pose to them, whether they choose to accept it or not, because the council is going to go on with the process, is the most straightforward way to get feedback from the recreational industry, or the commercial industry, particularly to a task at-hand.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: While this is coming in light of the red snapper ABC that we're going to be up against, this is for the entire snapper grouper fishery, and should we let these folks know that we are intending on implementing a license, because I feel like, once we have a smaller universe of anglers out there, that would already just go ahead and greatly reduce the discards that people think are happening, when I don't really think they are, as many as they say, and, I mean, I know it's farther down the road, but, I mean, hey, if you thought that every license was going out after snapper grouper, and then you find that only 20 percent of them were, then that might drop your discards considerably, and we might not have to do all this stuff. I made a list, and I said the most important thing, in my eyes, is the license. The second-most important would be a season, or a bottom closure, and then, third, if you go to do that, then you would have to go to limited access on the charter permits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me try to restate and then try to put it into some sort of a timeline. I am wondering -- I like how you're suggesting that it's part of the discussion, and so that, when this goes to the SSC, when it goes to the AP, and when the public starts commenting on some of these big-picture ideas, they understand our intent would be to create this recreational license, so we know the amount of effort.

It seems like that needs to be part of like the background material for this, even if it's in a different amendment, and I don't necessarily think it needs to be inside that holistic management amendment, but it's letting the public know there is another piece to this puzzle, and, just because it's not in this amendment, it doesn't mean that we're not talking about it or it's not at the top of our list, and is that what you're intending? Okay. All right. We captured that there as well. Kerry and then Trish.

MS. MARHEFKA: Given that there is considerable more complicated information that's going to be coming at them, with our short-term, mid-term, and long-term approach, I would just say, as far as the scoping process, you really can't be -- I mean, I know we'll have the webinars and everything like that, but I just highly recommend that, when you're talking about something this controversial, that we try to really get staff to each state, and a couple of places in each state, and maybe only one or two people show up, but those are the one or two people that really have something to say, and the building of relationships, in my past experience of having to do that, and it's hard, and it's grueling, and I hate to say that, but I also think it's the best way we can communicate with people, and so I would just recommend that there is a little bit of a scoping tour for something this important, if possible, and I'm sorry, and you can guys call me from the road and tell me how much you hate me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the idea, and I like the concept, and, also, I think we can think about maybe the way we set up the council meetings, and so it sounds like, by June, we'll have more

specific information. In June, that's the council meeting in the Keys, and so that meeting, in the past, before COVID, was heavily attended, and so maybe there is an evening thing, separate from the public comment, where we have more of a discussion.

Roy used to do the fireside chat, and we could do something like that, maybe one evening before the public comment afternoon, where we talk about more of those things, and so I like that concept and trying to think about another way to maybe get it into the meeting week, when we're going to have some more information, more specific information, and I like that. Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: Just real quick, I wasn't implying that we give up on the face-to-face. All I was simply saying is that -- Like what we're doing now is we're saying next Tuesday at 6:00, and next Thursday at 6:00, boom, boom, that's it, and then that's our scoping. We need to be more robust than that, which would include face-to-face, and you can't beat face-to-face, and I agree with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Moving down the list here, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just getting at the scoping discussion, we at the division are kind of going through the same evolution of changing how we interact with the public, and we've changed things like our workshops, and, instead of just sitting around with an advisory committee to get input on our FMPs, I think we've come with specific questions on things we need to know to help guide us.

Next year, we're starting something of what we're calling listening sessions, which I think just gives the public an opportunity to just say what they need to say, or, again, we would probably come with some specific questions on whatever topic that we need input on, but we're trying to look at different ways to get that input. We've also put together a communication team that we're working on getting better outreach and everything, and so I think our division and this council might be kind of on a parallel track, as far as trying to get at the public, and so those were just some other ideas to throw out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let me try to sum up where we are in this discussion before we go to lunch. Once again, we've had a good discussion here about scoping, as well as some of these short-term actions and things to keep in mind and things that we need to kind of let the public and others know what the intent is and that the entire kitchen sink might not be in this short-term action, but there might be other pieces coming, like the intent to have this recreational license, whether it's federal or state or however we're going to do it, and so that was one example, a good example.

It sounds like these pieces are going to come back in March, and we'll refine this, as much as we can, and then they will go to the SSC, and they will go the AP, and there will be scoping throughout this entire timeframe, and then it sounds like this will come back in June as well, and so I think that's where we are right this minute.

Of course, we'll see a timing and tasks motion when we wrap up the committee discussion at the end of the week, and then we might be talking about timing as well when we come back from lunch and we talk about this holistic management approach, because there were some timelines in there, but Monica laid out some ideas, and we've talked about some ideas, and I think that's kind of where we are, based on this discussion this morning. Do we think we've captured everything?

All right. I appreciate that discussion. It was a great discussion. I will turn it back to you, Mel, to tell us when you would like for us to come back from lunch.

MR. BELL: Let's just -- Given that we have to go offsite for lunch, we'll just leave it at the hour-and-a-half, and I will cheat you seven minutes, and if we could still be back at 1:30 and get it going. Thanks.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again, and we are going to start on the red snapper response and holistic management approach, and I believe that document was in the late materials, and I am going to turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. What I am hoping for is just getting guidance from the council to make sure that we are going in the right direction, that you guys are okay with it, that you understand what we're thinking about doing, and that's what this paper is trying to explain a bit to you. It's more or less trying to explain what a management strategy evaluation is, and, basically, a management strategy evaluation is looking at tradeoffs among management approaches and trying to address the uncertainties associated with that.

The management approaches can be very different, depending on who is involved and what the stakeholders want out of this, and so it's going to be a public-driven process. What we're trying to do is get the public involved as much as possible, and I will take you through a flow diagram that was from another MSE, but it kind of gives you an idea of where an MSE can go and what are the necessary steps in it.

I was talking to Myra about a good example of how to do this and why an MSE might be an appropriate approach and how it's an iterative process, and let's say you're trying to start a company that is going to make some cookies. First of all, you want to go out to the public to find out what cookies they want, what is in demand, what's their favorite type, are there certain sizes, do you like them crunchy or do you like them soft, and there's all kind of different cookies, and hopefully -- Maybe we get brownies today, and I don't know, but those are some thought processes that you could ask the public about.

You could have your evaluation criteria, thinking about that, such as how was the taste, was the chocolate appropriate, what kind of chocolate do you like, do you like fruit in your cookies, and so several different things, and then you're going to develop the model, and the model is going to be consistent no matter what you're basically putting into the cookie.

There is some flour that you're going to put in there, and there's some sugar, and there is a fat, usually butter, and then your sweetness, and so you can go from there, and you're going to have the exact same chef, and it doesn't matter, and so that's maybe part of your model that is going to stay consistent across your management approaches. The oven temperature might stay the same, and so there's going to be some things that stay the same across your cookie making, and that's going to be essentially your model structure, and, that way, you're going to be evaluating this cookie just on certain pieces of taste.

However, if you are going to be making certain items, it might not always be appropriate -- Let's say you wanted to -- Overall, most people wanted a chocolate chip cookie, but there were a few individuals that said they wanted some fruit in there, which might not be a -- It might not seem that good, and so, as you did your survey, these pieces came out, and you looked at it, and you bring it back to the public, and they're like, no, there's no way that that's going to work out, and that is not going to be a good-tasting cookie, and so you might have to reevaluate and redesign and make things better as you get more information from the public, and so it might be an iterative process. You might have an idea, in the beginning, but, as you put together all the components of it, it might have to change, based on certain preferences that the stakeholders might have.

If you go to that case study, and I tried to give you a case study that was not fish related, and this one is looking at a choice model that was actually for a duck hunting and farming example, and so, normally, we don't think of duck hunting and farming together in the same sense, but this an actual example over in, and I think it's in France, where it's looking at some of the agricultural markets, and it can actually have an influence on a duck population, depending on what the farmers want and how the profit margins were working for certain crop yields.

In different scenarios, you can run it through and look at how the profit margins differ among the different scenarios that initialized the model and then look at the outcome after ten different years or twenty years, and so, in this model, they looked at what the hunters wanted, and they looked at what the farmers wanted, and they also looked at the impact to the duck population.

In the final example, when it was finally run out, there were different levels of duck harvest that came out of the model, and there was different levels of duck population, and there was different levels of profit for the farmers, and there was different levels of satisfaction for the duck hunters, and so you can use these MSEs to really look at these different types of approaches and have them in a similar framework and then evaluate it at the end, in order to figure out what might be your optimal way to manage a fishery, or, in this example, a farm and duck hunting.

We'll go down to -- I am not going to go into great detail on a lot of this, but, like I said, this is going to be a public-driven process, and, if you look at Table 1, and this is in Attachment 2b in the late materials, and it's on page 4, and it really starts off with scoping and identifying the participants, and what we're thinking about for the stakeholders is we would like to do an online survey of the stakeholders, to get their input, and we'll utilize the AP to maybe refine some of those comments from the stakeholders, and then you guys would also be involved in providing guiderails on what is a reasonable solution that we can come up with.

The next piece that we're going to have to do is identify management objectives, and so what is most important to the fishermen, and these objectives have to be quantifiable, and so maybe it is - - Let's say we want to have a -- Obviously one of them is going to be you have to maintain a sustainable harvest, and so, as you're projecting forward, you want to make sure that the population stays in a sustainable harvest. We're going to be doing this potentially for multiple stocks, and so it's going to be extremely complicated, and it is going to take a long time to develop.

The other thing is we want to develop quantitative performance criteria, and we have to be able to evaluate whether or not the objectives are being met, and, in my example there, is it sustainable, and then we could be looking at the potential biomass that's projected at a certain time period or maybe the certain number of times that it goes below a sustainable biomass. You also need to

identify some of the uncertainties that are associated with it, to make sure what you're coming out with is actually a reasonable solution and is not highly variable, depending on just small tweaks to the model.

The next part, after you do the scoping, is you would go to developing an operating model and an implementation model. This is where a lot of the input from the SSC, as well as an MSE working group, will be utilized, in order to develop this, but, in general, we're going to need a contractor to do this. This is a highly-specialized approach, and it's probably beyond what we have time for staff to do at this point, and, as additional items are being added on to staff workload, it's probably going to be even more important to get an outside contractor to do this.

In addition to that, we would probably need a facilitator, in order to facilitate some of the discussions, to make sure that what we're getting to can be quantifiable and also be -- To meet some of the objectives, and so I have some of that information on that in the end.

After our technical phase, we will go back to scoping and identify some of the management strategies, and so a management strategy differs from an objective in just trying to figure out what is going to be the most important, and I am actually drawing a blank on the management strategy, and I forgot to give an example for that, but it could be something as simple as maximizing profits for the recreational fishery or for the commercial fishery, maximizing the satisfaction that somebody might have. Different items such as those could be a management strategy.

Then you want to do some simulation testing, and that's going to be done through the modeling, and it just puts some randomization, and it also looks at addressing some of those uncertainties associated with that, and then, at the end, this information is going to be presented not only to the AP, but it will also go through the SSC, and so they will be able to give some insight onto the evaluation at the end and describe is this really meeting what's being described, and is it going to be achievable, and is it going to be acceptable to the public.

Then, after we do this evaluation, that's essentially when the -- That will essentially end the scoping phase for the long-term management, and we'll potentially be able to have a more thoroughly-developed early version of an amendment document ready, because it's going to be evaluating several different pieces that are currently considered in amendment development now. It could have information on the social impacts, and it could have information on the economics, as well as the biological side, and those are all considered in amendment development now, and so this could front-load a lot of the work for the long-term management.

As far as participants, I had already talked about some of the groups, the stakeholders, and how we want to get those comments, and it would be great to get those through an online survey, basically through public comment solicitation through those scoping phases, and we would also utilize the Snapper Grouper AP to get comments on management objectives and criteria. The SSC would assist in reviewing the model, and there would also be a working group that would work along in the development of the MSE, and so there's going to be additional workload for the SSC.

The council will be utilized to provide final recommendations on management strategies, and, with this, it's not just considering the final outcome of this, and I think the several different strategies should be evaluated, in order to give you guys the best frame of reference in order to potentially select options.

We'll need an MSE contractor, and this person will be responsible for doing most of the modeling, and then there will be an MSE working group, and hopefully we're going to be able to work together, as council staff, with a science staff member, a biologist, economist, a social scientist, as well as the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and getting some of their modelers and ecologists and social scientists involved, as well as SERO, and hopefully we're going to have -- It's going to be a pretty big working group working on this, but, with this diverse group of people with backgrounds, we're potentially going to be able to solve some of those situations and maybe figure out some of the data issues that we could potentially have.

Then, finally, what we need is a meeting facilitator, and this person is really going to drive some of these public meetings and making sure that we get objectives clearly defined and we get criteria clearly defined. Something that us, as staff -- We do it quite a bit, but we're not experts in it, and getting an expert in it I think could really give us much better results. In a class that we took on developing MSEs, that's one thing that they highly recommend, is to have a facilitator at these meetings, in order to get everything accomplished.

With that, that was all that I was going to go over. As far as the timeline, what we're thinking about is trying to develop an RFP, a request for proposals, beginning in January, and then hopefully having a deadline in March and announcing who was awarded the contract in March and potentially starting this long-term in July. With that, that's all I had, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Chip. I am just curious, and how are the products of the previous visioning session going to inform this? I assume that they will be useful for that, and I'm just curious of what the nexus is, maybe, between that and this process.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you for that. One of my visions for this is to actually use the visioning blueprint in order to solicit public comment and get them -- Look at what's in the vision blueprint and develop kind of -- Figure out what is most important to the public, and those would be some of the ideas that we bring to the Snapper Grouper AP and get them to comment on is this feasible for management, does this need to be refined a bit more, in order to get it implemented, is this a quantifiable objective, and then also looking at some of the criteria as well. It's going to be -- We're going to start off with the visioning blueprint as kind of the footprint and then go from there and narrow it down to what is most important.

MR. WOODWARD: Then there's also the workshops that we did when Kari was here, and I think that could be informative as well, sort of along with the visioning blueprint.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any comments or questions? Mel.

MR. BELL: Just a question about -- I would agree that a facilitator would be very beneficial in this. I've done some other things in other areas where facilitators have been, external facilitators have been, very helpful, and I know the quality of the facilitator is an important thing too, and I assume there are folks out there, and maybe even -- Would this be external like a private contractor kind of facilitator and not necessarily drawing -- Okay. They're out there, and we have kind of

identified resources at some point, and when would they -- When would the facilitator engage? Would it be like from the very beginning?

DR. COLLIER: That's getting down in the details that I haven't really gotten to yet, but, in order for the facilitator, in all likelihood, to do their best job, they would probably need to be engaged very early on in the process.

MR. BELL: Yes, because it's a very process-driven thing, and that's why I was asking, and so okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Chip, you're saying we can't just cross go and go completely to Number 3 and start from there, based on what we have out of visioning, and save some time and money? I mean, Steps 1 and 2 of the scoping just sounds like what we did with visioning, and it feels a little repetitive, but you're smarter than me, and so maybe not.

DR. COLLIER: If you look at some of the information that's in the visioning document, there is some items that are contrary to each other, and so trying to get down to what is the most important -- I don't feel like we ever got to that situation. We listed a bunch of objectives, but we didn't quantify which ones were the most important, in order to address, and we're not going to be able to address everything that's in the vision blueprint, and so we'll need to focus it down on just a few.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just wondered if going to scoping is -- Aren't we just going to end up with more of that situation?

DR. COLLIER: Maybe, but I think, if we do the facilitation properly, I think we can actually get to something that will basically show us what is most important to the stakeholders.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica, and then we'll go to Andy.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: If the council decides to go forward with this, Chip, I am a little concerned, or not concerned, but would you please involve our office when you're talking about soliciting the public? I want to make sure that we're in compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, which comes into play when you're asking survey kind of questions, and so we want to make sure that we work all of that out from the get-go.

DR. COLLIER: No problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Chip, thanks for laying this out and giving us the cookie example after lunch, and it made me hungry. I am supportive, in concept, and I guess my question would be how do you see this interfacing with the discussion we had prior to lunch, because we're talking a multiyear strategy evaluation, and then, obviously, subsequent management changes thereafter, and we have a lot of good ideas that potentially we're going to want to pursue before then, and so how do those intersect with one another?

DR. COLLIER: Not knowing what is going to be pushed forward, as far as some of the short-term items, it's hard to say how it's going to interact, but I imagine some of the more complex issues that are identified in the short-term action would be shifted over to this one, in order to more thoroughly evaluate how that's going to impact the fishery and the fishermen and their opinions on it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more comments or questions? John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks, Chip, for the nice presentation of this, and the Center applauds this work. We have seen management strategy evaluations on our strategic initiatives that we want to implement for a lot of our fishery problems, both from a science as well as a management perspective, and this really touches and incorporates both of them, as well as the key stakeholder component.

We have a new hire, a relatively new hire, Cassidy Peterson, who is tasked with helping to catalyze these kind of approaches, and she is looking forward to reaching out to providing help on that, and, in particular, I think quantifying the conceptual and operational management objectives for the snapper grouper fishery is going to be one of the key elements.

As we've seen with what the dolphin wahoo outreach groups did, it really helped to define what our different user groups want out of the fishery, and we see that there is some divergence across the objectives. Some states want certain things, and other states want different things, and that's a fundamental trade of management.

The key is try to find a management procedure that maximizes the net happiness. You can't please everybody, but you can find something that might work for most people, and I think that's the goal here, and so I hope that we can incorporate the things like what recreational fishermen want out of the snapper grouper fishery and what commercial fishermen want out of it and incorporate those both conceptually, like tell us what cookie you want, and then, operationally, how many cookies do you want per day, and for how long, and that's turning the conceptual into operational, so that then we can, in the simulation, evaluate does Management Procedure A or Management Procedure B achieve that cookies per day, or fish per day, which, in fact, for dolphinfish, it was fish per trip, which was one of the operational management objectives.

Just to circle back to the key requirement of making sure that the decisions that come through are vetted through the process, the federal process, so that they can be turned into management, and we do have to cover the Paperwork Reduction Act and federal notices, and that's something that we can help work together to make sure that happens, because the dolphin wahoo ones were outside of that, and so they weren't actually to get management, but it was more to gain information. Here, we're going to actually be probably coming up with things that might be evaluated for management, and so we look forward to participating and assisting in the process. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. I am really excited about this process. I too wish that it would go faster, but I understand that it's a process. Any more questions or comments from Chip? Chip, do you need anything from us? This was just an update, or are you seeking some sort of approval to move forward?

DR. COLLIER: I think it can be more or less just guidance to staff. As long you think we're on the right path, I think we're good, but, if you see any red flags, that would be -- Tell us to hold off and change course.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking around the room. What it seems like we've heard so far, from the folks that have spoken, is it seems like they think we're on the right path, and maybe -- Are you going to come back with some periodic updates for us, as you start moving through the process?

DR. COLLIER: Yes, and the plan is to update you guys quite frequently on this, as well as work with the SSC and get a working group started with them, potentially in April, at least identify the working group in April, and then we would be working through the normal cycles. If you look further down, I have a proposed timeline on when it would be coming to different council meetings, and so you can see potentially when it would be there, but this is all likely to change as soon as a contractor gets on, and they are likely to change things quite a bit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Chip. Anything else from anybody else? It sounds like we're good. All right. Thank you. Next up, before we jump into the white paper on commercial snapper grouper permits, let's go back to Jimmy and his presentation from the Snapper Grouper AP to talk about their discussion on the two-for-one.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Snapper Grouper AP had a discussion on the removal of the two-for-one commercial permit policy. Overall, there was very mixed opinions on removing the two-for-one policy at this time. We felt like more information could aid us for future evaluation and discussion.

We did have some specific requests for information, and one was how many Snapper Grouper 1 permits have been retired? Also, how quickly are the commercial ACLs being reached, and how much quicker could they be reached with additional participants? Also, the snapper grouper stocks may not be healthy enough to sustain additional effort. There are few healthy stocks for commercially-important species. Also, the high recreational fishing pressure also makes sustainability difficult for any additional commercial fishing.

Again, a point that there was very, very mixed opinions on this subject this time, and some people still really do want to see it disappear, for various reasons, and others are worried about that the stocks can't stand any more pressure from the commercial side, as well as with all the pressure it's getting from the other sector. There is concern also about the corporate transferability of the SG 2 permits, with addition of the loss of working waterfront, and there was some comments on the difficulty to enter the fishery, and some local fleets are aging out, but, in other areas, there seems to be some younger participation, and I think that the initial idea of removing the two-for-one, at least for me, was the idea of how does someone enter the fishery, because these permits are hard to come across. As they're being removed, it just makes it tougher and tougher.

There is an AP member, Andy Mahoney, who did, early on his AP time, circulated a permit plan that he developed, and it was presented to us, but we didn't really have it on the -- He brought it up and thought that we should be talking about it further, which we may do in the future, and so, with that, I will be glad to take any questions on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Any questions for Jimmy before we dive into the white paper? All right. Thank you, Jimmy. We might have more questions as we start discussing, but, John, I'm going to turn it over to you to talk to us about the white paper.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. To get underway, just to orient the council on where we stand, and the committee on where we stand, and where we're going, we're coming back around to the -- We're kind of picking up where we left off in September on discussion of which direction to go with the snapper grouper commercial permit, the SG 1 two-for-one provision in general, and also additional information on the SG 2 permit and the commercial permitting for the commercial snapper grouper fishery in general.

As an overview, I have a quick refresher of the information that we previously discussed, a very high-level overview, and so we're not going to get into that again, and I do have the white paper pulled up, and, if there's anything within that you want to focus on during the discussion, we can certainly hop over to that. After that, we'll kind of slow down a little bit and go over what's new in the paper. We did have the recent AP input, and so that's been taken care of, and so, after the additional analysis, we'll jump into the discussion and the requested committee action.

As a general refresher on how this came to the forefront, at least recently, is it was part of the council's response to an Executive Order to evaluate the snapper grouper commercial permit two-for-one provision, to consider if changes will provide social or economic benefits to the fishery. After that discussion, we got into Amendment 8, which is where the two-for-one provision was put in place, and this was back in 1998, and it has been place since then. At the time, there was concern over overcapacity and intense competition over snapper grouper resources.

As a reminder, Amendment 8 did create two commercial permits, the unlimited permit, which is the SG 1 permit, and then the trip-limited permit, which is the SG 2 permit, and so, when I'm referring to SG 1 and SG 2, that's the specifics of that.

Then there was a review of the recent reports that have been provided on the snapper grouper fishery, a look at permits trends overall, and so basically what has happened since implementation of Amendment 8 in the commercial fishery, and there was a profile of the recent fishery, looking at participating vessels and landings and revenue.

We got into trends of the fishery, looking at, in general, there's been a decrease in the number of vessels, effort, and landings, and this was combined with relatively stable revenue, and, in general, decreased landings were offset through increasing price, and there was an increasing average revenue per vessel for vessels that remained active in the fishery. Overall, there was a very strong reliance on snapper grouper species, from a total revenue perspective.

That was a general overview. Again, I didn't want to present the same thing over again in detail, but I'm happy to take a step back, and then, from here going forward, we'll go over what's new in the paper, and so really looking at what was requested at the September meeting, looking -- Just really quickly, to run through that list and remind everyone where we left off, it's looking at the maximum time period allowed to purchase an additional SG 1 permit when a non-corporate SG 1 permit is purchased, and so, essentially, if someone has that first permit, the clock is ticking, and how long do they have to find a second permit, so that two-for-one provision can be satisfied.

There were questions on corporate ownership of permits and leased SG 1 permits and associated landings, information on SG 2 permits, looking at information such as landings, utilization, and ownership type, and then potentially yield in the fishery. I will, as a little bit of a spoiler, the Number 5 -- It is in the works, but that's something that will have to come back to the committee at a future meeting.

To jump into the new analysis, looking at timing, that first question on how long someone has to purchase that additional SG 1 permit to qualify for the two-for-one provision, to enter the commercial fishery and obtain an SG 1 permit, someone must purchase two non-exempt permits or a single exempt permit. The maximum time period allowed to purchase an additional SG 1 permit to qualify for the two-for-one provision really varies on the first permit's expiration date, and there is no standard answer to that question, and it depends, in short, but it really depends on the expiration date of that first permit.

Once someone does purchase that first permit -- Say it gets purchased, and then the expiration date is six months from the purchase date, then the person that is looking to get into the fishery has one year and six months to go ahead and find and secure that second permit, and so hopefully that helps answer that question, and we can provide additional information from that aspect.

Switching gears a little bit to look at information on corporate ownership of permits, looking at the ownership structure, the corporate ownership of permits has increased overall. Originally, in 1998, approximately 17 percent of SG 1 permits and 15 percent of SG 2 permits were owned by corporations.

Fast-forwarding to 2016, this had increased to approximately 45 percent of SG 1 permits and 25 percent of SG 2 permits falling under corporate ownership, and, really, that is a 2016 statistic, but it looks like it's fairly accurate now. Moving forward in time, and looking at the SG 1 exemption from the two-for-one provision, as of September 2021, there were 242 corporate-owned SG 1 permits, and so just under half of the total SG 1 permits overall, and only two of these would not be exempt from the two-for-one provision. In other words, 240 of those corporate-owned permits would be exempt from the two-for-one provision, kind of flipping that statistic on the other end.

Looking at permit trends and additional information that has been made available, Table 3, and I will start off with the left side of the slide here. Table 3 shows at least recent trends in the number of vessels that have SG 1 or SG 2 permits, and it has been decreasing over time, and, again, these are recent years, but, overall, on average, there are approximately 556 vessels with SG 1 permits. On average, there are 114 vessels with SG 2 permits.

Moving down to Table 4, that shows the number of SG 1 permits that were assigned to leased vessels. One thing to keep in mind here is there is no -- While the permits assigned to leased vessels is tracked, the reason for leasing that permit is not necessarily tracked, and so, in other words, somebody could be leasing it to enter the fishery, and somebody could be leasing it because they need to transfer it onto a new vessel, because their vessel is broken, and so a little bit of a caveat to that statistic, and it is trackable, but the reason behind it is not. It's not included in that record.

Then the next two columns get at some of the information that the Snapper Grouper AP was interested in, as far as how many permits have been consolidated, or terminated, at least in recent years, and so, looking at the number of -- In general, there has been approximately eight SG 1 permits removed from the permits system, if you will, and the majority of those tend to be due to the two-for-one provision, and so, when you see "SG 1 permits consolidated", those are the number of permits consolidated due to the two-for-one provision. When you see "SG 1 permits terminated", or "SG 2 permits terminated", what that really means is those permits were just not renewed in time, and so they were removed from the system.

Overall, you're looking at an attrition rate, and so a loss of permitted vessels within the system, of approximately 1.4 percent, on average there again, per year for SG-1-permitted vessels and approximately a 2.8 percent decrease for SG 2 permits per year.

Switching gears over to SG-2-permit-specific information, and SG-2-permitted vessels, there is information in the technical memorandum from the Science Center specifically on SG 2 permits. In general, at least in recent years, these SG-2-permitted vessels account for approximately 63,000 pounds gutted weight of snapper grouper species landed annually, and so, overall, that's really a pretty small percentage of the total commercial landings in the snapper grouper fishery, 1 to 2 percent per year, and, looking at utilization rate, that's a -- You have to be careful how you define it, and I know that the Snapper Grouper AP had a pretty in-depth discussion on this when Kari MacLauchlan-Buck was working on her overall report of the commercial fishery.

If you look at on an annual basis, you're going to get a different statistic than if you look at it over several years, since some people might not be using it every year, but, if you look at say over five years, they are relying on it at times, and so, pulling that information from Kari MacLauchlan-Buck's paper, there is approximately a 94 percent utilization rate of SG 2 permits, where there was at least one pound of snapper grouper landings recorded between the five-year period that was examined.

However, if you look at did the vessels land each year, and the question was no, but did they land over a five-year period, the answer was yes, and so, if you look at the SG landings in all five years, only 29 percent of vessels used the permit, quote, unquote, used the permit, or recorded landings, in all five years examined. For comparison purposes, 97 percent of SG 1 permits had at least one pound of snapper grouper landings over the same time series, and 45 percent of SG 1 permits had landings in all five years examined.

As I mentioned, there is still additional information being gathered. In general, there will be continued efforts to collect additional information on leased permits and associated landings, and I do have to take a second to kind of give a shoutout and a thank you to the SERO Permits Office, and they've done an outstanding job providing the permit information and just in general been very, very helpful in this, and so that's certainly appreciated, and, really, it's on my end, our end, to crunch the numbers, as far as the landings associated with the leased permits, and so a big thank you there to the SERO Permits Office.

That effort will continue, and, also, as mentioned earlier, updated information on potential yield in the fishery, and I think that analysis will probably tie into the Snapper Grouper AP's suggestion to look at how ACLs may be reached if there is a change in effort, or really an increase in effort,

and these findings will be presented at a future meeting. With that, I would certainly welcome any questions, but we'll take a break and have a discussion.

The requested committee action, I will go over that very quickly. Does the committee feel that the information provided satisfies the council's response to E.O. 13921, and so the Executive Order, which is the kind of original reason for bringing this to the forefront of the council's discussion, and how would the committee like to proceed with future evaluations of the SG 1 and SG 2 permits, and specifically the two-for-one provision of the SG 1 permit?

There is a few possible options there of considering moving that discussion into the MSE discussion that Chip spoke about just before me, and we could certainly look at an amendment that looks at changes to the snapper grouper permit outside of that process, and another option is do you feel like there has been a thorough enough discussion and analysis that you feel that it has met those obligations of the Executive Order and maybe potentially reevaluate it at another time, and so, with that, I will turn it over to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I see hands going up. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that. That was very informative. I've got some questions about the snapper grouper, the SG 2 permits, and, if my understanding is correct, these permits were really for one reason, and that was for a group of individuals to use them -- To be able to have it and use it in addition to their main and primary fishery and not to be completely shut out of a fishery that they had been participating in at some small level. It was basically to an individual, and he could pass it down to his kids, or his family, and that was basically it. After that, it went away.

Well, it's morphed into something much different than that now, and I will give you a perfect example. There is at least one instance that I know of where there is an SG 2 permit, and it's a corporate name, and the corporation was from Florida. Well, the next thing you know, that corporation now has two SG 2 permits, and I don't even know how one corporation could end up with two permits, an SG 2 permit, and I don't even know how that ever was allowed, but now you're got a corporation that owns two SG 2 permits, and the corporation was then sold to another individual in another state and reincorporated in that state, which, although the name is the same, essentially it's a different corporation under different state rules. There is different state corporate guidelines.

The owner, the sole owner of 100 percent shares of that corporation, is a dentist. Now, how in the world can a dentist own two SG 2 permits under a corporation? Something is not right here with these, and I realize that the SG 2 permits are not catching a lot of fish, but, when we're in dire straits like we are, 63,000 pounds of fish is a lot of fish, and, if only 30 percent of these guys are using them, that means that 30 percent of them are catching the 63,000 pounds, and so I am not sure whether -- It's not that big of a deal, but I just think that, somewhere, somebody needs to take a look at -- If these permits are indeed only being used by 30 percent, then what do you do with the rest of them, and why are they out there and being traded. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Any other questions? If you don't have questions, is there discussion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I absolutely share Tim's concern, and he knows that, and I have some other things about the whole system that I would like to tweak, but I think, from a practical standpoint, this is sort of not where I want to put my eggs in a basket. I think it fits nicely into the MSE approach, and I don't think, right now -- We're just out of place, and I'm not convinced that we're still not overcapitalized a little, and maybe that's what is going to come out of MSE, and, of all the things we have to do, then (c) is my choice right now, and that's not to say that what Tim -- Tim is absolutely right, and it drives me nuts that some people are working outside of the bounds of this 225 thing, but I just don't think we have time to address it right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess let me pose that as a question, since you brought it up, and so you were suggesting (c), which says do not further discuss changes to the commercial snapper grouper permit at this time, but could you not also do (a), and you brought that up as well, and just consider it as part of the MSE? It's almost like you're doing (a) and (c) at the same time, and is that what you were saying? I am just trying to clarify.

MS. MARHEFKA: I had macaroni and cheese for lunch, and so, therefore, I want to take a nap and eat one of Chip's cookies, and so I missed (a), and I think it fits nicely into MSE, but the thing I want to be clear is I want to make sure -- I know part of the AP is really obsessed with us doing this, and, on one hand, I want to say we hear you, and we're going to do it, but, on the other hand, I don't think, until we work through that MSE process -- You all have better things to discuss, and we have better things to discuss, until then. Sorry if that's rude, but we just have too much to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, and I think that it -- To me, the right place might be inside the management strategy evaluation, because they're looking at all sorts of different things relative to the snapper grouper fishery, and I feel like this is an important piece to look at. Tim, you had your hand up again.

MR. GRINER: I was going to agree, and I think what Chip is working on -- This really would fit nicely in that, because, at the end of the day, it is a visioning-type thing of are we overcapitalized, and how do you move forward in the long-term with the few permits that we have left, and the few participants that we have left, and the little bit of fish that we have left to try to split up among us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I think that's where the AP got, is where you all are at right now, and it's like, yes, the further we talk about it, yes, we have concerns about how do new entrants come in to replace these old guys that are dying off, because everybody is really getting old in the fishery, and how can they afford to enter the fishery, other than, right now, buy a permit or lease a permit, and buying two -- Trying to find two SG 1 to begin with, and you only have no more than two years to get them and lock it in is pretty prohibitive, in some cases, because they are hard to find, because we are down to where there are not a lot of them available, and then the corporate way of leasing -- It's an abstract way to move permits around, I will tell you what, when you're leasing a vessel, and they take all the permits, and it's just a mess, but that is a way that is affordable for someone to enter the fishery. I think that the AP -- That was their main concerns at this time, and there is a way to do it, and so leave it alone until we have time to think further about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm so sorry for saying this, but the one thing that really does give me heartburn, quickly, about this is the issue of someone having that short period of time to buy a second permit, and I can't imagine how hard that is, and I don't know if there is any quick fix that we can do to stop that, because it seems very low stakes, and it doesn't alter what is happening, as far as number of permits, and you're still condensing it, and it gives a little relief to people. I can't even imagine taking that chance and spending forty or fifty-grand hoping beyond hope that you can find a second one. I suspect I know the answer, but, if there was something super quick we could do, and sorry, and I know, and probably not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I am going to look over here to staff about if there is something -- Myra is going to run up here.

MS. BROUWER: You all know that nothing is super quick in our business, and so I think this would constitute a pretty substantial change to a program, and so, if I am correct, and I am looking to Monica, this would have to be done through an amendment to the FMP, and am I understanding correctly?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: What is this, exactly?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It sounds like we're talking about either doing away with or lengthening the time for you to acquire the second SG permit, in order to retire it. You have bought one, and now you have a timeframe that is like a year, up to two years max, to get the second one, and you've got some instances now where those permits are down at lower numbers, and people aren't necessarily transferring them, and so then you're really taking a chance when you buy the first one, because you've got to acquire the second one in order to fish the first one.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, I agree that it would take an amendment, and so I agree with Myra, and I also like the nothing is fast in our line of work, and so, if we're really talking about how you would get at exactly what you just said, would you want to lengthen the time period to renew permits? That might be the easiest way to do it, because, otherwise -- I think it would take a plan amendment. Thank you.

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

MR. CONKLIN: When I had to do it, I just bought a boat from a fisherman, and I leased his permit, and I had it in writing, but I had five years to do it, and the permit would stay in his name until I found another permit, and then I consolidated them. If you think outside of the box, we don't have to do a plan amendment, and we could just let the fishermen think up some real creative ways to do things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that. So then, based on that, I am looking kind of over to this side of the table, and I think the answer to Number 2 here on the screen -- It seems like where we're wanting to go is (a), is to consider this as part of the management strategy evaluation. I see heads nodding yes, and so then let's go back to Number 1 here about does the committee feel that

the information provided, and we have discussed this numerous times, and the AP has discussed it numerous times, and do we think that this satisfies the council's response to the E.O.?

I would say I think it does, also partly because we're taking the information and we're taking another step here, and we're plugging it into this bigger-picture look for the entire snapper grouper fishery, and so I just want to make sure that other folks are in agreement on that. All right, and so I'm going to look to John. Do you think that you have everything you need on this?

MR. HADLEY: Absolutely. I think I do, and I appreciate the discussion, and we have a path forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for all your work on this. It's a very interesting topic. All right. Next up, we have -- Are we done with red snapper today? All right. Next up, it looks like we're going to go into the SEDAR 68 Atlantic Scamp Research Track Assessment. First, I guess we're going to get a presentation. Sorry. Andy. Is this about red snapper?

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry to disappoint you. We're not done with red snapper. I just learned that there's a new assessment. No, I'm just kidding. Before lunch, we had, on the screen, kind of the next steps for the short-term and medium-term, whatever approach we want to take, and I did not see anything captured with regard to ABC and ACL changes, and so I just want to make sure that was understood.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and so let me try to interpret what I saw/what I heard, and I don't know that we resolved whether that would be inside the short-term action or whether it would be a mid-term action, and I am not sure if we would know that until we looked at some of those other pieces and maybe got some information back from the SSC, and so I think that Mike could capture it, about ABC and ACL, question-mark, short-term and mid-term, and we don't know which one it is, and would that help, that that's listed on there and spelled out?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I think that's helpful, and I am getting confused between the short and mid-term terminology, and I would say it should be in the end overfishing immediately action, whatever that ends up being.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good, but just not in the management strategy evaluation is the thing that is crystal clear. Not in that long-term item, but I will give Mike a minute here to get this captured. While he's typing that, I am assuming that nobody else has anything else on red snapper right now. Okay. All right. We're good to go on that item. Now over to SEDAR 68 and the Atlantic Scamp Research Track Assessment. Mike, who is going to give us that presentation?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I believe we have someone calling in remotely, and we will need to transfer the presenter, and so we might need a break, just to reorient everything.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. So a five-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're going to get rolling here. As folks come back to the table, once again, a presentation on SEDAR 68, the scamp research track, and I believe that Francesca is going to be

the one actually giving the presentation, and Katie is there as well, but I think that Francesca is leading the presentation.

DR. FORRESTAL: My name is Francesca Forrestal, and I was the lead analyst for SEDAR 68, the U.S. South Atlantic Scamp Research Track Assessment. I was actually on loan from the Miami Lab, due to some personnel changes, and the upcoming operational assessment will be led by Rob Cheshire from the Beaufort Lab.

Just to give everyone an outline of what I will be presenting today about scamp, I am going to go into what the research track was and the process that it entailed, and then some of the inputs for the assessment from the data workshop, including life history, removals, and surveys, and then I'm going to go into the catch-age model, which was slightly different between the assessment and the review workshop processes, and then I will go into some model diagnostics, some uncertainty analysis, and, finally, these sensitivity runs that we did.

This is a research track assessment, and it represents the first ever one conducted under SEDAR, and it is also the first formal assessment of scamp and yellowmouth grouper under SEDAR. Research track assessments are not used for providing management advice, and, as such, they don't rely on the most recent data, and so the terminal year for this assessment is 2017.

This assessment took a little bit longer than planned for, and so the timeline had to be altered, due to COVID. The stock ID workshop was conducted over the summer of 2019, and then the data workshop was originally scheduled for in-person for the week of March 16 through 20 of 2020, and that's essentially when the world shut down, and so these had to be rescheduled on the fly, and so they were conducted over the summer of 2020. The assessment webinars were held from December through May of 2021, and then we just wrapped up the review workshop in September.

The main output from the stock ID workshop is that scamp and yellowmouth grouper are very difficult to identify, as they have a very similar -- It's very difficult to differentiate between the two of them, as they have very similar morphometrics and life history characteristics, and so the scamp is the fish to the left, and then yellowmouth is to the right, and there is some differentiation seen in the gill raker counts, the lateral line scales, and the number of pectoral fin rays, and so it's very small detailed differences between the two, and so the recommendation by the life history working group was to combine all the data, such as landings indices, age and length comps, for the two species. This assessment actually is a complex, and so it's the scamp complex, and it's taking into account both species. However, scamp does represent the vast majority of the data across the different data inputs.

The life history data used included the natural mortality, age and growth, and female maturity as well as sex transition. The natural mortality, or target natural mortality, was determined from using data from the Then et al. dataset, and we subset it to fish within the family, and so Serranidae, and we used a maximum age of thirty-four. The natural mortality was then scaled, based on the Lorenzen curve, and so that curve assumes that mortality is age or size dependent, and so that is the figure to the bottom-left. The highest natural mortality occurs at the youngest fish and then eventually stabilizes.

The age and growth curves are in the middle bottom-left, and the blue curve is the population growth curve, and so that is how the fish grow within the population, and then we also used a

fishery model for landings caught after 1992, to take into account some differences seen in the growth curve, and this was recommended by the data workshop.

Then the female maturity curve is the top-right-hand one, and so the age at 50 percent maturity for females is just about three years old, and scamp are hermaphroditic, and so they start out as female and then eventually transition to male, and the age at 50 percent transition to male occurs at just over ten years, and then any fish that are male are considered to be fully mature.

There were two landings fleets in the model, a commercial fleet and a recreational fleet, and the breakdown in the numbers caught between the two are in the figure, and you have the commercial fleet in green and the recreational in blue, and these are in numbers, just to compare them. The commercial fleet is composed of handline, longline, spear, and diving gears, and then, prior to 1980, all of the groupers were classified as unclassified groupers, and so, in order to proportion out scamp, some proportioning was required, and this was done consistent with previous SEDARs.

The recreational fleet is composed of the Marine Recreational Information Program, and so MRIP, which is the private and charter, and this represents about 37 percent of the landings, and then the majority of the recreational landings come from the headboat fleet.

We did have some discard data, and I apologize these figures are flipped, and so the top one is recreational, and the bottom is the commercial, but, first, I'm going to discuss the commercial discard data, and so the data is available from two different sources. You have the discard logbook and the coastal logbook, and, unfortunately, in the South Atlantic, the observer data was not sufficient to calculate discards, but what has been observed in the Gulf of Mexico is that these logbook discards are actually generally higher than what the observers report, and so a biased correction factor, based on the observed discards in the Gulf of Mexico and the logbook discards in the Gulf of Mexico were applied to the logbook discards in the South Atlantic.

You can see that the discards for the commercial fleet was quite negligible, and it's that green line just going along essentially what looks like zero, but it was accounted for, and then the recreational discards are a larger component, and the data was available both from MRIP and the headboat survey.

The composition data for the discards was quite limited, but it was available for the commercial and recreational discards, and then we also had information on discard mortality, and so the point estimate took into account for the immediate and delayed mortality, to give the total mortality, and, for recreational, it was 26 percent, and then 39 percent for commercial.

The survey data I used in the assessment came from the chevron trap survey, and this data was available from 1990 until 2017, which was the terminal year, and this included both age and length composition data as well as an index. As we were going through the process, we noticed that there the proportion of larger, older fish increased beginning around 2010, and this coincided with the information from SEFIS when sampling coverage increased, as well as the spatial coverage, and so we weren't particularly -- We weren't sure if this was coming into effect because of increased sampling size or if there was a decline in the smaller fish, which would increase the proportion of older fish. That was covered a lot in both the assessment webinars and the review workshop.

We also had a video survey from 2011 to 2017, and this was just an index, and there was not any composition data available for this assessment, for SEDAR 68. There was a very similar abundance trend seen in the video index, as compared to the chevron trap survey, and so these two indices were combined using the Conn method.

We had four indices of abundance that were recommended for use at the data workshop, and so we have the commercial handline, which is in blue, the recreational headboat, which is in green, and then the two surveys, the SERFS chevron trap and the video index, and both are fishing-dependent indices, and so the headboat and the commercial handline were truncated in 2009, as there were some regulations that came into effect in 2010 that had the potential to affect fishing behavior. It does appear, in this figure, that the video index has a different abundance trend from the chevron trap survey. However, when we rescaled the chevron trap index to the 2011 to 2017 average, the abundance trends were very similar, as shown in the previous slide.

This is the model structure from the assessment workshop. The model runs from 1996 to 2017 and the length compositions were available from 1978 onwards. The age compositions were not available until 1990, and we used a catch-age model, the Beaufort Assessment Model, and it was a one-area, one-season model, and we had a combined spawning stock biomass. We fixed the von Bertalanffy growth in the model, and then the Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment relationships -- We estimated several of the parameters in that, including steepness.

There were two time blocks for age-based selectivities in the model. The first time block ran from 1969 until 1991, and then we had a second that came into effect in 1992 to account for the size limit regulations that went into effect then. There were three indices of abundance, and they were weighted with the iterative Francis reweighting, and then we assumed constant catchability across the time series.

When going through the review workshop, they recommended a few changes to the assessment webinar base run, and so the assessment webinar base run included two separate discard fleets. There was one for commercial and one for recreational, and the review panel recommended that we combine the dead discards with the landings for both of these fleets, and this was, first, to simplify the model, but then, also, there is currently no way to separate discard retention from landings in BAM, and so we removed all the discards from the model, but we added the dead discards to the landings, and we did that by applying the discard mortality rate to the discards, and so 26 percent for recreational and 39 percent for commercial.

As the commercial discards were so small compared to the landings, there wasn't a large change, and so the input for the commercial fleet did not really change between the assessment and the review workshop base model. Because discards were a larger component of the recreational fleet, it did slightly change some of the inputs, particularly running from about 1995 until 2009.

These are some of the model fits, and the top two figures on the left are the commercial and recreational catches, as this is actually the review workshop, and so it includes landings and dead discards, and the model fits quite well to the commercial landings, and so each empty purple circle is what was observed, and then the blue lines are what the model is fitting, or how the model fit, and the recreational -- The model did not fit as well to the recreational, particularly in 2014, and that year had a lot of uncertainty around those landings, and so the model actually was estimating lower landings in the recreational fleet for that year.

The breakdown of fishing mortality by each fleet, the majority of the mortality is coming from the commercial fleet, and then we have the fits to the spawner-recruitment curve in the bottom-left, and then the recruitments over time in the middle figure there, and the recruitments were allowed to be estimated from 1980 until 2015, and so the recruitment appeared to be relatively high in the 1990s and then began to decline in the mid-2000s. Then the final figure on this slide, in the bottom-right, are the numbers-at-age across the time, and so you can see the breakdown of the population by age.

These are the fits to both the age comps as well as the indices, and so the top three figures are the pooled age comps, and so all the age comps for all the years in the model, and the top one is the commercial, and the model fit these quite well. The middle is for the recreational, and the model slightly overestimated some of the older ages in the recreational fleet, and then the chevron trap - - The plus group of fifteen was underestimated. Then the bottom-three figures are the fits to the indices, and then the scaled residuals at the very bottom.

The commercial index fit quite well, while the recreational, at the beginning of the time series, from 1980, it did not fit as well, and the model overestimated it, and then the chevron trap -- While it wasn't able to capture all of the peaks, particularly in the beginning, it did capture the overall trend.

To account for uncertainty in this model, we did a Monte Carlo Bootstrap Ensemble modeling, and so we bootstrapped over the indices, landings, and then age and length comps, and then we also did the Monte Carlo on the natural mortality, and so that was a uniform draw from low to high, using a max age of thirty-two to thirty-six years. We did 4,000 runs, and then the runs were culled from the ensemble model when the R_0 , FMSY, steepness, or R -sigma hit the upper bound, and so the figures in the middle show the probability density around the estimated variables of R_0 and steepness.

As I mentioned, steepness was estimated, and so the vertical line is the value from the base model run, and that was 0.56 for steepness, but then you see all the other possible values for them, and then, below those, we have the probability densities around the unfished spawners per recruit and then the log recruitment residuals, and then the two figures to the right show the overall uncertainty around the fishing mortality at the top and then uncertainty around the spawning stock biomass. This is a research track assessment, and so we're not providing status or management advice, and these plots are only really to show the uncertainty around these values.

We conducted several different sensitivity runs, both during the assessment webinar as well as the review workshop, and so the first for the assessment was the retrospective analysis, and so those two figures to the right are the yearly peels, and there wasn't a lot of -- There was no retrospective pattern seen. The middle figure is the sensitivity run on the low natural mortality and the high natural mortality, and then we also did a beta prior on the steepness estimate, to see how that would impact it, and we also did a sensitivity run on the male contribution, and then using the ageing error matrix.

During the review workshop, there was a lot of discussion around this selectivity mismatch between time blocks, and so what was seen was that, in the selectivity for both the commercial and recreational, younger fish were selected when the size limit was in place, which is counterintuitive,

as you would assume that the size limit would help select for older fish, and so we did a lot of sensitivity runs around that.

The first one that was used in the review workshop was combining the dead discards with landings, and so this was the accepted review workshop base model. We also did a dome-shaped selectivity on the recreational and commercial. However, that did not fit the data very well. Then we removed the time blocks from several different runs, to see the impact on the selectivities there, and then, finally, we did six time blocks on the base run. However, this also had some counterintuitive selectivities, and, also, it's important to note that this is a multispecies fishery, and so the time block was in place to account for the change in the size limit for scamp, but other things could be going that have an impact on scamp that might not be apparent, and so this is definitely to be explored more in the operational.

This assessment went through the Center for Independent Experts, and so this is who was there for the review workshop, and they made recommended changes for the upcoming operational assessment. The first was to explore a random walk on the age at 50 percent selectivity parameter for both commercial and recreational selectivities, to see if that would have an impact on the ages selected, or do something similar to that last sensitivity run, where we increased the time blocks, but we would need to do a likelihood analysis to determine what the best years would be to place the additional block, as there weren't clear management changes that would inform our decision about what year to place them on. Then to include the commercial landings uncertainty in the ensemble modeling step.

The next step for scamp is there will be an operational assessment, and so Rob will be incorporating all of the recent data, and there will not be any topical working groups needed. The operational assessment will determine status and will provide management advice through projections. The final data for this assessment will be due in July of 2022, and the assessment and report will be completed by the end of November of 2022, and so hopefully, at this time next year, we'll have some status and management advice. That is all I have, and thank you very much for your time, and I will take any questions, if there are any.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that presentation. Let me see if we have any questions for you. All right. I don't see any hands on this presentation, and I really appreciate you guys giving this to us, and it was very cool, and this is the first one of these, and it was exciting to see this kind of come to fruition here. Now, Mike, do we want to go over to Genny, to talk about the SSC recommendations for this? Thank you, Francesca and Katie.

DR. NESSLAGE: Thank you. I would just like to reiterate the same feelings, that the SSC was pleased to see this assessment and so much thorough work that had been done for scamp, and this is a long time coming, and folks did a wonderful job, a very thorough job. The SSC, in general, in providing its review, felt that the majority of the TORs were addressed in great depth. The one thing that wasn't necessarily addressed was the one TOR on ecosystem and climate effects, which is a really tough one to do, for many species, but there is hopefully room for working on that in future assessments beyond the next operational assessment, but, in general, a very thorough job on this research track assessment.

We also agreed that this assessment represented BSIA for this species and that the uncertainty was characterized quite thoroughly. We did talk about what additional work might need to be

undertaken during the operational assessment, or in preparation for the operational assessment, in order to address some of the uncertainties that Francesca already highlighted. In particular, we discussed, at length, the age and size structure information in the model and how it might be telling kind of different stories, each component that's in there, and they might have different information, and there seemed to be a push and pull there that needs to be further explored.

We also talked about how that might be impacting selectivity of the video and trap surveys and how they were structured in the model, and, also, we spent a good deal of time talking about the stock-recruitment relationship and how steepness might not be as well estimated as you might hope, and that can affect, of course, recruitment and projections, when we get to the operational assessment, and so we did go back and forth a little bit with the Center on these recommendations, and we have very specific recommendations in our report, and we made a list of short-term things that should probably be done, prior to doing the operational assessment, that were incorporated into the revised terms of reference, and so the Center seemed to believe that Rob could handle that with an upcoming operational, and so I think we're all on the same page regarding what needs to be done in order to move this model forward as a tool for setting management, quantitative management, advice.

We expect that the model configuration will change a bit during the operational, to address some of those issues, but we didn't think that anything we saw would prevent the assessment to be used as a tool for providing stock status and fishing level recommendations, when the time comes, and so we were very pleased with this research track assessment.

We were asked to comment, in our review, on any factors that we thought might be affecting uncertainty in stock status and fishing level recommendations, when they are determined using this model, and the one thing that really popped out at us, that we talked quite a bit about, was the ability to estimate the stock-recruitment curve, and so Francesca showed it, but I will just zoom-in on it here, and we've got it displayed on the right here, and you've got the spawning stock biomass on the horizontal axis and recruitment on the vertical axis, and we would expect the relationship would look something like the black line, but, as you can see, the blue dots indicate that the model appears to be overestimating recruitment at the lower stock sizes, on the mid to left side of the graph, and it's not -- The blue dots are not along the black line, and vice versa.

When you get to higher spawning stock biomass, that kind of 3,000 and above, it seems to be overestimating recruitment, and so that indicates to us that steepness may not be well determined in this model and that it appeared that the estimation of the stock-recruitment curve, and steepness in particular, seemed to be influenced by the length of the time series and how selectivity was blocked and natural mortality, and so those are all things that might affect uncertainty in stock status and the resulting projections and any sort of quantitative management advice that might fall out from use of the model.

I mentioned before that there was a bit of a mismatch between the age and length data, and one might be more informative than the other, and there is more data in different time periods and whatnot, and one of the things that they'll be looking into is which information sources should be most emphasized in the model, because they seem to be telling slightly different stories, and so that's something that will hopefully be worked out during the operational.

Then we also talked a little bit about the potential influence of chevron trap composition data, and it seemed to be highly influential, and whether or not that's appropriate and whether that's actually what is going on in the model is something that they will be exploring as well.

Just continuing on with factor that affect uncertainty, it's already been mentioned, but this technically is an assessment of both scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and it's mostly scamp data, but if for some reason either the fish or the fishery begins to emphasize, or they go in different directions, these two species, this could influence, of course, the future performance of the model and how well it might provide advice for scamp.

Then Francesca already mentioned that there was significant uncertainty in commercial data, particularly the discards, and then both commercial and recreational composition data was very limited, and so that could influence the uncertainty in estimates coming out of the model, and then, finally, the retrospective analyses were quite thorough, and most of them indicated there wasn't too much of a problem, but there did seem to be an indication that there was some patterning in the F over $FMSY$ ratio, which would be the overfishing definition, and that could affect uncertainty in stock status, if that continues during the operational assessment, and so that's something to keep in mind, moving forward.

Then the last thing we did was we provided some long-term research recommendations, and these wouldn't be done for the operational, per se, or not at all, because there is not time enough for that, but, hopefully, looking forward into the future, the next assessment beyond that, folks might be able to work on getting more enhanced data collection, and particularly generation of length data from the video component of the SERFS index would be highly beneficial for this stock assessment.

We also suggested examining the impact of combining the video and chevron trap surveys into a single index and possibly exploring alternatives to that, and then, also, exploring species interactions and the impact of climate variability on this species, and so I believe that that's a brief summary of our review, but I am happy to answer any questions that folks may have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Genny. Any questions for Genny? All right. I don't see any hands. We appreciate the SSC's review, and, Genny, thank you for those slides that you had on this topic. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: This is just a plug for Thursday. Thursday, we're going to be going over terms of reference for the operational scamp assessment, and so, what you guys were presented today, it might be good to think about and be ready to consider the terms of reference for that upcoming stock assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds great. Thanks for the reminder. So nothing else we need to do today on this? All right. Excellent. Okay. Next up on the agenda would be Snowy Grouper Amendment 51, and I believe that the first item that we're going to go over is we're going to go back to Jimmy Hull to review the AP comments and recommendations on snowy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. In regard to snowy grouper, the Snapper Grouper AP had a discussion, and the first item was commercial trip limit. One of the points was to advise to keep the fishery open as long as possible and modify trip limits to reduce effort. Also, the trip limit

reduction may make the trip to the fishing grounds not worth the cost and effort in some areas, and that, overall, we would prefer the 200-pound trip limit, if possible, and so there's kind of a little mixture there, to try to keep the fishery open as long as possible, but we would prefer the 200-pound trip limit, if there's a way to make that happen.

Also, the subject of a spawning season closure, we would be willing to consider a spawning closure to retain the 200-pound trip limit, and having snowy grouper commercially open earlier in the year is crucial. The spawning closure should be considered for later in the year. Modify the recreational season to not coincide with the peak spawning, which is determined to be May through August. Also, to reemphasize how important the snowy fishing season is during the shallow-water grouper closure, and it's one of the few white-meat fish that we have available, the only grouper that we have available, during that closure, and so it's important to have that for that market during that timeframe.

Under recreational management for snowy grouper, the AP recommends some type of a stamp or permit is needed for the private recreational fishery, which would be some type of deepwater stamp or permit to identify and gather data on the deepwater fishery for the recreational sector. Greater recreational data collection, possibly a census, is necessary, due to the low MRIP intercepts. The recreational effort and accessibility is increasing as technology advances in this deepwater fishery.

As far as recreational accountability, there was very mixed opinions from the AP. Some of the members desired functioning in-season closures for both sectors, and others noted that, for the recreational sector, the landings are so small that AMs shouldn't be put in place, and it would be so restrictive, because there is -- According to the intercepts, there is not much being landed to harm the fishery. With that, I would take questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Are there questions for Jimmy? I am seeing heads nod no, that there aren't any questions. Okay. If there aren't any questions, then now we will go to Allie to lead us through the overview of Snapper Grouper Amendment 51.

MS. IBERLE: You guys first saw this options paper in September, where we kind of reviewed what we had so far, and you guys wanted this to go to the Snapper Grouper AP with some specific things for them to discuss, which you just heard feedback on, and we'll kind of rehash those as they're applicable, as I move through.

A little bit of a reminder on the background, and our most recent stock assessment indicated that snowy is both overfished and experiencing overfishing. Snowy does have a rebuilding plan in place, and it's a thirty-four-year rebuilding plan that will finish in 2042, and then, for this meeting, and so we're still early in the process, and so the objective for this meeting is to determine -- We took specific things to the AP, and so, at this meeting, we'll decide what you want to take to scoping, and so kind of flesh that out. If you're wanting the IPT to build in some specific actions, which we'll go through, that's what we will be doing today, and then this will go back to the AP in April.

Then the purpose and need statements, and so these haven't changed since the last time that you saw them. However, they will be modified as we modify the amendment. Then I wanted to review the ABC and the OFL for this species, really quickly, one more time, and went over it in September, and so we received the OFL and ABC in pounds whole weight and numbers of fish,

and those were total removals, and so the first step was to convert pounds whole weight to pounds gutted weight, which is how the commercial sector is expressed, and then the recreational sector is expressed in numbers of fish, which you guys recommended continuing to do, and then we used the stock assessment -- How the stock assessment indicated the total removals fleshed out to get you from total removals to landings. Those blue columns in that table are what we're going to use going forward. I kind of breezed through that kind of quick, and so are any questions on that before I jump into the options for proposed actions? All right.

The first action for this amendment is to revise the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for snowy. We've talked a little bit about that updated language of including language for the ABC, and this amendment doesn't have that language in here yet, and so the verbiage for each option will change to accommodate that language, and so not much has changed with this action.

Highlighted in yellow, the IPT thought it would be a good idea to add in that 5 percent buffer option, and so that has been the only thing that has changed since September for this action, and so I am going to use Table 2, because it's a great summary table. Option 1 is setting ACL and the OY equal to the current ABC, which is based off of those CHTS numbers, and then Option 2 would be setting the ACL equal to the OY with the updated ABC, based on the MRIP-FES numbers, and then Options 3, 4, and 5 give you a 5, 10, and 20 percent buffer, respectively, between the ACL and OY and the ABC.

Then Table 3 shows you how those numbers would flesh out in pounds gutted weight, and so I will stop here and see if there's any discussion on this. The rest of the items that you have seen under the discussion section, we saw those in September, but let me know if you want me to go back over anything.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. Do we need a motion to accept those IPT edits?

MS. IBERLE: I believe, at this point, it can be guidance to staff. The motion will come when you approve the entire item for scoping, but correct me if I'm wrong, anybody.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, once again, we saw that there was a new option in here underneath the first action. Any discussion or concerns? I am just going to assume that we're okay with adding this, unless I see otherwise. I see heads nodding that it will be okay. All right. Back to you.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 2 is to revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for snowy grouper. Again, I am going to use Table 7, and so the major change with this action is that it was recalculated using an average weight from the SEDAR 36 update from 2016 to 2018, and so, when I originally showed it to you in September, I had calculated the allocations for the recreational sector based off of those total removals numbers, and so these have been adjusted using that weight, but, again, I think the more important piece, at this time, is to decide on the methods that you want to take to scoping for setting the allocations for this species.

As it stands, Option 1 is taking those current allocations, and so 83 percent to the commercial and 17 percent to the recreational, and applying them to the new ACL, and so those percentages were used, or were determined, off of CHTS landings. The other two options are to use that same method, and so the average landings from 1986 to 2005, but rerunning that method on the FES

landings, and then Option 3 is using the allocation formula, and that uses mean landings from 2006 to 2008 and mean landings from 1986 to 2008.

Then one more note on the options in Table 7, and these are all based off of the ACL being set equal to the ABC, and so that's how the ACL was set in a previous amendment, which I believe the most recent one was Regulatory Amendment 20, and so that's what we modeled here. If you guys decide to go with a different option for that first action, then these will change.

Then Table 8 is, again, the actual breakdown in the numbers, and so we give you -- There's a lot going on in this table, and so the first column is the percentage allocation for the recreational sector, and then you have the recreational ACL in numbers of fish, and then you have the total commercial ACL.

Snowy grouper currently has a split season, and so Season 1 is January 1 through June 31, and it receives 70 percent of the total commercial ACL, and then Season 2 is from July 1 to December 31, and it receives 30 percent of the total commercial ACL. Then, as a reference, when you're looking at this table, the current recreational ACL is 5,315 fish, and then the current commercial ACL is 153,935 pounds, if you wanted to kind of look at where you're at in that table. I will pause here and see if there any discussion on this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I have a question, but go ahead, Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I think that the figures are reversed in Table 7 for Option 3.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry about that. Sorry for any confusion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Laurilee, and so my question is about the options, and so is there an option that would retain the current allocations, but is just converted to the FES?

MS. IBERLE: I'm sorry, but could you say that one more time?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry. I know you're still looking at that table. Sorry. Is there an option that would retain the current allocations, but it's based on the new FES numbers?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so that is -- Essentially, that's what you would be doing with Option 1, and so you would be keeping the 83/17 percent allocations, and they would be applied to whatever new ACL you choose, which the ACL would be based off of MRIP-FES. Option 2 is reformulating those percentages, but on the landings side, and so it's essentially that you're using the -- You are redoing the method for allocations, and you are using the MRIP-FES landings, whereas, in the first option, you've already incorporated the MRIP method when you created that new ACL, and you're just sticking the 83/17 on the new ACL. Does that make sense? I hope I didn't --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I need to think about that more, but more hands are going up, and so let me think about it. We'll go to Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: Wouldn't that be Option 3 though, and you would be using the old allocation formula and using the new FES numbers? It seems to me that that's what --

MS. MCCAWLEY: I wasn't 100 percent sure, and that's why I was --

MR. GRINER: I wasn't either, and that's why -- I think that would be Option 3.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks. I got confused. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So are you asking, in the -- You're not asking about the FES, but were you meaning in the spirit of, when we started this allocation thing, to keep the commercial pounds near the same, and the allocation would change, and is that what you were asking?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I was trying -- Yes, and I think you said it better than I could, and so I was trying to make sure that -- You know, we've been putting in these various options, when we look at allocation in all of these documents, and I wasn't sure if we had all of those in here, because we're still in the early stages and trying to make sure we have the range, and I wasn't clear if that one is in there or not.

MR. GRINER: As a follow-up to that, in a way, doesn't Option 1 do the same thing, or not really, because you're keeping the percentages the same, but the ABC is going to be the ABC.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's what is unclear to me, because I thought that Option 1 wasn't supposed to be viable, and do you see what I mean? I'm just confused.

MS. IBERLE: I think the table is a little misleading. With Option 1, you're still -- Yes, you would still be -- The percentage wouldn't change, but you're applying it to that new ACL, and so I think the CHTS got it a little confusing, because it seemed like we weren't using the updated landings stream, and you still are, because you have that updated ACL. Then the allocations formula -- Currently, you haven't used the allocations formula for this species, and they used, in Regulatory 20, the average landings from 1986 to 2005. Sorry that got a little confusing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's okay. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am not sure, Allie, when we started like quota management for this species, and so we don't have a recent time series for allocation, but I assume that's intentional on the staff's part, because it would be biased, in terms of setting allocation with the caps in place, and do you know?

MS. IBERLE: I am not exactly -- Myra is coming to help.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks for that Andy, and so, I mean, this question keeps coming up, and we're going to be talking more about it, as we talk about other snapper grouper amendments that we're developing, and so the issue of having more recent years for your allocation formula is something that -- Really, it's up to you all to tell us if you want us to bring you back options from the various IPTs to work out those options, so that you can consider them, but, as you mentioned, there is the caveat that there's been regulatory regulations that have caused closures, and so then you have the issue of the fishery not being representative, I guess, of the -- You know what I'm saying.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: That was my suspicion, and so we can look into that further. The second thing that strikes me is this is the first instance where I've seen when we switched to CHTS to FES and the actual allocation for the commercial goes up and not down, and I guess I'm surprised by that, because the FES estimates higher fishing effort, in most instances of showing that catches are doubled for other species, and I just wanted to make sure that that's been checked and double-checked and that those are the correct numbers.

MS. IBERLE: I know that this species -- The recreational side of things is -- The numbers are really low, but I will make sure that the IPT goes back and makes sure that everything is kosher with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Maybe this is to Myra, or maybe not, and so are you saying that we could add an option right now to go ahead and look at a more recent timeline and do it not under the allocation formula, necessarily, but we could do an average landings to include a more recent time series?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and I think that would be appropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Is this like the third or fourth allocation decision we've had to make since this stuff has come out, and we've done, what, dolphin, and we have snowy, and we've done red porgy, and is that correct, and is that the only three, and have we changed any of the allocations yet? Did we actually change dolphin? I think we also did wahoo, but did we actually change the allocation from what it is?

MS. BROUWER: For dolphin wahoo, they did change, and also your preferred for red porgy is to apply the allocation formula, as opposed to what you had done in the past, which is the current allocation, and so, yes, there has been some changes.

MR. CONKLIN: I know we have this tool or whatever that someone has conjured up, and, I mean, is there one -- I mean, is there going to be any kind of legal repercussion if we pick one way or another, or we build a certain case, or, I mean, why wouldn't we just do the same thing for all of them, to justify it, or not change them at all? Like I mentioned before, I think there is litigation in the Gulf over this, and it's going to take a couple of years to shake out, and it may prove everything wrong, and we may have to revert back and do it all over again, and so maybe some help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I have an answer, but Shep has come to the table. Let's let Shep go first.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's going to be on a case-by-case basis. I mean, it can vary stock-by-stock, and the decision ultimately, I would say, would be judged on the record, in the context of litigation, for any action you've taken, and so, as long as you have explained why you did it in that particular fishery, you should be okay, and, generally speaking, you wouldn't have how you had handled the other fisheries in the record for defending that one decision, and not that you couldn't get that information before the court, but, yes, it's a case-by-case thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep, and, yes, I agree, and I think it was maybe Chester and Mel and I that talked about this when we were talking about some other species and how we felt like each one of these should be an individualized decision and have this discussion about the landings trends and has one sector gone over, or stayed way under, et cetera, just looking at each one of these based on all this different information, life history, et cetera, and so I feel like we've had unique discussions on all of these. Go ahead, Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I guess these are the numbers that we have. I mean, yesterday, with the blueline tile discussion, we had one sector, or both sectors, and, I mean, personally, I don't know if I believe the numbers. I mean, they're pretty high, and then you see a scenario where they've been tamed back down. It's just going to be really tough for me to make decisions based upon something like that. I mean, you have one sector that sees -- You know, they get a bump, and they're like, oh, goody, and then here, in this scenario, one of these, we might be like, oh, goody, and then it's all just a sham, but I am not saying that it is, but it's very uncertain.

I don't want to be driving a tack in between these sectors any more than there already is, and, I mean, we're all friends here, but it's just real difficult. I mean, we knew it was going to be, but I do like the rationale of, if you look at it on a case-by-case basis, and somebody is closing down and another sector is not, and that might be good rationale to make a different decision, and so I just wanted to get that on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. I am going to come back to kind of the original question here, and do we like this range of options, or do we want to add any additional options here? We've had some good discussion, and are we good with this for now? I don't see any hands raised, and I am going to turn it back to Allie to go to the next action.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The next action is in response to one of the items that you guys asked for at the September meeting, and that was to consider reducing the snowy grouper commercial trip limit, and so, in September, you guys mentioned -- The current bag limit is 200 pounds gutted weight, and so you guys mentioned stepping down to 150 and then 100 pounds, and so we kind of built in a rough action for you guys with those options.

In September, there was a really preliminary analysis of one of the allocation scenarios for the commercial sector and the predicted season length, with the different bag limits, and so what the IPT did was expand out that analysis for Table 9, and, again, this table has got a lot going on, but what you're looking at is, for each allocation scenario, the season, and so it's split out by season, and so Season 1 is the first three rows in each section, and then Season 2 is the last three rows, and then you have each bag limit scenario, and so the current bag limit, 150 pounds, and then 100 pounds and the predicted season closure.

This table is built on the ACL being set equal to the ABC, and so, again, everything is building off of that. If you change that action, then these will no longer apply, and then all three allocation scenarios, and so, if you were to add -- Later on, add an allocation scenario, then we would have to reevaluate that, and so I will kind of stop here. Again, the rest of the discussion was kind of covered in September, but let me know if you want me to rehash it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion of -- This is the commercial trip limit action. Any discussion on this? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to recognize the AP's comments of wanting to stay close to that 200-pound mark, and I was also thinking that -- I was running the numbers and looking at stuff, and we certainly couldn't afford to go below 150.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Anything else on this? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question for Jimmy, maybe. I believe you mentioned that the catches earlier in the year were more important than later in the year, and was that correct? Am I correct in that?

MR. HULL: Yes. With the shallow-water grouper closure, it was thought, from the AP members, that we need a grouper catch, being a deepwater grouper, that's available during that time.

MR. STRELCHECK: So we have a split season right now. Would it be something worth considering where we just start the season at the beginning of the year, whatever timeframe, January 1, and just continue it until the fishery closes, as at least an option?

MR. HULL: I can't remember us discussing that at the AP, of changing the season like that. It would be something that we probably should put forth, and I know a lot of people have -- The snowy grouper is very -- We don't have much, and it's really important to try to utilize it the best way possible for everybody, and so I think that I can't really answer that question, as far as opening it and just leaving it open without a split season, but the split season was to extend it, but also to give fair access up and down the coast to different regions, so that it isn't all gobbled up by Florida, for instance, that has better weather earlier and that type of thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: There were some hands that went up, and I think it was Tim.

MR. GRINER: That's exactly what I was going to say, Jimmy. The reason we did that, and we've only done it recently, was to give some access to these fish to the northern guys, especially in North Carolina, so that they would have access to these fish, and we split it up also to try to time it a little bit, so that any bycatch with the blueline tile fishery, that does occur with some snowy -- That we wouldn't have to throw the snowy back, and so, yes, it was to provide access up and down the coast, and so that's something that still needs to be a consideration.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I agree with Tim, and we basically -- We have two things that we can fish for during the year, snowy grouper and a few shallow-water groupers, but snowy grouper and golden tilefish, and that's our restaurant supply for our fresh fish, and so, in my opinion, you could start the tilefish season two weeks later, in mid-January, and that would help extend it into the season, when we really need fish for our restaurants, because we really aren't doing a whole lot right after Christmas, but, if you could start the snowy season a little bit later, so that, when the golden tilefish closes, you still have more days for snowy grouper, as long as you don't get into the high spawning season for them, and that would give our boats fish for a longer period of time than what we have, the way it is now, and absolutely I would be opposed to running the season until the limit was reached, because the only thing that they can fish for right now is snowy grouper, what little bit is left.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. I also heard some good ideas in there for golden, which is coming up. Anything else on this particular action? All right. I don't see any other hands. Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so, in September, when talking about the commercial bag limit, there was kind of like an either/or about considering a commercial spawning season closure, and so that was mentioned, and we took that to the AP, and then IPT did a little bit of research, but we don't have a range of alternatives for you at this point, and so, if this is something that the council would like to move forward on, we would need a little bit of guidance on what options you would need.

In looking at the research, Farmer et al. noted that snowy grouper spawn from January through October, and they considered peak spawning to be May through August, and then Kohmos et al. indicated that snowy spawn from January through October and April through September, respectively, and another thing to note was that Kohmos et al. noted that spawning was heavily tied to the lunar cycle, and we mentioned that to the AP, and the AP noted some issues with enforceability of anything tied around a lunar cycle, but I wanted to kind of note it here, and so that's where I will leave it. I will pause on the AP feedback, so that we have it on the screen, if you want to review that, and I will see if we want to scope this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Allie, and so I'm going to throw a couple of ideas out there for folks to consider. I am wondering, should we consider something like a June to August, and I was looking at this chart, and a June to August closure, and there's not a closure at the same time for blueline, and it seems like some folks are catching both of them at the same time, and I don't know, and I'm just throwing it out there for discussion. Any thoughts on this? Tim.

MR. GRINER: My first thought is there is no need to have a spawning closure when they've got an ACL of 70,000 pounds. You're not going to hurt or help or do anything. All we're taking out of the biomass is 70,000 pounds, and so I think you just don't even need to concern yourself with spawning.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I just wanted to throw it out there, but any more discussion on this? Okay, and so it sounds like we're not going to consider a commercial spawning season closure. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am supportive of it being considered. I don't think it hurts us to go out and at least get input on it, and so I would recommend that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Do you need anything more specific other than we would like to consider it? Do you need specific months?

MS. IBERLE: If we are going to take it to scoping, then we would need to have some options for the IPT to build on. The other thing I wanted to note is, currently, the recreational season is May through August, and I just wanted to note that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I guess my concern, looking at the timeframe you just mentioned, is are we then taking access back away from the very people we were trying to make sure had access with the split season, because you're taking away those three months.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So the spawning season -- It's in this chart, and it's relatively long, and it looks like it could be all the way from March through October, but I was suggesting -- So there seems to be some peak months, depending on which paper you're looking at, and so I was suggesting a subset of those peak months, and not even all of the peak months, and then I think that that's a good question, about would you then try to align and have a spawning season closure on the recreational side as well, and so like why would you do it for one and not the other? I'm just throwing these ideas out there. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't understand how, if you have a commercial closure spawning season, and you look at the recreational season, and certain places where you would catch a grouper, it's my belief that the commercial side has got a better idea of where they're going to catch their grouper at, versus dropping down for something else, and so you've got to have one with the other.

Something else to look at is exactly where these co-occurring species that you all -- That the folks have been talking about that the data does not support, and which is kind of frustrating for me, particularly north of Cape Hatteras, and you're looking at areas where you don't have the co-occurrence, as you do further south and other things, and so the data needs to be fleshed out a little more with this co-occurrence and exactly the reason why some of these -- Exactly the reason why the grouper was done on a 70/30 split and not to revisit that, but I don't think that data supports some of the things that the outcome produced.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Let me ask the question again, and so it seems like there is some interest in keeping this option in there, but we would need some specific months, and I guess we could look at May and June and then, separately, July and August, or something else, and I'm just throwing it out there. I see Andy is conferring. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: What if they just swim over to the spawning SMZs, and we don't have to worry about them?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, what are your thoughts here? Should we leave this action in, and, if so, what months?

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I'm asking Rick, and so, for clarification, we're at the scoping phase, or we've moved past scoping?

MS. IBERLE: We still haven't approved for scoping, but Myra has just said that we can leave it open-ended. Sorry. I misspoke on that, and so, if you want to scope it as-is, then we can do that.

MR. STRELCHECK: Then the other comment that I would make is I think it's okay to leave it open-ended, but maybe ask the question of a subset of months. For the commercial fishery, the closure potentially isn't impactful on the frontend, because you're going to be closing before you reach the closure, right, and so then what I would be interested on the commercial side is, on the backend, when does it end? The July 1 season would be essentially impacted by a closure that

extends into the July and August and September timeframe, and so we would potentially have to have a different start date for the second half of the season that wouldn't align with July 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good questions. I hope that that little spawning table is in the document when it goes out for scoping, because that was helpful. All right. Anything else on this action? All right. Back to Allie for the recreational management measures.

MS. IBERLE: Really quickly, before we move off of this one, did you want to include any months anywhere in this action, any specific months, or just leave it as-is?

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, and I see heads nodding no. No specific months.

MS. IBERLE: Perfect. I am going to take that out. All right. The next action deals with modifying recreational management measures, and so, again, we talked about this in September, and you wanted to get the AP's feedback. There has been a lot of discussion on, as Jimmy mentioned, a permit for the recreational sector, and, when we took this to the AP, we acknowledged that you guys have discussed -- There's been a lot of discussion on that permit, and then the IPT did a little analysis looking at Table 12 and Table 13 on kind of a similar thing that we did for the commercial, and so looking at the different recreational allocation scenarios and then the average landings from 2015 to 2019, and, again, that recreational season is from May through August.

You're looking at the average landings from those two waves, and, from that, we were able to look at the expected recreational ACL for each allocation scenario and roughly predict about how many waves you would have with that ACL, based on those landings in Table 12. For that first allocation scenario, you would have roughly one open wave. For Alternative 2, you would have less than one wave, and then, for Alternative 3, you would have a little less than two waves. I will kind of stop here and hover over the AP comments, but, if you want me to go back up to those two tables, I would be more than happy to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What do we want to see here? Anyone? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, looking at what we did this morning with talking about depth for the red snapper, when we talked at lunch, it was sort of coming to fruition of like how is that going to affect people that want to go out -- Do we need to look at a season by depth for these deepwater species? In other words, match up the waves, and I'm thinking it through, and am I making any sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so, but I'm just not sure how to do it, and I would also pose the same question that we just had on commercial about having a season avoiding the -- We don't have the avoidance of a spawning season, or a recreational spawning, season closure here either. The open season overlaps with the peak spawning. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: You just beat me to that. I was looking at that and noticed that the rec season is the peak spawning season, and so do we need to add an option about a rec spawning season closure?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so. I don't know why we would consider it for commercial and then not for recreational, and the recreational season is right over the peak of the spawning.

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, and, in fact, I thought I read it wrong, and I was thinking the same thing, and so I agree, and I think that might be an option to consider adding.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Allie is getting that typed up. Anything else for recreational that we want to consider here? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess it's implied, based on the previous comment about the spawning closure, but we would want to look at options to then move the season either pre or post that spawning season closure. The challenge becomes, once you move outside of the recent timeframe, we're not going to have a lot of data to estimate what may or may not be caught during that timeframe, but I would assume that the preference would be not early in the year, because of weather conditions, and so you would want to open the season March and April, at the earliest, or after the summer spawning season closure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that kind of depends on where you are in the region, Florida versus another state, because earlier in the year is usually pretty good in Florida, and so then it gets to the regional differences that Dewey has been talking about. Dewey, you had your hand up.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: This spawning closure means you just can't keep the fish, and is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: That would depend on how you guys want to build it in, and so I just changed the language to consider shifting the recreational season, and so talking about, again, moving it pre or post spawning, versus closing it down, but that's how you guys decide to build that action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But I would say no retention during these months.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So that doesn't stop people fishing and discarding snowy grouper, just because they couldn't keep it, and so it's just a feel-good measure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess, unless you took other actions along with it.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Well, clearly the data shows that you're catching, in the majority of the area, certain things of co-occurring species, and so people are going to go fishing for other species, unless there's a particular closure area, and so they're going to go fish, and they're going to catch snowy grouper, and they just won't land their one -- I think it's one fish a vessel, or person, and so they won't land their whatever, and it just continues to go on, and so, in reality, nothing has been achieved, for that matter, because most of the fish at the depth, unless you're using your descending device, which you're required to have ready and all that, might not make it back, or something like that, and, I mean, I'm just trying to think of reality. It sounds good, a spawning closure, but that doesn't affect certain groups or something from going fishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. So leave it in there? What we would essentially be doing is moving the open season, and so it would essentially become a spawning season closure. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Based on that logic, and don't shoot me, but it seems like we should take out the commercial spawning. Right? Don't shoot me. I was just thinking out loud too, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Why don't we take a ten-minute break? I feel like we're all a little -- Why don't we take a ten-minute break and come back?

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're going to get started again, and so get your caffeine and get your second or third cookie. I am going to throw out a crazy idea for you guys to react to, and so we talked yesterday, although that seems like three days ago, but it was just yesterday, about blueline, and we talked about it being a framework amendment for a single action to modify the accountability measure, to match the accountability measure that I believed we're suggesting for red porgy.

That's also going to be the same accountability measure that we're going to look at for snowy grouper, but, because, for part of this South Atlantic region, snowy and blueline co-occur, and in case other actions get added on blueline, and so let's say we start looking at things other than just the accountability measure, and why would we not bring blueline in with the snowy amendment, so that we're looking at both of them at the same time, so that we can take the same actions for both of these species, because, to get to where Dewey was suggesting --

Yes, you're going to end up discarding these fish, and, since they're co-occurring, why would you not try to line up the actions for both of them? I see that Dewey is like, oh, hell, no, but maybe, first, let's talk about the timing of this. Allie or Myra, if we pull -- Instead of doing the framework action for blueline, if we pull the blueline accountability measure in here, what is the new timing?

MS. IBERLE: I scrolled back up to the tentative timeline for this amendment, and so, right now, we're scheduled for a December 2022 final draft amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have to stick with the timeline, because of the rebuild?

MS. IBERLE: The rebuilding plan doesn't have to be modified, but we did receive a letter in June of this year, and so we are on a deadline for this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then, Myra, you were the one guessing the timing of the blueline framework action, and so what do you think? If we pulled that in here, the timing would be not as quick?

MS. BROUWER: I think we can stick to this timeline, and I am just noticing that it probably should say December of 2022, and so we could -- I am looking at the wrong one. December of 2022 is when we could approve this amendment, and, if we add the blueline, I think we can still stay on that timeline. What we talked about yesterday -- My recollection is that you were interested in getting a framework that could potentially be approved in September of next year, and that's why we talked about, if it's the single action in a framework, then, yes, we can probably get that done. If you add an action to this amendment, and especially if there is going to be additional actions, potentially, then that does affect the timeline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. what are people's thoughts on that idea? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: First of all, I am not trying to micromanage or give comments on micromanaging fisheries, but there is a segment north of Cape Hatteras that there is no co-

occurring species. All your surveys from 2016, the Mid-Atlantic survey, your first leg of the deepwater survey, will show there is no co-occurrence of snowy grouper with blueline tilefish north of Cape Hatteras, in a particular area.

When you start further south, I believe that the data will show that -- You know, co-occurrence, I believe, of species is that you go here and you catch this, and I am just particularly to commercial, and you go here and you catch this species, and you go here and catch this species, and, all of a sudden, you go land them, and they're called co-occurring species. Go pick out the data that shows that you're catching snowy grouper and blueline tilefish neck and neck.

When Amendment 25 started out, about reducing the season of a hundred pounds from January to May, particularly in North Carolina, fishermen in the lower end of North Carolina talked to them and said, hey, we're fine with a hundred-pound trip limit or less, because we don't catch many snowies. I think places that land the snowies, particularly with blueline, is you're going to see maybe using a drift gear buoy fishery, where the gear drifts across and catches blueline, and, if it drifts a little further, it catches snowy grouper, and maybe, if it drifts somewhere else, it catches golden tilefish during that time.

I believe the data -- This co-occurrence that we're wrapping our hands around the axle with, I wonder just how prevalent it is, based on the data, and not just because we landed everything together, and I am not asking for people to go do more work to look at the data, but, somehow, that has got wrapped in here, in the last amendment, I think it was 25, and where we're sitting here now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't think anything changes if we keep the stand-alone blueline tile AM on its own, but then, still, as early as this is, put in there some consideration about -- Because there are places, and I know our guys are catching them together, and like not landing them together, but catching them together, and so maybe, in here, we add a blueline and snowy closure, just to keep the discards down, and that doesn't change anything. This one is still going, and that one is still going, and it doesn't slow that one down.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a good point. Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Is the data going to show a magnitude? Are we talking hundreds of thousands of pounds of fish or just a few fish here or there? How much work are we going to do for just a few fish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think that's the point of scoping, right? Like the point of being this early is to be able to say, hey, are we going to have an issue if we close snowy and someone is going out there for blueline, and, I mean, it's early enough to look at that. It may not, but we're trying to reduce discards, eventually. At the end of the day, if it doesn't help any of us, then this is when we look at it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was kind of my thought as well. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think the other problem we're going to run into -- We can analyze the data, but there is no data, other than that grid that we report on, and it's a fairly big grid, and so you're not really going to be able to distinguish was this caught in a separate area, and that's going to be part of the problem there too, if we try to dig into it too much. I mean, you can make a lot of stops and still be in the same grid.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so what do we want to do here?

MR. GRINER: I think the blueline needs to be left alone, like it is. We went through a lot of work yesterday to get there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I will just throw something out for you guys to chew over, and you can leave the blueline the way it is, and, I mean, you're going to give us direction to take this out for scoping, and there's no reason why you can't ask the question that Kerry just posed as part of the scoping for this amendment. It doesn't necessarily mean that you need to add an action at this meeting, but you can direct us to gather more information about the co-occurrence or how the regulations for one are going to affect the other, and that's perfectly okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I like that. Direction to staff to ask the question. What were you saying, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: But let's un-attach it, and let's still keep the framework on its own path.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, that's what I think we're -- Okay.

MS. IBERLE: So what do you want the -- I just want to make sure that I word it correctly on the guidance for that item.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Ask about the frequency of catching the two species together on the same trip. I don't know, and what do you think, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I guess the question really came from the spawning closure, right, and, so, within that action, I guess the question would be do people feel like there is a detriment to continue to fish for blueline tilefish, and are people even going to do that, first of all, and, if so, is it at the detriment to the snowy spawning closure, and do we even need a spawning closure for snowy?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie is typing it up there.

MS. BROUWER: Is this general -- I mean, I just want to capture sort of the gist of what you guys want, and we can sort out how to better phrase it, but, if what's on the screen is general enough, then I think what would be fine with us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so. Kerry, can you look at it? Request information from the public on how the potential restrictions on snowy would affect blueline tilefish. Is that too general, or is it okay?

MS. IBERLE: Do you want language in there on specifically the snowy grouper spawning season? Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got that in there. Are we ready to move to the accountability measure action? Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so Action 6 is the last one that we'll cover for snowy, and so, again, in September, we posed the question to the council on whether or not you guys would like to modify any of the snowy grouper accountability measures, and you instructed the IPT to look into the recreational -- Specifically, the post-season accountability measures, and the IPT kind of looked at it as a whole, and, in discussion, we decided to take those alternatives that you've seen from red porgy, and those are highlighted in yellow, and, again, it's going to be that same thing, and I'm going to use Table 14 to kind of explain this.

As it stands now, there is an in-season AM, where, if the recreational landings reach the ACL, then the season closes, and then the post-season AM is tied to the recreational landings, and they need to exceed the ACL. The total ACL needs to be exceeded, and it's tied to that overfished stock status.

Alternative 2 will have NMFS annually announcing the recreational fishing season start and end dates, and then Alternative 3, which I will note is the preferred alternative for red porgy, removes the in-season AM and then, again, uncouples that post-season AM from the total ACL and the overfished stock status, and so the only thing that would trigger it would be the recreational landings exceeding the recreational ACL, and then, in the following season, it would be reduced by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from being exceeded. With that, I will turn it back over to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments or concerns on the accountability measures? Once again, these are the same ones that we were talking about for red porgy. All right. I don't see any hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right. I think the only thing left to do then would be to potentially approve this amendment for scoping, and so, at this point, we would kind of clean up everything that we've added, and, those kind of more general actions, we'll make sure that those are kind of in tip-top shape and ready to go out and scope, and then the AP will see this in April, and we will move forward, and so, if you would like to approve it for scoping, then we will need a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: Madam Chair, I would move that we approve the Amendment 51 document for scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's seconded by Kerry. **Any objections to that motion? Seeing none, that motion carries.** I think this is all we need to do on snowy, and then on to golden tile.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Thank you, guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. Now I believe we're going to move over to golden tilefish, and we will start by turning it back over to Jimmy, so that he can tell us about the AP comments and recommendations on golden tile. Back to you, Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Your AP discussed golden tilefish, Amendment 52, and a point was recommend that the private recreational component has a census method of reporting deepwater catch. Recommend that the council set the total ACL equal to the updated ABC and recommend that the council retains the current sector allocations for golden tilefish. Also, recommend changing the commercial hook-and-line season to be different from longline, and, also, consider measures to extend the longline season, possibly through individual fishing quotas, without reducing the trip limit. Madam Chair, that's all I have on golden tilefish, if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Any questions? No questions. I'm sorry. Andy has his hand up.

MR. STRELCHECK: Jimmy, I'm curious about your comment about the commercial longline season having a difference there, and is that for those that catch golden tilefish in the longline fishery also being able to participate in the hook-and-line fishery afterward?

MR. HULL: Well, in order to do that, you would have to have a separate boat, because you can't have the same -- So it's more in line with market, market issues of having too many fish at the dock and the price go down and having available fish when the longline closes and having the longer hook-and-line season. I think it's -- Everybody is so desperate to have fish, and we're trying to stretch out the harvest between those two fishing methods and make it a longer season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? All right. I don't see any more hands, and so then, Mike, is Roger going to walk us through this?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and Roger should be online.

MR. PUGLIESE: Good afternoon, and we're going to walk through Amendment 52 to the Snapper Grouper FMP, catch level adjustments and allocations for golden tilefish. What we're moving forward on is the golden tilefish has been assessed a number of times, starting in 2004 with a benchmark assessment, moving forward to a standard assessment in 2011, which was updated in 2016.

That brings us to the present, with SEDAR 66, the operational assessment for golden tilefish, which was completed in 2020, and it includes the recreational landings estimates using the MRIP and FES. The council received the results of the assessment back in June of 2021 and directed advancing on a plan amendment to adjust catch levels, and so what we have is objectives for today's meeting is to provide guidance on actions and the range of alternatives to consider to adjust catch levels and sector allocations based on the new assessment and to consider any changes to management measures for scoping and to consider recommending for scoping.

What you see is a tentative amendment timeframe, which we have the review of the AP comments, which, in addition to walking through the options paper and potentially approving for scoping. Given that timeframe, we're looking at approval of the amendment in December of 2022.

What this options paper brings forward is the draft purpose and need statements, and these are tailored to include the action now on acceptable biological catch, and so the purpose is to revise the acceptable biological catch and the annual optimum yield, the total annual catch limit, and sector allocations for golden tilefish, based on the results of the most recent stock assessment, and the need is to achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practical, adverse social and economic effects.

What that moves forward to is the SSC reviewed the stock assessment in April and May of this year and found the assessment addressed the terms of reference appropriately, and it was conducted using the best scientific information available. It was adequate for determining stock status and supporting the fishing level recommendations, and it addressed uncertainty consistent with the expectations and the available information, and so what we have is, in Table 1, the OFL and ABC recommendations, with the base ABC recommendations of increasing to 418,000 pounds gutted weight.

That moves us into the actual options for proposed actions, and, again, these actions are tailored to include ABC in them, and so Action 1 is to revise the golden tilefish total acceptable biological catch and annual catch limit and annual optimum yield, and the SSC recommended the new ABC based on the result of SEDAR 66 and provided the ABC, which is feeding into a total ACL and annual OY, which must be adjusted accordingly.

In addressing the revisions with the MRIP and FES, we have options presented. The first option, no action, is where we are, based on the previous assessment, with a 342,000-pound gutted weight total annual catch limit. Option 2 revises the acceptable biological catch based on the recommendations of the SSC and revises the total annual catch limit and annual optimum yield for golden tilefish and sets them equal to the updated acceptable biological catch. Then that catch level would stay in place from 2026 until modified.

What you're seeing with Option 3 and Option 4 then are a step-down, or a buffer, where the ACL would be equal to 95 percent of the updated acceptable biological catch and 90 percent of the updated acceptable biological catch, and Table 2 presents that, where you have the present total ACL, the ACL equals ABC, at 418,000 pounds, and then the step-down that would move it down to 397,000 pounds and 376,000 on a 95 and 90 percent reduction.

The Snapper Grouper AP provided comments and recommended that the council set the annual total allowable catch limit equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish, as stated previously, and some additional feedback on the need for a recreational census and the potential value of mobile applications and tracking, and so, with that, I would bring it to the committee for discussion on the range of options that have been presented.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: If the stock assessment says that they're not overfished and they're not undergoing overfishing, why is the ABC so much lower than the OFL?

MR. PUGLIESE: I may defer to Mike or Chip on that, but it's the step-down and the uncertainties that were in this stock, and the stock status has uncertainty in natural mortality, and, also, there is recruitment uncertainty accounted for in the projections, and there is a number of those uncertainties that I think provide that, and it probably has one of the largest differentials between OFL and ABC, and Mike or Chip may want to step in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip is up here. Thanks, Roger.

DR. COLLIER: In a previous assessment of golden tilefish, there was an extremely large buffer between the OFL and the ABC, and, since then, it has been reduced quite a bit, and one of the reasons for that extremely large one previously was because of the uncertainty associated with natural mortality. They had used a pretty wide range of natural mortality for golden tilefish, and that led to an extremely large buffer. In this most recent assessment, they reduced the uncertainty associated with that natural mortality, and, therefore, the buffer between the two is not as large.

Another issue for this species is it doesn't recruit to the fishery until age-six or seven, and so that leads to an additional uncertainty, especially for stock assessments, when you're looking at these forward-projecting models. They have some issues towards the terminal year, and, when you're not getting recruits until age-six or seven, it's having to fill in some of those gaps in those -- As it's doing projections, it's having to fill out more of those time series earlier on than other species, and so it doesn't have as much information in it for those projections.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chip. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Chip. Is there a standard formula that you use to develop this buffer based on some level of uncertainty, or how exactly do you get to a certain buffer level based on a certain level of uncertainty?

DR. COLLIER: It uses the P* approach, and what the P* approach does is it basically takes the uncertainty that's associated with the model and basically searches through all the different data points in there, and John Walter can probably explain this a lot better than I can, but it searches through basically the prism of all the uncertainties included in the assessment, and that will develop the uncertainty associated with the stock assessment, and then there is also whether or not the P* is using the reduction associated with the ABC Control Rule.

For this species, it utilized -- It's not overfished and overfishing, and so it didn't have much of a reduction there, and I think it is sensitive to overfishing, based on the PSA analysis, and so there was going to be some significant reduction associated with that, and the other two factors I am actually drawing a blank on right now, and you caught me off-guard. There it is, and it's the assessment tier, and so this one was -- It was a Tier 2 assessment, because the assessment -- It was specified in the assessment, and the uncertainty was a two, and that's given the environmental conditions. The stock status was a two, because it was close to the benchmark values, and the PSA was a three, and that's because of the low productivity and high vulnerability associated with the PSA analysis.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So, first of all, I'm new to this, and so I'm not really sure what natural mortality is. These guys are catching huge fish, and then I was told that one of the uncertainties was that they weren't catching very many small fish, and I wanted to respond to that, because this fishery is one of the very few fisheries where you can actually target the size fish that you want. The fish are from 600 feet out to 750 or 800 feet of water, and, the deeper you go, the bigger the fish are, and so the fishermen do not target -- They don't fish in the shallower water, because they don't want to catch the small fish. Number one, they're not worth as much, and, number two, why target small fish, when you can let them grow up and they're worth a lot more money?

You also are fishing offshore and adjacent to a sixty-mile area where it's full of small fish, and so the offshore site of the Oculina Reef HAPC is a recharge area for golden tilefish, and they can't fish in there, and so, yes, sixty miles of bottom that is generating fish, and so I don't understand, first of all, what this natural mortality is, and if you could explain that first, please, if you would. Thank you.

DR. COLLIER: So natural mortality is just a fish dying from natural causes, whether it's predation or if it's being -- If it's other factors just killing it, and a cold-water intrusion might cause some mortalities, and so it's just associated with natural causes and not related to fishing, essentially.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So golden tilefish have a greater natural mortality than some of the inshore groupers that don't have as much of a buffer?

DR. COLLIER: No, and there was higher uncertainty with golden tilefish natural mortality. There was a very large range that was applied in the previous assessment, and it's not as bad for this one, and so the buffer between the OFL and the ABC is greatly reduced from what was in a previous assessment, and this one is pretty much in line with other assessments now, as far as the amount of uncertainty.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MS. THOMPSON: So they don't reach sexual maturity until they're six or seven years old, and so is the SSC basing the uncertainty on the fact that you don't have very many six or seven-year-old fish that are being unloaded at the dock?

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks for these questions, Laurilee, and this is, I think, a good opportunity to say that a lot of this comes from the recipe for the ABC Control Rule, which is really just a recipe for how much probability of overfishing to allow. There is a number of factors that are involved in that, and the SSC has developed it, and, as Chip noted, it relates to the tier of the stock assessment, whether it can estimate all of the parameters.

In this case, we can't estimate some of the stock-recruitment relationship parameters, and that knocks down the tier to a lower tier, and it means we have to entertain a lower probability of

overfishing in the ABC Control Rule. I am not sure what the P*, to use the jargon, and that is really the probability of overfishing, and the way I think about it is you've got an overfishing limit, which is at the 50 percent probability, and, if we want to be less than that, because we have higher uncertainty, that means we have a larger buffer between the 50 percent and the 40 or 30 or 28 percent.

That buffer translates to a larger difference between the overfishing limit and the ABC, or ACL, as you aptly noted, and, in this case, the uncertainties that go into it are natural mortality, which, quite often, in fisheries, that's one of the biggest challenges for us to get, because we don't see natural mortality that often, unless we happen to see a shark eat a fish that's not on a line, and it happens out in the water, unbeknownst to us.

We have indirect ways of estimating it. For this species before, we had, as Chip noted, a lot of uncertainty, which created a huge buffer, and I look at this buffer as there is a distribution around the OFL, and that's like a normally-shaped distribution. 50 percent is the overfishing limit, and then, as you work your way down to less percent, you are less than that total overfishing limit, and the total catch is going to be less than that, and, in this case, we had -- Prior, we had a really wide distribution, because we didn't know nearly as much, and now it's a little bit tighter, but it's still wide compared to other species, one of the reasons being ageing of these animals is kind of hard.

Tilefish are one of our weirder animals. They dig a hole and live on the bottom. In the Gulf, there is this missing set of years, where we just don't see the fish, and I don't know why that happens, but they are literally one of the weirdest animals, with a lot of still unknowns about their life history, and that translates to a wider distribution around the OFL, and that entertains a lower probability of overfishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: What's the magnitude of the difference of the OFL and the ABC for this species? I missed that in the discussion. Is it 100,000 pounds, or exactly what is the poundage?

MS. MCCAWLEY: There is a table in there that I think we can scroll back to. It's about 160,000 pounds.

MR. PUGLIESE: I think it's about 17.5 percent.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So that from the ABC to the OFL is the cushion of 160,000 pounds of uncertainty? Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let me ask Roger -- On this first action, because I think that what we're doing is trying to approve this for scoping, and I think that question for the committee is looking at the range of options that we have here under Action 1, and that's what you're looking for, right, Roger?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and that's what we have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, once again, Action 1 is to revise the ABC, the ACL, and the OY, and we've got three options under there. Are we good with those three options? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Just to explain, I mean, we can't go any higher than what we've been given.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Correct. We can't go any higher than the ABC, yes, and there is an option in there, and Option 2 would set the ABC and the ACL equal to each other. All right. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Just to kind of put it on the table, and looking at the range, I think the range seems pretty acceptable, because, even at 90 percent, you're still above what we were at under the old. The only other way to look at it would be to look and see what 340,000 pounds looks like relative to what percent away from the ACL, or the ACL from the ABC, but I think it more than covers it, unless there is reason to assume that we're not being conservative enough, but I don't think that's the case at all, and so I think we're covered.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Based on this discussion, I would say I don't think that's the case. All right, and so it looks like no hands around the table, Roger, and I'm going to pass it back to -- Wait. Andy's hand is up.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just was asking Rick about this. In Table 1, we have the OFL, which is declining from 2022 to 2026, but the ABC recommendation is increasing, and so it's counterintuitive to me, and I'm wondering if some numbers are flip-flopped there, and I wanted to find out, and is the stock catches increasing over time, or should they be increasing, and the OFL is wrong, or is the ABC is wrong here, in terms of the year?

MR. PUGLIESE: Which are you saying is declining, because, across-the-board, they are all increasing over time, for Option 2, 3, and 4.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am looking at Table 1. Anyway, it's just something to check at this point.

MR. PUGLIESE: This was directly from the SSC. The ABC is increasing over time, and the OFL seems to be decreasing, and I'm not sure if that's an uncertainty reduction over time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike has something here.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Roger, I have the SSC report pulled up, and so we can -- I am just going to read this verbatim from them, and that can hopefully address the issue. OFL declines over time, whereas the ABC increases. This is due to an increase in fishing mortality in the first year of management at OFL to F equals FMSY. This increase in fishing mortality results in higher initial landings, which cannot be sustained, while still remaining at or below P* equals 50 percent. Hence, landings decline over time. In contrast, the ABC is based on P* equals 32.5, which results in a lower fishing mortality in the first year of management relative to current estimated fishing mortality. With this lower fishing mortality, spawning stock biomass is projected to increase over time, and, thus, landings are allowed to increase over time as well.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that. That clarifies things, and then back to Laurilee's point, and so the scientific uncertainty essentially is narrowing over time. It starts off large, but it becomes smaller through the time series.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just kind of putting it a little bit of a different way, this fishery is right at the line of the overfishing occurring, and that's what these results are showing, and so, if you fished at the OFL, then you would be driving that population down, and you would be overfishing the -- Not necessarily overfishing, but you would be fishing above FMSY and pushing the population down, whereas, if you lower and have that buffer, then you're below that line, and the population is able to increase over time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Tim, you had your hand up a minute ago.

MR. GRINER: I was just going to say the exact same thing, because I had asked that question, and I forget what stock assessment, what SEDAR, it was, but that's how it was explained to me, that, over time, that uncertainty is changing, and that natural mortality changes, and so you can actually pull more fish out of the biomass as the biomass grows.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think, based on that, it sounds like we have a good range of options here under Action 1, and I am going to turn it back to Roger to go to Action 2.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Moving on to Action 2, it's to revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish, and the purpose is that sector allocations need to be revised due to the updated total ACL and the change to MRIP-FES data. The current allocations for the commercial and recreational sector are 97 and 3 percent, respectively, and, if you apply the same methodology for determining the allocation, using the new FES, you end up with a 96.7 percent commercial and a 3.3 percent recreational allocation.

In addition to that, Amendment 18B established the 25 percent of the commercial ACL for the hook-and-line component and the 75 percent of the allocation to the longline component of the commercial ACL, and the recreational allocation is presently at 2,316 individual fish, and the ACL for the current commercial is 331,740 pounds gutted weight.

If you move forward to Action 1, no action, and retain the current commercial and recreational allocations of the 97 and 3 percent, and I had stated the present commercial annual catch limit split of the sector allocations of 25 for hook-and-line and 75 for longline and the existing -- You apply the weight conversion used, and what we did is we applied the weight conversion from Reg Amendment 28 to come up with the numbers of fish. Now, that's something that I think is still going to be discussed across-the-board, and there may be some update on how that gets addressed in terms of looking at a different way to determine ranges, potentially, but this is what was used and the highest ground to be in right now, to at least look at the relative comparison between these options.

What that does is I've got Tables 3 through 5 that present the ACLs based on ACL equals ABC, ACL equals 95 percent of ABC, and ACL equals 90 percent of ABC, where you are applying the 97 commercial and 3 percent, and so what you see is, on Table 3, the 418,000 pounds, which is your total ACL equal to ABC and how that translates to a total ACL for commercial of 405,460 pounds of fish and a recreational number of 2,831 individual fish, and those are both increases, and then it steps down, with the 95 percent dropping down to say 385,187 commercial allocation and 2,689 fish. Then, if you get all the way down to the 90 percent, you have 364,914 for the commercial allocation and 2,548 fish.

Now, that's based on the 97/3 original allocation. When you use the new -- Based on the FES of 96.7 percent commercial and 3.3 percent recreational, what we do is have another set of tables that provide that, and you can see now this is -- At that level, you do have a slight reduction in commercial, down to 404,206 pounds, but, at the 3.3 percent, you actually have about a 10 percent increase, to 3,114 fish for the recreational ACL, and then that's, again, stepped down, using the 96.7 and 3.3 percent, and you have a reduction down to 383,996 pounds gutted weight for the commercial allocation and 2,958 individual fish, and those are, again, both increases relative to the present, as well as even the 90 percent, and you have 363,785 pounds of fish gutted weight for the commercial and 2,802 fish for the recreational, using the 96.7 and 3.3 allocations.

The Snapper Grouper AP, again, provided the same guidance, that the council set the total allowable catch limit equal to the updated ABC and retain the current sector allocations for golden tilefish. What we're moving forward is to, again, get input on the range of options provided.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anybody have any questions or want to see different options here? Any comments on this? I don't see any hands. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess the struggle here is we really don't have a range to choose from, and they're almost identical. I don't have a suggestion, in terms of a third alternative that potentially would provide a range at this point, and so I just point that out, and my perspective is, if there wasn't a better option, or the third option even came out similar, that we should consider but reject this as even an action and alternative, but we should at least review the allocation, first and foremost, in light of FES.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for those comments. Any other comments? All right. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, along the lines of what Andy just said, I do have a question, because we've had, I guess, some guidance on I think it was one of the CMP amendments that we wouldn't be able to just do away with the action, regardless, because the motivation -- Like the reasoning for the no action is different from the reasoning that we have now, even though the numbers would be the same, and is that correct?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any more hands. Roger, back to you for the next action.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Well, we don't actually have additional actions. We have other areas for consideration, to determine if we are going to include actions, and so should the council consider management changes in the commercial or recreational sector? What we presently have is the annual season, and we have sector trip limits, the longline of 4,000 and hook-and-line of 500, both gutted weight, and the bag limit of one, as part of the aggregate limit. There are no size limits, across-the-board, and the gear requirements are the straightforward ones on those.

Now, the Snapper Grouper AP provided two of the more significant ones that was raised by Jimmy earlier on, and that was the consider measures to establish a longline season, possibly individual fishing quotas, as well as change the season, potentially, for hook-and-line to be different from longline, and we had September/October or after longline.

Additional feedback highlighted the need for the recreational census, rather than the estimate, due to low numbers of intercepts and reporting on mobile applications and the utility and value, once they're established, and the -- There was not a whole lot of interest in reducing any of the trip limits at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so before -- If you wouldn't mind keeping those on the board there, those comments. It seems like we might want to consider some additional actions in this amendment. I don't know whether we would want to talk about the IFQ, but it seems like maybe we should talk about the hook-and-line season and the longline season and changing the start dates, which is one of the things that the AP brought up, and so any discussion on this? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I've got a question, and maybe it's for Jimmy, and there is a reference in the AP recommendations about going to some sort of a stamp or endorsement for hook-and-line, and is that talking about recreational hook-and-line only, or is that for commercial hook-and-line and recreational?

MR. HULL: Thank you, Chester. That was a stamp for the private recreational deepwater fishery, like golden tilefish. If you're going to prosecute deepwater groupers, or golden tile, snapper grouper, you need a stamp for the deepwater. That's what that recommendation was from the AP.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Thank you. That cleared it up for me. Thank you very much.

MR. HULL: Yes, sir.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I am trying to find the chart with the start dates on it, if you know where it is, and you can probably find it faster than me, but I have a question about otoliths, and I guess this is a question for Andy, and so they've been taking otoliths from almost all of the tilefish that are have been getting landed at our dock, and where does that information go? Is that part of the stock assessment?

MR. STRELCHECK: That's actually a question for John, but all of those otoliths are used in the stock assessment. They age the otoliths. They cut the otoliths and determine how old the fish are, and then that is used to estimate the fishing mortality and the age of the population.

MS. THOMPSON: So all these big fish, these big, gigantic fish that we're catching, they're about to die of old age, and is that why the fishing mortality is so high?

DR. WALTER: Well, the fishing mortality means they die because we killed them.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm sorry. I meant the natural mortality.

DR. WALTER: The natural mortality, I think the natural mortality we estimate usually declines with age for most fish, and we use sort of a declining mortality with age, usually. The smaller you are, the more likely you are to get eaten. Once you're big, there's not as many things that can eat you in the environment, and that's sort of the theory that we scale the natural mortality to. However, in terms of are they going to die in the wild, it's probably less likely that they die because they're old and the mortality -- That function we use is allowing for a declining natural mortality with age. You asked how we use the otoliths?

MS. THOMPSON: He answered the otolith question, and you said that it's used in the stock assessment, and so you've got a bunch of great big, giant fish that you just said are less likely to die of natural mortality, and how do we fix this? Do I tell my captains to go out and bring in a bunch of peewees? How do we fix this? To me, it's crazy. There is little fish out there, and there is tons of them.

DR. WALTER: There is a little bit wrapped up in how we fix this. I guess the question that you wanted to fix this is how can we reduce the scientific uncertainty and address the issues that the stock assessment would have, and, in that case, there is usually research recommendations coming out of the SSC that are designed to address the key uncertainties of the stock.

Natural mortality is usually one of them, and collecting that age data, and collecting it consistently, and we don't necessarily need to change how we're doing it, but the fact that we're collecting those hard parts, those otoliths, on the dock is one thing that's really going to help us to be able to do that. As we collect more, we can better estimate that actual mortality.

In particular, one thing that's quite often used is the maximum age of the animal, as an ability to estimate what its natural mortality is. There is a relationship that we quite often use to get natural mortality based on the maximum age. We don't know what the maximum age for many of our fish are until we've collected enough otoliths, and, in this case, and, in this case, it sounds like we've got the work in place to collect that, and that should better refine what that maximum age is, and that's one of the main benefits. The other thing that the otoliths allow us to do is to estimate recruitment events, because we can see when there is years where a lot of the fish were all born at the same time, which would be a good recruitment versus a bad recruitment.

I think there is probably some other research recommendations, and, primarily, it's in the survey and getting the South Atlantic Deepwater Longline Survey, getting some years under its belt, which is going to give us, we think, an index for golden tile, because that's really what it's designed to do, and it looks like it might work for other ones, and I think that is probably the main research recommendation to knocking down that uncertainty in that buffer, is getting that really -- Beginning to reap the benefits of that survey.

MS. THOMPSON: When they do the longline survey, are they going all the way from 600 feet to 800 feet of water?

DR. WALTER: Yes, and I believe -- I was looking at the presentation, and I think the council got a presentation, at its June meeting, from Dr. Todd Kellison on the 2020 survey. I can confirm the actual depths, but it is designed to target the depths that golden tile live in, as well as a number of the other deepwater fish, and some of the shallow-water species that that's the maximum extent of their range.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to come back and ask my question again about do we want to add some additional actions to this document, based on the feedback that we received from the AP, such as changing the hook-and-line season for commercial to be different from the longline season?

MS. THOMPSON: They both start in January. Ideally, for the restaurants, and to get the best price for the fish, if you started the longline in mid-January, like the second week of January, instead of January 1, that would give us an extra two weeks at the end, when we really need the fish, when the restaurants in the state are really, really busy. Then, if you did the hook-and-line - - If it was timed to start after, or close to the end, of when we project the longline season to end, that would stretch it out, and everybody would get a better price for their fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. So then, based on that, it sounds like we need to add an action to consider the start date of the commercial hook-and-line and the commercial longline season. Okay. It sounds like we want direction to staff to do that. Okay. All right.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What else do we want to consider for golden tilefish? What are we going to do about the fact that the longline folks want an IFQ-type program? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I can't answer that. I know how my nephew feels, and he would probably set his boat on fire before he went on an IFQ, but the accountability -- The recreational fishermen catch way more fish than they're supposed to every year, and we just spent a lot of time trying to fix that for blueline tile, and why should golden tilefish be any different?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That was one of the questions in the document, was do we want to add an action to consider the accountability measures, and so maybe that's what you're suggesting as well, is that we consider the changing, or modifying, the accountability measures, and so I see heads nodding yes for that action as well. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: To me, it would make sense to group these in with the deepwater season and to -- I mean, my boats in the commercial fishery, we need those fish on January 1, just for the record. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Then, just to make sure I understand what you're saying, Chris, that would be covered under this action that we're adding, which would be looking at different start dates for the hook-and-line versus the longline, and that would cover it, right, Chris?

MR. CONKLIN: I was referring to the recreational season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Got it. Thank you. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I am confused. Which fish do you need on January 1, Chris?

MR. CONKLIN: Ideally, we like to zoom out, at six knots, and get our snowies and all the different tilefish and come back in and try to catch some little fish. I mean, that's what we look forward to,

because our shallow-water grouper are gone, and so that sort of gets us through a couple of months up in Carolina, but I was referring specifically to the recreational fishing season and grouping that in with the deepwater fishery, because I think I saw, in the top Figure 1 or whatever, that it runs year-round until the quota is met, and so it just doesn't make sense, to me, to have a recreational guy going out and dropping and discarding everything else to try and get a golden tile.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think what we're going to come up against with the start date is a boat's needs versus the market's needs, which aren't necessarily going to align in this weird circumstance, but, in that case, I think that's why we bring it out to scoping and hear from everyone how they feel about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think you've lost -- Mel and I were trying to ascertain what you guys were driving at, and you kind of lost us, and so are you guys suggesting that we also need to look at the start date of the recreational season? Okay.

MR. MARHEFKA: Chris convoluted it, okay? He's right, but just because they were said in the same thing, and I think -- Chris, tell me if I'm wrong, but let's just first tackle Chris's first comment relating to the commercial boats needing a January 1 start time, so they can go out and get their fish, and how that might be in competition with what the actual restaurants or seafood dealers -- So that should stay in there for scoping, because some of that will get fleshed out. Then I think what you were referring to earlier was, when we were talking about changing the season for snowy grouper --

MR. CONKLIN: I was saying that my recreational longline boat needs to have gag grouper open on January 1, so we can go catch golden tilefish.

MS. MARHEFKA: You have a recreational longline boat?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Now I am super lost. He just said a recreational longline boat, and I'm sure that Chester's head just exploded. I'm sorry. I couldn't hear anything else you said after that, because I just could feel Chester having a heart attack from Florida. I am going to go to Chester.

MR. BREWER: Well, just so you know, my head did not explode. The whole idea of recreational longlines and recreational gillnets is -- I have made my position known on that, and I don't need to dwell on it anymore, but Chris keeps coming back to something that I think is really important, and Dewey has touched on it, and that is, if we are going to get the deepwater snapper grouper conundrum in which we find ourselves under control, or at least try to get it under control, I think we've got to go and -- I said this a couple of meetings ago, and, if I said this two years ago, I would probably take myself out and shoot myself, but, as I've listened to the different conversations today, and yesterday, and really over the past three or four council meetings, I have become convinced that we are going to have to go to a deepwater snapper grouper season and one that is not just recreational, not just charter boat, but it's across-the-board.

There might be variations in those seasons, but we're going to have to go to it, and, even with that we are going to have some species that you're still going to not be able to keep, obviously, even

though you have a season, and so I realize that that's pretty much a Baby Ruth in the punchbowl, but it's becoming clearer and clearer to me all the time, and, with that, I will rest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I like all these comments. I am trying to turn it into an action in this document. Go ahead, Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I am okay with -- I get it, and I understand the needs of the boats, because my sister has been pounding on me too about that, that they really need to be able to start fishing on January 1, because of the boat, the captain, the crew, but, if the hook-and-line season got shifted, so that more of the hook-and-line fish were coming in after the longline season ends, that should take care of that. It should definitely help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let me try to articulate my confusion again, and it is late in the day. I guess I'm trying to figure out what action to put in this document. Is it a multispecies action to set a deepwater, and fill in the species here, season, or we had an amendment that came out of visioning that we laid on the table that we could pick back up, and it had the deepwater species in it, and these were some of the actions, and so that's why I am like which thing are we doing right now in this amendment? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Maybe just for me to keep my arms around things a little bit easier -- In my mind, this is a golden tile amendment and not a deepwater overall species amendment. Like you said, we have something out there that we had during visioning that we dropped, because, once again, we got it so convoluted that we couldn't even figure out what we were doing, what species were what and what was deepwater and what wasn't, but, right now, it just seems to me that, if we could just limit this to golden tile, we could get something done here.

As far as the start dates go, that -- It's a little bit of a conundrum too, because not everybody is a longline boat, and so those guys that aren't longline boats -- For us to not have access to that fishery in January and February, while we have access to a puny little 200 pounds of snowy grouper, and so how can we go get our snowy grouper and not be able to hook-and-line some golden tile while we're out there?

We almost have to have that, and so I understand that it would be nice to not start that after the longline season, but you've got to remember that the longline season goes pretty darned fast. By mid-February, that thing is done, and in mid-May, it reopens for a week or two, because we have to monitor the quota, and it goes so fast, but, at the end of the day, if guys had to wait to hook-and-line until February, or the end of February, or even March, that's three months of the year where all you can really do is trigger fish and vermilion fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey and then Jimmy.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that the hook-and-line trip limit is 500 pounds, and you look at the weather in January and February, exactly how many trips in that two-week season -- It's not like it's going to be ten trips, and so a couple of trips -- I think you need to look at starting that season, because it's only 500 pounds in January, to give access to them fishermen, so they can put together a multifacet of species to make it profitable, because I don't see it being a problem. With the weather, you're probably not going to have a lot of trips to be able to do during that time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We talked to some longline folks, leading up to this meeting, and they were suggesting a February 1 start date. Jimmy.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. In previous AP discussions on this, you also have to take into consideration that the longline gear is not allowed south of whatever line that is, and there is a lot of hook-and-line golden tilefish guys there, and so they need access during January also, because there's a lot of people in south Florida in January, and so the markets there need it, and I don't know where that line is, and I can't remember, but that was a discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Going to Chris and then Kerry, and we don't need to solve this here. We're just adding some actions, and staff will come back.

MR. CONKLIN: Being that the Southeast Regional Office opens and closes the longline component -- They will close it and reopen it and let them catch a little more, and I believe that we have the latitude to open the longline component of the fishery at a later date than the actual hook-and-line, if we were able to leave it January 1 for the bandit fishery that gets the little bit, and is that not correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't think so, but why don't we just keep this guidance to staff to go look at this and bring this information back, instead of trying to solve it here today? I'm just saying. Chester has had his hand up. We'll go to Chester, and then I have an idea about this aligning the deepwater seasons.

MR. BREWER: My timing was probably not optimal in bringing that up, and I did not really think that it was something that needed to be under the golden tilefish, and this is a golden tilefish amendment, and we don't need to get into what is going to be a pretty complicated, and I think it's going to have to -- Obviously, it's going to have to be an across-the-board FMP, and so I don't want to mess up the golden tilefish over that, but it keeps coming up, and it keeps coming up, and I just think we need to start working towards a deepwater snapper grouper season. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have an idea, and so Chester is kind of going where I'm going. I agree, and I don't know that it goes in this golden tilefish amendment. I appreciate the discussion, and it's a great point, and it is also one of those topics that we keep coming back to. I think that maybe we could look at it in this framework action, or the MSE, for all snapper grouper species. We could look at it as one of those two, and one of them is short-term, and one of them is longer-term, but I agree that it needs to be looked at, but I don't think the golden tilefish amendment is the right place. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with that as well, and probably not the framework though, because didn't we swear and cross our hearts and hope to die yesterday that we weren't going to stick anything else on it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We talked about that action today. That was today.

MS. MARHEFKA: It's all blended together.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I know.

MS. MARHEFKA: It shouldn't be in this. Where it goes after that -- I think we want to go there, and then we just need to figure out where.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I like that. So we want to go there, but we don't know where, but not inside the golden tilefish amendment. So then I'm going to go back to Roger, and we have a couple of items there, and I think that you have enough guidance about changing -- I also think that we heard changing the accountability measures, and so you only have two bullets there, and maybe you need to add a bullet about direction to staff that, yes, we want to consider changes to the accountability measures. Then, based on that, do you think that you have enough guidance, Roger?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and, actually, the accountability measures was the next action to consider, and so you all have been discussing it, and it follows right here, and so we can address that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Great. Then do you need anything else from the committee, Roger?

MR. PUGLIESE: The only thing we need to do is -- Let me scroll down and just get an approval for scoping.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds great. Would someone like to make this motion to approve this for scoping? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: **I make a motion to approve this for scoping.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Trish and seconded by Mel. **Any objections to approval of this for scoping? Seeing none, that motion carries.** All right, Mr. Chairman, back to you for what time we're going to be here tomorrow.

MR. BELL: I think, after talking to staff and all, I think -- Basically, the only thing we didn't get to today that we had hoped to was gag, but we have saved a little time on the backend, and I think we'll be okay coming in at 8:30, because we're going to go to 3:45, and so we've got the rest of the things in Snapper Grouper, from 8:30 tomorrow to 3:45, and then we've got a hard stop at 3:45 for the public hearing, and so I think we've abused you guys long enough today, and we need to give Jessica a hand, but, anyway, and so let's just start fresh at 8:30, and we'll try to focus tomorrow and make sure we're done by 3:45, and then we'll be ready for the public hearing. Thank you, guys.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on December 7, 2021.)

DECEMBER 8, 2021

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Beaufort Hotel, Beaufort, North Carolina, on Wednesday, December 8, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Moving back into what is now -- I guess we're on day three now of working on snapper grouper, and so the first thing we're going to cover today is gag, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 53, and the first part of that is we're going to go to Jimmy Hull to hear the AP's comments and recommendations.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. The AP discussed Amendment 53, gag grouper, and started with commercial management priorities. It was pointed out that we need to ensure that there is some available harvest for both sectors, even if it's just in a bycatch fishery. It's important, for fishery-dependent data collection, to keep some harvest available. Closing the fishery could increase the discard mortality rates, and the need for a summer harvest of some type for the seasonal grouper market.

Some of the commercial measures that were highlighted and mentioned was a range of anywhere from fifty to a 250-pound trip limit for gag, and, obviously, anything but a closed fishery, and, if all shallow-water grouper -- If all shallow-water grouper would need a higher limit. Consider expanding the spawning closure through May for some parts of the region and consider impacts since enactment of the current closure. Also, as far as recreational management priorities, ensure there is some available harvest, again, for both sectors as a bycatch fishery, basically somehow keep the fishery open, to some degree, even if it's just for fishery-dependent data collection.

As far as recreational measures, the AP maintains its previous recommendation to establish a recreational permit/license. We could consider a slot/size limit, to protect spawning females from size at maturity to size at transition, possible, to male. Also, some other comments were to consider support of aquaculture efforts to raise juveniles for stocking and rebuilding. Consider expanded use of artificial reefs to provide more habitat. Complementary state measures are needed to protect inshore and juvenile habitat as well.

There is some problems noted with identification between gag and black grouper. Management measures may need to include the shallow-water grouper aggregate, and that concludes what I have on gag. Any questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Any questions for Jimmy? It doesn't look like we have any questions, and so I believe that now we're going to go into the SSC recommendations from Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: The SSC had the opportunity to receive a presentation from the Center on the latest projections that were run for gag grouper at our October meeting, and we had a very lengthy and serious discussion about how to make the best recommendations regarding fishing levels, and one of the things that we spent a long time discussing was uncertainty in recruitment moving forward.

As you all are well aware, the stock has experienced low recruitment in the last ten years, and, when we look at the stock-recruitment curve, which I am showing here on the slide. Again, on the horizontal axis is spawning stock, and the vertical axis is recruitment, and you can see the black

line indicating the shape of the curve that would be essentially used to do the projections. You can see, on the far-left side, and, ideally, the blue dots would line up with the black line, but you can see that blue dots are the far-left side of the graph indicate that the model is underestimating recruitment at low stock size and then overestimating recruitment -- I appear to have that wrong in the text. It's overestimating recruitment once it gets a little bit higher.

Right now, we're in a state where we're at low biomass, and the model predicts that there is low recruitment, but we may actually be underestimating that recruitment, and so, given that we don't have any other kind of fishery-independent information about recruitment to compare with these model estimates, the SSC was a bit concerned about what recruitment assumptions should be used in the projections to set fishing level recommendations, and so we spent a lot of time talking about that.

A couple of comments and consensus statements, I guess, that I wanted to share with you from the group, and the SSC emphasized that, really, given the recent status of the stock, it appears that significant reductions in fishing mortality will need to occur in order to have successful rebuilding of this stock. Other management actions you may consider are great, but they may have -- If they have little impact on fishing mortality, they are not likely to help with rebuilding.

There is a new MARFIN study that South Carolina DNR is running that should provide some fishery-independent information that could inform our understanding of trends in recruitment that can be used in future assessments, which is great, and I think we all agreed would be very welcome for this assessment. Unfortunately, we don't have a long enough time series yet to use that in making decisions at the moment, but it's something to look forward to.

We also recommended prioritizing the research recommendations that we outlined in our spring meeting, when we first reviewed the assessment itself, and that included a series of potential alternative data that could be explored to identify trends in recruitment, or spawning stock biomass, particularly in estuarine areas, and so that sort of information could help, in the future, inform any rebuilding that might be occurring and try to keep a better track on how the stock is performing overall outside of the model and possibly for incorporation into future models.

Then we also wanted to suggest that, given this high uncertainty in recent recruitment, that the council should -- If you can, try to ensure the next assessment stays on schedule for 2025 and doesn't get bumped. That way, we can take another look again soon, with regard to how the stock is responding and whether recruitment really is as poorly estimated as we think it is in the terminal years, and so that would be, hopefully, a high priority for the council.

Then we were asked to set catch levels, or recommend catch levels, and this was a little bit difficult, because, usually, with a stock that's in a rebuilding plan, we would be provided -- The council would provide a probability of rebuilding, and then we would use that to set the ABC. At our April meeting, we had gone through our ABC Control Rule and recommended a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent be used to generate catch level recommendations, and I wanted to take a moment to explain how we got to that, especially given the discussions last night over tilefish.

I think it's important to understand why, for the rest of the slide, and so the probability of rebuilding of 70 percent -- That recommendation, we generated that by going through our current ABC Control Rule. Now, if there are new ABC Control Rules adopted in the future with the big omnibus

amendment, then that might change, but, currently, we're using a control rule that has four tiers, and each of those tiers, or decision points, if you will, either adds or doesn't add an additional component to the buffer to the OFL, and so, basically, we set the OFL at F equals FMSY, and that is assuming a probability of overfishing of 50 percent, and then we start going down our decision tree, and so, at the first assessment tier for gag, we assigned that assessment the top tier, and it was an excellent assessment, very thorough, and they were able to estimate MSY, and so we didn't add any buffer, given the high quality of the assessment.

When we get to the second tier, the second decision point, there is language in there about whether or not environmental conditions are explicitly included, and that would be like a top tier of uncertainty, and so that wasn't included, and that's pretty normal, and so there was a slight adjustment, a 2.5 percent addition, to the buffer.

Then the third decision point is the stock status tier, and so that's where, given the stock is overfished and overfishing is occurring, it's assigned a Tier 4, and that adds a 7.5 percent adjustment to the OFL, and so that's where, with our current ABC Control Rule, you're kind of getting a double-whammy, because you're having to institute a rebuilding plan, but you're also getting this adjustment to the P*.

Then, with the last decision point, that's our PSA tier, and so this stock has low productivity, as we just discussed, very low recruitment at the moment, and, in general, it's a low-productivity stock, and its highly vulnerable and has high susceptibility, and so, according to the PSA tier, we would add a 10 percent adjustment, and so it gets a pretty heavy hit there for being a low-productivity stock, and it has the 7.5 percent adjustment for being overfished and overfishing.

If you add all of that up, that's a 20 percent adjustment to the OFL, and, because we're in a rebuilding plan, then you subtract from one, and you get a recommended probability of rebuilding of 70 percent, and so the reason I went through all of that is because we talked at length about whether the alternative projections that were presented to us with the two different recruitment streams -- Which one should be used, and, given there is uncertainty in the projected recruitment, and it's already a stock at low biomass, and experiencing low recruitment, we felt that this probability of rebuilding, given our ABC Control Rule, incorporated a lot of the scientific uncertainty that would be associated with our understanding, or lack of understanding, of what recruitment levels actually are and what they will be in the near future for setting catch level recommendations.

The committee, after lengthy discussion, suggested that we stay with our recommendation of setting catch levels assuming a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent, because that accounts for a lot of that uncertainty already, and then we use the projections though that incorporate recruitment estimates from the stock-recruitment curve.

To make a long story short, basically what we're saying here is that, if you use a probability -- If you choose to use a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent, that should incorporate a lot of our concerns about the scientific uncertainty in recruitment being used in the projections, and so, if you go that route, then I will show you on the next slide that that would result in a certain set of ABC recommendations.

The one thing that we discussed though was that, if you do decide to select the probability of rebuilding of 50 percent, then the ABC would get kicked back -- The decision would get kicked back to us, I assume, and then the SSC would very likely add an additional ad hoc buffer to the OFL, given that that probability of rebuilding wouldn't be following the -- It wouldn't incorporate all the scientific uncertainty that our recommendation of 70 percent would take into account, given our normal decision tree process, and so I'm not sure what that buffer would be, but it wouldn't -- We probably would not provide a recommendation for an ABC that would look like, necessarily, what you see in the report from the Center, and so just to give you a heads-up on that, but we really do feel that that probability of rebuilding of 70 percent would account for all of the scientific uncertainty and the concerns that we have regarding the estimation of recruitment.

Then, as usual, we do recommend, if you can, that the council set the ACL lower than the recommended ABC, to account for management uncertainty. As folks have already mentioned, this will largely shift to a discard fishery, and we all know there is a high uncertainty in reported discards, and being able to monitor the fishery will be difficult, as folks have already pointed out this morning, and so any additional uncertainty in management that can be accounted for would benefit the rebuilding of this stock, and I believe that's -- The next slide is simply pointing out to you that, if you choose to go with a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent, then our recommended OFL and ABC would be found in Table 1 on page 12 of our report from October. I think that's it. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Genny. We have some hands here. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Genny. Genny, I understand the dilemma with the fishery-independent data. Can you talk to us a little bit about the thought process on the commercial handline data and how you used it or didn't use it?

DR. NESSLAGE: In the assessment you mean?

MR. GRINER: Yes, ma'am.

DR. NESSLAGE: I am not sure that I remember all the details of the assessment, and I will be honest with you. We see a lot of assessments, and that was back in April. I can look, really quick, but, if there is someone there who is more familiar with the assessment -- I am going to mute myself and look really quick, but maybe I can get back to you on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie wants to chime-in here while you're looking for that, Genny.

MS. IBERLE: I don't want to misspeak, but I believe that the commercial handline was removed for SEDAR 71, if that's what you were wondering, Tim, but, Chip, correct me if I'm wrong on that one.

DR. NESSLAGE: Actually, it looks like it is in there. I am looking at Figure 22, and there is a fishing mortality associated with both the primary fishery and the discards, directed and discards.

MR. GRINER: That's where I was asking, because I was just curious what the rationale for removing the commercial handline data was. I mean, it's the best data we have.

DR. NESSLAGE: Was it removed?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip is coming to the table, and so stand by, Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: Okay. Sorry.

DR. COLLIER: Maybe, to clarify this, Tim, are you talking about an index of abundance using the commercial handline data or the commercial handline data itself, because it was used in the removals.

MR. GRINER: Can you say that again, Chip?

DR. COLLIER: The commercial handline data was used in the estimates of removals, and so the landings are in there. Are you referring to an index of abundance associated with the commercial handline?

MR. GRINER: Yes.

DR. COLLIER: Okay. I will check on that.

DR. NESSLAGE: Jessica, do you mind if I --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: I see what you're talking about now, and so it does look like they removed the catch per unit effort index based on the commercial handline. I will say though that I am looking at a sensitivity run where they included it in the assessment, and it looks like the results were almost identical to the base run, and so removing it did not have a huge impact on the assessment, if that helps at all.

MR. GRINER: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there more questions for Genny? Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on that a little bit more, a lot of the commercial, or fishery-dependent, indices are not being included right now, because, as ACL management has gone into place, there has been more and more closures, which influence how these indices would be developed, and, therefore, it's a bit more of a challenge to incorporate some of those fishery-dependent data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: What's going to be the buffer between the ABC and the OFL, particularly, to this species, how many pounds?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie.

MS. IBERLE: I don't know off the top of my head, but I can run those numbers for you, because we have those in the paper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn, I think, has it pulled up right now.

DR. BELCHER: The OFL is 367,000, plus or minus, and the ABC is 175,000, plus or minus, and so it's about half, a little less than half.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? All right. I don't see any more hands. Thank you, Genny. I believe we're going to go into the document, and I'm going to turn it over to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: This is the first time that you guys are seeing this amendment, and the IPT has not met yet for this amendment, and we will meet for the first time after this meeting, and so a little bit of background on gag, and so, again, SEDAR 71 that we were talking about is the most recent assessment, and it had a terminal year of 2019, and it did indicate that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Figure 1 shows that spawning stock biomass with the minimum stock size threshold and the fishing mortality, and then we went over some AP feedback, and I've got some specific AP feedback that I will also touch on as I go through the paper, and so, like Genny mentioned, the SSC reviewed those projections and decided to go with the 70 percent probability of rebuilding with the stock recruitment from the assessment, and so that gives you the following OFL and ABC recommendations. Then, just to give you some reference, the current total ACL is at 734,350 pounds gutted weight, and so we were talking about a significant decrease in harvest, and that's a 76 percent reduction.

For this amendment, the projected changes is we would be establishing a rebuilding plan, and gag currently does not have a rebuilding plan. We'll be adjusting catch levels, and so accepting that ABC and then setting annual catch limits and revising annual optimum yield. We'll be revising sector allocations, and then I will ask if you want to scope any other changes to management, and so this is the first time you guys are seeing this, and so we're kind of right at the starting gate for this amendment, and so, today, what our objectives are is to decide what you would like to take to scoping, and then you will have the opportunity to approve this amendment for scoping. Then the AP will see this again in the spring. Any questions before I dive into purpose and need? That was a lot, and so I'll stop here for a second.

All right, and so the purpose and need, the purpose of this fishery management plan amendment is to establish a rebuilding plan, acceptable biological catch, sector allocations, and annual catch limits for South Atlantic gag based on the results of the most recent stock assessment. The need for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic gag, rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

Moving into the options, the first would be establishing that rebuilding plan, and so, again, the rebuilding plan is needed because of the status indicated by SEDAR 71. We received guidance in June, I believe, that, if F equals zero, that the stock would be able to rebuild within seven years, which means that, according to National Standard 1, that the stock must be rebuilt within ten years, and so the council is bound by that ten-year timeline.

Option 1 is that the South Atlantic stock of gag is currently not under a rebuilding plan, and so that would not be establishing a rebuilding plan, and it is, therefore, a non-viable option. Option 2 uses that seven-year timeframe, and, again, there's a note that the seven-year rebuilding is under an F equals zero timeframe, and there was an error in the PDF. It said that the seven-year rebuilding plan would end in 2030, and that should be 2029, and so I apologize for that error.

Then Option 3 is establish a rebuilding plan with the maximum timeframe, which would be the ten years, and so a rebuilding plan ending in 2032, with 2023 would be year-one, and so I will stop here and ask if there is any other options that you guys would like to scope or any modifications to the options presented.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Allie. All right, and so, once again, we're preparing this document for scoping, and so what we're doing is looking at the range of options that we have in there under each action, to make sure there isn't anything else we want to add before scoping. Are we good with the range of options under this action? I see thumbs-up. All right. Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The second action is to revise the gag total acceptable biological catch and annual catch limit, and so new ACLs are needed, because the SSC recommended new OFL and ABC values, and the new assessment uses the MRIP-FES survey, and so those levels need to be updated.

Currently, gag is expressed, for both the commercial and the recreational sector, in pounds gutted weight, and the committee can choose to change that, and it's pretty simple across-the-board, and commercial landings of gag have averaged 76.6 percent of the current commercial ACL from 2015 to 2019, and there have been no commercial closures, aside from that spawning season closure, during that time period, and Table 2 shows you the ACL and the percent ACL used.

Then, looking at the recreational landings of gag, they average 33.1 percent of the current recreational ACL from 2015 to 2019, and there have also been no recreational closures, aside from the spawning season, and a quick note about Table 3. You are looking at landings in the CHTS estimates, because the ACL for those years is specified in CHTS numbers, and so you have to compare apples-to-apples with that one.

Then Figure 1 and Table 4 show you a comparison of the recreational MRIP-FES landings to the commercial landings for those years, and so we won't need to look at those FES landings for gag, and so, for this action, and, really quick, I will note that these options do have the updated language of accepting that ABC recommendation, and so, while these might change, depending on what the committee would like to scope, that language has been updated, and so Option 1 is no change.

I will note that, in a previous amendment, Reg 22, the council set the ACL at 95 percent of the ABC, and so they did choose a 5 percent buffer. That's what I used to display the allocation information, but we'll get into that in a minute. Option 2 sets the ACL equal to the ABC, and then I'm going to use Table 5, and Options 3, 4, and 5 present a 5, 10, and 20 percent buffer, respectively. Then Table 6 gives you the actual ACL in poundage, and so I am going to break here and let you guys discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: First of all, I just want to express my utter disgust with the previous assessment, and how could they have gotten it, obviously, so wrong, to where we get to where we are today, and something is really messed up, and one thing that sticks out to me is the FES numbers in the chart above. I mean, I saw -- I think we were talking about blueline, and, somehow or another, those numbers got tamed down, but there's no way that recreational fishermen are catching that many fish over the commercial fishery. I mean, I'm just going to call it, and it's bull. I don't believe it, and I don't see how we're supposed to manage on garbage like this. That's not to say that the assessment wasn't good and the presentation is not, but this is just my personal feelings, but, I mean, it's just not believable.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. What do we think about the range of options that we have here that are going to go out to scoping? This range appears to be what we usually do for most species. Are we good with that? I am looking around the room, to see if there's anything that we want to add, and it looks like we're good. I see thumbs-up. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I wanted to have a conversation, and so, if you recall, at the last council meeting, we did request additional projections looking at alternative probabilities for rebuilding that deviated from the ABC Control Rule, and so we have an ABC Control Rule, and Genny spoke about it, and she, obviously, explained how they reached the ABC based on that control rule.

Going to a 50 percent probability of overfishing, obviously, has some limitations to that, in terms of rebuilding, and there's uncertainty with regard to recruitment, but it does provide potentially additional flexibility, in terms of the ABC setting, and this would have to, obviously, go back to the SSC for further discussion, if we wanted to go down that path. I say this because I think there is also potentially options where you could look at phasing-in the ABC to account for social and economic impacts, especially with such a large reduction like this.

We still have to prevent overfishing, but you potentially could use maybe a lower probability of success for the rebuilding plan early and increasing that, obviously, as you get later in the rebuilding plan, and so I think there's more options here than are at least laid out that we may consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's a great idea. Would you like to give direction to staff to look at those options, Andy?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess I would be interested in first hearing from the council more about those concepts, ideas, if they're supportive of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds great. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think that's a great idea, Andy, and I would be curious to hear what the SSC -- How the SSC would react to that. I mean, if any flexibility in setting the uncertainty of the rebuilding -- If we go back down to that 50 percent, and then slide it up to the 70 percent -- If they're just going to add an ad hoc buffer, it really doesn't help us any, and so, I mean, I guess I'm a little bit concerned about just -- I don't even like the term "ad hoc buffer", and, I mean, that just seems like they're pulling something out of the air, but how would that affect a decision like that?

If we did try to build in some flexibility, would it just be all taken away through some ad hoc buffer?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking around to see who wants to answer that question. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: So it's not that they're trying to take away flexibility. What they're trying to do is address uncertainty coming from the assessment, and that was a big concern, and so that 70 percent addresses some of the most recent very low recruitment for gag grouper, and that's what they are trying to address with that, and, if you look at just using that 50 percent probability of overfishing and rebuilding, that one is not completely addressing the uncertainty associated with the recruitment, and so, yes -- I don't know how it changes the flexibility, but it would definitely still impact the ABC catch level.

MR. GRINER: So, as a follow-up to what Andy was suggesting, then, if we did use some sliding timeframe, where we started at a 50 and then worked our way back up to that 70 -- If you're just adding in a buffer for that uncertainty, then it doesn't really get you anywhere, I guess is what I'm saying.

DR. COLLIER: Actually, I had a question to Monica on this subject in general, and so there was a guidance document on phase-in and carryovers, which indicated that, in order to utilize either one of those, that you have to have it listed in your ABC Control Rule, as well as addressed through potentially some simulations, and I was just wondering what legal thought as far as those.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That's the part of Andy's suggestion that I wanted to mention, is that the guidelines do talk about your ability to use a phase-in and carryover, but they say that -- The guidelines are pretty specific in that that should be in your ABC Control Rule.

You have an amendment, an ABC Control Rule amendment, that you're working on that contains those kinds of things in it, but, again, that's just still draft, and nothing is final, and so, right now, I would urge you not to use a phase-in approach, because you don't have it in your ABC Control Rule. Now, in terms of your timing, when you think that control rule amendment will be finished, versus when you think the gag amendment might be finished, and so you've got some discussion there, in terms of that, but I agree with what Chip was bringing up, and I was going to discuss that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've got some more hands up. Let's go to Genny first, and then we'll go to the list of hands. Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: Thanks. I had raised my hand, I guess as Chip was coming to the table, and I think he covered what I was going to say, primarily, but I would just reiterate that we would, of course, need to see the projections, to see how that would all play out, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Genny. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Genny, this question is for you, and I always cringe when we start talking about using phrasing like "ad hoc", and then we get into this whole -- Like we had that arbitrary and capricious that haunted the SSC back a number of years ago, that it was more of a conversational use of that word and not a hard-and-fast way of approaching the problem. Has the SSC talked

about how they would come up with the ad hoc percentage, if the 50 percent was there? I mean, has there been any indication of what the procedure would be or how you would get there?

DR. NESSLAGE: No. We had a hard enough time coming to this decision, and, frankly, we ran out of time to even start having that even rougher conversation. I don't like the phrase "ad hoc" either, and my understanding is that's how it's phrased in the control rule, and so that's why we were using that, or at least our understanding of how Magnuson allows for deviation from the control rule, but if that's not -- If am incorrect there, we can change the phrase, but, no, it will be a long and brutal discussion, with regard to how we would actually go about setting that buffer, but I can tell you that the SSC -- The reason we put that bullet point in our report and in the presentation is because I don't think the committee would come to a consensus on a probability of rebuilding of 50 percent with no additional buffer for uncertainty, particularly in recruitment. Does that answer your question, Carolyn?

DR. BELCHER: Yes, that was perfect. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. This is going to show my ignorance on this whole ABC Control Rule issue, but can we not put a gag ABC control rule situation in this amendment, or do they all have to be together?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking around. John is going to come to the table.

MR. CARMICHAEL: My thought is you can pretty well put anything you want in an amendment, any provision, but the challenge with doing that is we've tried to avoid making species-specific ABC Control Rule changes, and so that could put you in a bit of a challenging spot for dealing with your ABC Control Rule in other amendments, but, if you wanted to, you could do it. It's legal, and I see Monica saying, yes, you can put whatever you want in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just a question on what's the timing of the ABC Control Rule amendment that you have? I think maybe you will see it again in March?

MS. MCCAWLEY: John is looking it up, but I think it's on a slow track. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The ABC Control Rule amendment is supposed to go out for public hearings in June of 2022 and be considered for final approval in December of 2022.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I am going to go back to my list of hands. Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, this discussion has kind of been all over, and I really liked Andy's idea, and as far as direction to staff to kind of try to figure out how to incorporate the idea in there, and I like that, and then I was getting kind of caught up in the timing of this, and so Monica kind of threw some legal cold water on it a little bit, but I understand that, but then, if the ABC Control Rule amendment can be in place at the time the gag is ready to go into place, and they marry up, does

that work, and, if that doesn't work, timing-wise, then we go to Kerry's idea and incorporate it in here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, yes and no, right? Let's just talk through it. Yes, it would work for the phase-in approach, but then you would -- I can't speak to what is all in the ABC Control Rule again, and Mike can, and I think Shep can, but wouldn't you want then your SSC to use that ABC Control Rule to give you a new ABC recommendation? Otherwise, you would be one foot in one control rule and another foot in another control rule, and that's kind of shaky, right, and so I would think that you might have timing issues there, and I believe you're on a two-year clock for this amendment to rebuild, and I think you got the letter in June or July or something, and so there would be -- I am not saying that it couldn't be done, but I would think you would really have to have a fine-tuned schedule that involved your SSC, in terms of how you would get the information in time to finish things up according to what the Act requires.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to Mike and then we'll go to Spud.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess just a couple of things along those lines, concerning what's in the ABC Control Rule amendment right now, and so, on the phase-in aspect, depending on what the council chooses for their options, but, right now, kind of the direction that that seems to have been headed is that phase-ins would not apply for an overfished and overfishing occurring stock. That's one aspect.

The other part of it is that in terms of coming up with a new ABC from application of the new control rule, just kind of tempering expectations, you would still be subject to the OFL, and so that OFL would still be your upper bound. The ABC Control Rule does not change how the OFL is calculated, and it just changes how the ABC is drawn from the OFL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. That was helpful. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Jessica, and Mike answered part of my question, which was sort of what is the content of the ABC Control Rule and how might it affect the analysis, because, before he said what he said, I was like, well, what's the down side of going ahead and doing the analyses, to see what that might yield as an option, but it sounds like -- I guess that ABC Control Rule amendment could be changed before it's finalized, but, right now, the path we're on seems like that that may be an impotent action, to do a phase-in analysis, and so I'm kind of caught in the middle here of I would like to see what that would produce, but, like he said, I don't want us to go down a road where it's not going to be feasible when it's time to do it anyway, and so I don't know, and I'm a little -- I guess I have mixed feelings about that.

Back to this ad hoc thing, and I agree, and I think that "ad hoc" carries a bad connotation, and I think maybe a term that I have seen used before that allows the same process to take place, but it certainly sounds better, and that's "informed judgment". Informed judgement is basically you're using the same process, but it doesn't sound like it's just, well, we'll flip a coin and it's the way the coin turns up, and that may be something that's worth considering.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud. John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Beyond the legal issues of dealing with phase-in, I just wanted to comment on sort of the biological realities, and it seems appealing here, because the catch levels rise up so quick, and they rise up so quick because of the impact of those early low catch years, that SSB is recovering pretty fast in this stock, and the recruitment is getting better, and so the stock is really recovering fast.

If you don't take as much initially, you're going to slow that whole process, and I think some folks may remember our black sea bass rebuilding plan that we had at one time with a constant catch scenario, where we started out and it seemed really great, because we didn't have to take as much pain. When we got to the year, the next-to-last year, when the stock was actually rebuilt, we were trying to hold the stock to a very low fishing mortality rate, to get it to where it needed to be, and that seemed to be very difficult, because the stock was so much more abundant.

That sort of scenario could possibly happen here, where, to get to where you need to be, you're going to have to have lower fishing mortality rates out in the backend, to allow that SSB to be retained in the population, and so I think phase-in in a rebuilding situation is very difficult, because the best thing you can do is get that SSB in the water as quickly as possible, so that the recruitment can start feeding the stock and let it grow like this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Other thoughts here? Carolyn and then Andy.

DR. BELCHER: I think Andy is probably -- If he continues on with what he was talking about earlier, with other projections, I think the one thing -- What I appreciate from what Genny has brought forward is at least the SSC has recognized the fact that 70 percent is pretty conservative, with what they're proposing, because of the uncertainty. It's a big cut, and they recognize that, which is why I think they talked about the idea of dropping to 50 percent, understanding that the council would like to be closer to that probability, but recognizing that's a high risk.

Maybe the idea is to think about the projections that could be in there between the 50 and 70 percent probabilities, and it's not -- Again, if we could strike out "ad hoc", and I am just throwing it back, and we could talk about that all day, is to be judgmental about their choices, but, technically, when we apply these percentages of what we do, they're ad hoc percentages anyway, and there is no precision to how we do that, and there's times that we split and we ask for between 5 and 10 percent and go with seven-and-a-half percent.

I think it's just that idea of where do you want to see the next level is going to get you, and so, if we did 60 percent rebuild, does that feel that there's enough of a buffer scientifically or not, and so maybe the projections, with different percentages, are the way to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Carolyn. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Carolyn covered at least what I was going to say, that, if the idea of phasing-in, having to update the ABC Control Rule, is too complicated, then I think we could certainly ask the SSC to look at alternative risk levels that consider lower than 70 percent. We already have 50 percent, and we have 70 percent, and maybe something in between could be considered. We are trying to take into account, obviously, this huge reduction that's occurring in the fishery, and we have the ability to do that in setting risk and considering social and economic impacts.

My idea of the phase-in was really kind of more of the idea of trying to balance out the uncertainty with the science, as well as the immediate social and economic impacts, but maybe there is just a way of just setting the rebuilding plan based on a constant probability of preventing overfishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that, and so it looks like Allie is capturing that as guidance to staff, what Andy just mentioned, and she's capturing that on the screen. Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Does that cover it, what I've got down?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, do you want to glance over there at the guidance to staff, and it's underneath that table, just to make sure that you think that that covers what we're seeking? It says, if you can't see the screen, ask the SSC to consider additional probability of rebuilding scenarios.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I mean, I know that staff has probably captured our conversation here, but we would want to ensure that, obviously, they understand why we're asking for this and be clear on that, because, otherwise, I feel like they're going to have the same discussion they had with the 70 percent probability. I think we're in agreement, I am hearing, that we would be willing to deviate from the ABC Control Rule, because of the social and economic consequences of this, as well as the steep reduction, but is there anything else that we would want to share with the SSC?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie, I think I would add that we're willing to deviate from the ABC Control Rule. Then maybe Mike can help, because I assume he's taking notes over there, and he can help with the rationale on that, but we have other hands up, while you're typing. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Thanks, Andy, and I just want to reiterate clear and deliberate, when you're talking to these folks, because, I mean, while we have a very qualified liaison, sometimes they don't acknowledge us, and do you know what I mean, and so we need to really get the message across to amend this, because I've seen it happen too many times, going through TORs and all kinds of other stuff, and, like I said, it took us eight years to get an answer on something with red snapper, and so thank you.

MS. IBERLE: What I've got up there, is there anything else that you would like to add, because I want to make sure that this one is done and wordsmithed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would look over there to Mike. You've been taking some notes, while we've been having this discussion, and do you think that we need to add some additional points there to clarify our intent here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think specificity is always a good thing, if you're trying to look for answers, because, right now, it's kind of broad and open, and, I mean, we can come up with P rebuild levels of 65 percent, 60 percent, but then the question is going to come back. As far as I can tell, the question is going to come back of, well, the SSC has this stance that the recruitment needs -- The recruitment uncertainty needs to be accounted for, and does the 60 percent adequately account for that, and that's -- That is a place where we may need to see what the SSC's viewpoint is regarding how they would estimate that uncertainty.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I saw that Genny put her hand up, and then we'll go to Mel. Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: To add on to what Mike just said, I think, the more specific you can be, the better response you're going to get from the SSC. There were a lot of suggestions this morning already, and so it's unclear to me exactly what those additional probability of rebuilding scenarios would be. I think, given the probability of rebuilding is your purview, we need to be very -- One of the reasons that we are kind of waffling and having a real hard time discussing things is that -- It is just 60 percent without the ramp, and is that --

MS. MCCAWLEY: We were just starting to type while you were talking, and so finish, and then we'll try to see if we can add some more specificity, but that's that the type of specificity that you were looking for, right, Genny?

DR. NESSLAGE: Absolutely. That would really help us. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let's have some more discussion on that. Let's go to Mel first.

MR. BELL: You're heading in the right direction there with the specificity, but I was also going to just say that do we need to just -- Since we're building this record here and writing, why is that we're really trying to work on that aspect of minimizing economic and social impacts, because we know for a fact that's going to happen, and, I mean, that's been stated, and that's on the record right now, and so, to the extent practicable, and that's where this would help.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right and so, also, I heard some informal discussion here about 60, and possibly 65, and so, as people are raising their hands, just make sure you're okay with some of these numbers. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would add to it that all of us, I think, agree, also, that we're trying to minimize social and economic impacts while preventing overfishing and ensuring a sufficient probability of rebuilding, right, and so it's that balancing act that I think we're struggling with and the SSC is struggling with and what guidance can they provide to us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I have a question for Genny. What do you think would be, I guess, more productive for the SSC to come back with an answer on, and would it be a request, as it's currently, where there are specific P rebuilds of 60 percent or 65 percent, or might it be better to ask the SSC to go ahead and come up with that informed judgment uncertainty, as we're trying to phrase the term, but come up with that recruitment uncertainty to add on to the 50 percent, to see like what is the level that the SSC -- What is, I guess, the lowest level of P rebuild that the SSC is willing to endorse.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: That's such a difficult question. Honestly, I think, given the way our discussion went, that 20 percent buffer is where are at, and after lengthy discussions, both at our spring and our fall meeting, and so, I mean, I would have to look at how the different scenarios would pan out, but I imagine, as someone else suggested earlier, we'll probably end up in the same ballpark with regard to an ABC, and so that's kind of what I was trying to communicate with the my

presentation, was that you can -- I appreciate that the council is trying to incorporate social and economic impacts when setting the probability of rebuilding, and that is what you're supposed to be doing, right, according to Magnuson. That's your position, your job, and responsibility, but I think that the buffer we add would end up being -- You will end up with about the same ABC, if the SSC continues to deliberate the same way they have been the last two meetings.

I don't know if that answers your question, but the other thing that I would like to point out is it would be really nice if you could pick a probability of rebuilding that you're comfortable with at this meeting, because, anytime you add additional scenarios that we have to argue about, and, when they're that close, I think it makes it very difficult for the committee to focus on the big issues at-hand. Did that answer your question, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think so, kind of, but it's up to the council to decide what they want to request, and I just wanted to make sure that it was kind of out there, if they had those options.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Could we add an option to make it a 40 percent probability, and then they could throw their 20 percent --

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, and Monica is shaking her head. I think that the law says that 50 percent is the lowest that we can go. She is shaking her head yes that 50 percent is the lowest, and then it sounded like what Genny was saying is that 60 and 65 percent are pretty close and that she was suggesting that maybe we just select the percentage, a single percentage, that we would be okay with. Carolyn, do you have anything to offer here?

DR. BELCHER: I was going to -- John can probably help me at least remember which species it was, and a lot of what happens with the percentages too, relative to that rebuild, has to do with how that distribution ends up, how tight it is, because there is times that you would think something that's 10 percent is going to get you some large gain, and it's tight up enough against the middle value that it's not changing it by much.

This one, where the uncertainty is that broad, 10 percent may slide you farther away from your midpoint than what it would be if it was tighter and well known, and so we did have that happen, and I remember that was a caution that came up, and that was back in the Matt Cieri error, and so it's sad that you mark it by people, but I just remember that the discussion went around the table, because of the tightness on this distributions, and, again, it's kind of trying to figure out where you might happier.

50/50, I mean, that's -- We know how all that works, and it may be overfished, and it may not. They're saying that, with the uncertainty, you need to be a little bit more -- Well, obviously, we're saying a lot more cautious, and that's why we're looking -- The SSC is saying that's their preference, and so splitting the differences is probably as close as we're going to get. I don't know how you would inform it to get more prescriptive on your percentage. I mean, we're kind of in that realm with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. Genny, I was just looking -- I had sat in on the meeting, and I was just looking through my notes, and you did discuss an interim check on the stock, and I don't know how hard that would be, but, with all the discussion of uncertainty, is there an option to, halfway through this, do a little, I guess, turn of the crank, or some sort of check, to see how we're doing?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is that a question for John Walter?

DR. WALTER: I can answer that. Once we get the interim assessment approach working for these BAM models and have a reliable index that we've been able to vet, yes, we should be able to do these interim checks. Now, it doesn't necessarily deal with getting out of the rebuilding plan, in the sense that there still has to be, I believe -- That plan has to be put in place in this situation, but we could -- If like the indices show a big increase or decrease, then the interim approach would then adjust the ACL accordingly. I am not clear exactly how it's going to work when we are in rebuilding plans, however, and that's something that I think that's one of the nuances of the interim approach when you're in a rebuilding plan that I think needs to be sorted out, because we haven't applied it to a stock in a rebuilding plan yet, as far as I know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Just to let you know, right now, gag is proposed as 2025 on the assessment list, and so, if you think about when the management for this would be going into place, it would be in place in 2022, and is that correct, or 2023, and so you would have two years of that new management in place, and so you would be getting -- Pretty quickly after you have your management in place, you would be getting an assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am going to take us back to the guidance that we have here, and so we had some debate, and we've heard that Genny was suggesting maybe focusing on a single percentage that says the council is willing to accept this percentage probability of rebuilding. Right now, we have two percentages on the board, 60 and 65 percent. Before Trish brought up that other point, Carolyn, it seemed like -- I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it seemed like maybe you were suggesting to hone-in on the 60 percent? Okay. Then I am going to look around the table, and it seems like maybe we're okay with just going with the 60 percent and deleting the 65, and I see heads nodding yes, and Chris put his hand up.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just -- I mean, is there any kind of way, since we followed the last assessment and stayed within the realm of what they told us we could fish at -- I mean, can we get any credit on this? I mean, they're not going to give us any leniency for telling us we could catch that many, and then we went and caught them and stayed within the law and now we're in this position? I mean, there has to be some sort of give. I mean, they can't just sit there and be like, no, no, no. I know they can, but Jesus Christ.

DR. BELCHER: I think, unfortunately, the problem is that it's been overfished for three assessments, and now the third one has ended up in an overfishing, and so, I mean, I think there's been some negotiations, if you want to say it that way, along the way, recognizing that we've tried. You know, here we are, and we do our first assessment in 2006, and we're overfished. Well, we made adjustments, and we didn't do anything crazy draconian, but we reassessed, and you're still overfished. In good faith, we've worked forward, and now we're overfished -- Sorry. I used the wrong statement. We were overfishing three assessments in a row, and the third one resulted in

overfished, and so, obviously, we weren't restrictive enough, but we were working to make sure that you all were still operating.

I think the fact there is -- That Genny had presented that the SSC is willing to at least say, you know, we're being respectful, and, if you all decide to go with 50 percent, we would at least like to talk about something higher than 50 percent, because we are that concerned about the uncertainty relative to the recruitment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Jessica. I can support this, although I suspect that the end of that process is going to yield the same advice we're getting right now, but at least we will have explored it, and, just to make sure I understand, this will delay this document being ready for scoping, because we're going to be getting additional information that we may consider?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking at staff to try to get an answer there.

MS. IBERLE: I am looking to Myra, and she's heading up.

MS. BROUWER: We're thinking that, if you guys know the general direction where you're going, you can scope, and especially you can get input from the public on potential management measures, right, and so you can focus your scoping on that, while informing the public of -- Because people are going to want to know what are the potential catch levels, right, and so we're always going to have to sort of qualify that answer and tell them that's still sort of in the works, and so that's an option. If you wanted to go to scoping with everything already -- With a more definite catch level, then, yes, there would be a delay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It sounds like we could go to scoping without having this additional information. All right. I am going to try to wrap up this discussion on this action, but go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess, just to add to this, do we want to be more definitive in our language, with regard to our recommendation of 60 percent, and I think that might be helpful, for Genny and the SSC to deliberate over this. I did want to point out, and so, in reading the National Standard Guidelines, it says the SSC may recommend an ABC that differs from the result of the ABC Control Rule, based on factors such as data uncertainty, recruitment variability, et cetera, and so they certainly have authority to deviate. We're asking them to take into consideration other factors beyond just scientific uncertainty, and so I think it might be helpful, you know, if our recommendation is for them to provide us ABC based on a 60 percent probability. If they disagree with that, then they need to provide back to us the rationale for why they don't think that's appropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to look to Allie, and so I think that we take the word "consider" out and ask the SSC to provide the additional probability of rebuilding scenario of 60 percent, to minimize social and economic impacts, while preventing overfishing. That sounds more definitive to me. I see heads nodding yes. All right. We're clarifying it even more up here. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Based on what Andy just said, it's almost like we're asking them specifically to provide an ABC, and I think that's important. You know, not provide a probability, but provide us an ABC based on a probability. Okay. That looks better to me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is everybody good here with the guidance that we have? This is guidance back to the SSC, and we're very specific now with wanting ABC with a 60 percent probability of rebuilding. All right. I think we're good to move to the next action, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Thank you, guys, for helping me build that language, and so the next action in your options paper is to revise the gag sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and so we need to revise the allocations, because of the change in landings estimates from the CHTS to the FES kind of currency, and the current allocations were set through Amendment 16 in 2008, and they are 51 percent to the commercial sector and 49 percent to the recreational, and that used the distribution of landings from 1993 to 2003.

Throughout this option, I used the method -- I used the ACL that was the buffer between the ACL and the ABC that was used in the last amendment, and so, for these, you're seeing an ACL of 90 percent of the ABC. If you decide to, after we look at those probabilities, if we decide to set the ACL equal to the ABC, these will change, and I just kept it going from what we had last time.

Option 1 would retain the current commercial and recreational allocations as 51 percent and 49 percent, respectively, but it would apply them to the new total annual catch limit. Option 2 would use that same method, and so it would be based on the distribution of the landings from 1993 to 2003, but you would be recalculating the percentages using the FES landings, and that would give you 53.30 to the commercial sector and 46.70 to the recreational sector. Then your final option is using the allocation formula, which uses the mean landings from 2006 to 2008 and the mean landings from 1986 to 2008, and that results in a 58.01 percent allocation to the commercial sector and a 41.99 percent allocation to the recreational sector.

Table 7 kind of gives you a summary of those, and, yesterday, there was a little bit of confusion with snowy about the CHTS here, and so I switched it to FES, because, again, the ACL that you would be applying those current percentages on is based on -- It would be based on FES numbers, and so you're not really having CHTS numbers anywhere in that, and so I will stop here and ask any questions or have you guys discuss.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Allie. Do we want to add additional options here? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I had a question about Option 3, and it just adds up to over 100 percent.

MS. IBERLE: Sorry about that. I will look at that.

MR. CONKLIN: We will all take the bump.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim, do you have anything to add here?

MR. GRINER: Yes, I did. I would like to add another option, and I am going to ask -- Maybe Allie can help me out here, and so I started thinking more about this, and, you know, we're definitely in a dire situation here, and I think John really kind of hit the nail on the head here, that

the fastest way to rebuild this is by going low early, and that's kind of -- As painful as it sounds, that's kind of where we are, and so what I thought we could do is just kind of start from scratch here and kind of forget about the historical landings and how we came up with allocations in the past, because, basically, we are where we are.

We have a new ABC, and it's not very palatable, but it is what it is, and we can jump up and down, and we can look at how to tweak this ABC 10 percent here or a few percent here, but, as Carolyn said, you're looking at minor gains, and I don't know, at the end of the day, when we're faced with a ten-year rebuilding plan, that it really helps us any. What helps us in the end is going ahead and biting the bullet and let's get it done and take our lumps early and see if we can't rebuild this stock.

Most commercial fishermen will tell you that they've seen the handwriting on the wall with this for quite some time now, and so what I looked at doing was taking the ABC that the SSC has given us and starting where we are today with our current catch levels, both commercially and recreationally, and see what we have to do to go from where we are today to get to where we can split this ABC up and doing it in an equal manner.

What I looked at doing was taking our current catch levels, both recreational and commercial, and taking an even cut, and so what I came up with was we start out with a 24 percent cut across-the-board from our current catch levels today. We take a 24 percent cut for commercial and recreational, and we do it even, and that puts us at today's current ABC recommendation from the SSC. That ABC bumps up every year, and so what we would do from that point, after year-one, is we would take that bump and we would split it 50/50. The commercial guys get 50 percent of the bump, and the recreational guys get 50 percent of the bump.

We would continue to do that every year through the rebuilding phase. What you end up with, by doing that, is you end up with a sliding allocation. If you look at the percentages, it's going to look like it's all out of skew at the beginning, but it's really not. We're taking an equal cut, and we're taking an equal bump.

At the end of year-two -- Interestingly enough, at the end of the second year of the rebuilding, the commercial sector is right back to where they are today. The recreational sector is 30,000 pounds above where they are today, and I don't think we can do much better than that. By halfway through the rebuilding phase, in year-five, the recreational sector is above any catch level they've been at in the last twenty-five years. The commercial sector will be back to numbers that we were experiencing in 2013 and 2014.

This, I think, is a great way forward. It's equal, and it's fair, and it's equitable, and I don't see any other way around taking a hit in year-one, and so, one way or another, we're going to bleed some blood the first year, but, by doing it in this way, by the second year, everybody is right back to where they are today. We never stop fishing, and hopefully, by fishing at this small levels, as John said in the very beginning, the stock will rebound and rebound in a hurry, and so I would love to see some thoughts and some input on whether this makes sense to anybody else other than me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Really quickly too, I wanted to clarify that the landings for the commercial and the recreational sector that you're looking at, that 180,000 and 50,000, that is for the current season,

which will end on December 31, and so those numbers would change, and so this is just kind of where we're -- We calculated it out from where we are now, but we still have the rest of the months.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: That's a great point. Thank you, Allie, and I would like to say that, if you looked -- Of course, it's very difficult recreationally, and, I mean, we can kind of project what we're going to do in the next few weeks commercially, but, you know, we're two waves behind right now, and so, historically, the last wave, at least for the last several years, for gag grouper in the recreational sector, those last waves are under a thousand pounds. I think, last year, the last wave was 899 pounds, and, the year before that, it was 929 pounds, and so they are going to change, but they're not going to change appreciably.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tim. Thanks for the explanation, and thanks for the out-of-the-box thinking here, and so it's under discussion. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I like that idea, Tim. I appreciate you doing all the work to come up with it, and imagine where we would be had we done that with red snapper, back in 2010, rather than just shutting down the fishery, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Tim. I think that's an innovative way of looking at things, and so we would -- Depending on what we end up with as an ABC and an ACL, we would just make that percentage adjustment to reduce whatever was necessary, and it could go up or go down, and that 24 percent you're talking about would change to get to that target, and that's the way it would work?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I based this off of the ABC being -- Or the ACL being set to the ABC at 70 percent rebuilding.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there more discussion? Monica, I saw you checking it out. Did you have any concerns here?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: No. I'm glad there's another alternative, but I do have a question later on, and maybe it's for Allie, but I don't want it to stop discussion on this alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Allie and Chip over here.

MS. IBERLE: Another quick clarification. The 180,000 pounds and the 50,000 pounds, those are in CHTS currency, or just the 50,000. Sorry. Just the recreational. My apologies. I misspoke, and so that's not in FES currency. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Just to build on that, FES currency is quite a bit higher for gag grouper than it is for other species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: What happens when you have, and it probably should have been asked during the assessment, but the anomalies of looking at something and averaging the years out, and I will bring up a particular instance, and not to rehash blue line, but they had, in 2007, 37,000, or 35,000, discards, and it's just -- It went on past SEDAR 32, and we went to 50,000, and then it got smoothed over to 3,000, and, I mean, what happens -- Where is the leadership, at any level, when you have these astronomical, unbelievable numbers that are driving something that we just know are wrong, yet we leave them in there, and so why couldn't something be looked at that should have been looked at by someone to say, hey, we've got to smooth numbers over that are just crazy?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking to see who might want to respond to that question. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: It depends on where you are in the process. If you remember back to that discussion paper we put together for red porgy, there is essentially three different areas where we're using landings data, and one is in the assessment process, and so the assessment process has several pieces of information in it, and, yes, that can smooth out some of those outliers, and, if you look at what happened in the most recent scamp assessment, what they did, and I think it's a novel approach, at least in the South Atlantic region, where they fit with the original numbers in the stock assessment, and then they refit after that, after they had pretty much tuned the model, and would remove some of those outliers from that, because they relaxed the assumption that it had to fit recreational landings perfectly, and then it was matched to allow the deviation in the recreational landings based on the PSEs.

If you look in the scamp assessment, and I think it's the 2016 estimate, it is much lower for that, and so that's being incorporated there. As far as management, when we're looking at developing management advice for you guys, what we're trying to do is look at some of these outliers based on the PSE, and we did decide to remove a point, at least for snowy grouper, where the PSE was 80 percent, indicating that it was highly unreliable, and so that year was removed.

When we're thinking about monitoring, you guys do have the -- It is generally written in the accountability measures that the Regional Administrator has the flexibility, based on the best scientific information available, not to act on it if it does not seem to be the best available information, and so, looking at those three tiers of using recreational landings estimates, there is some flexibility in there. We're trying to get better at addressing some of the uncertainty with the recreational data, but, right now, we have to use that recreational catch stream, and it's just trying to identify those outliers, where they do exist.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Back to Dewey and then to Spud.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Isn't it based on PSEs that the literature has cited that over 50 percent should not be used or is not -- You all flag that all the time, up over 50 percent in everything, and so my question is what happens between the 50 and 85 percent, and why not at 65 percent you're flagging it or doing something like that, and why does it have to reach the 85 percent, when all the literature states that over 50 is an imprecise estimate and shouldn't be used for a management level?

DR. COLLIER: MRIP is actually changing their policies associated with this, and John Walter can probably talk about it a little bit more if he wants to, but what they're starting to do in the

upcoming years is removing any estimates that are greater than that 50 percent PSE, and the reason that they're doing that is because, as you had mentioned, that extremely high uncertainty associated with that, and greater than a 50 percent PSE means it's not statistically different than zero.

If you have an observation of catch, and, obviously, it's greater than zero, and so it is troubling to have those, and MRIP is no longer going to be presenting those on their publicly-available website, and they have also indicated that greater than 30 percent may even need to be considered flagged, but it is what it is, and I think we need to deal with -- We need to get back to figuring out how to deal with these data-limited species and how to estimate their recreational catch a little bit better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: When you say that MRIP is not going to be presenting that, is that publicly in the literature, and so what's going to happen? It sounds like they're just not going to publish over 50 to put out there to the public, and so what's going to happen when you still have -- What's the number going to be used for, even if it's not publicly put out, and so that's what it sounds like, and you just said presented, and so, to me, that's out there publicly, and so we're not going to be seeing that no more.

DR. COLLIER: It's not going to be on that website. You can go to the website and see what landings were for our region. However, if you download the raw files, you will still be able to analyze that data and incorporate it. It is going to be somewhat available for analysis, but, you know, as we're developing it, as staff, we can take those pieces of information into consideration and really try to address the uncertainty associated with it. It's not a good situation, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: John Walter, did you want to respond?

DR. WALTER: I will just make two comments. One, MRIP is going through a lot of consideration of things such as rare events, and there's a working group to evaluate how to better characterize those. If the council wants, and needs, more information on the MRIP process, I know that NMFS Science and Technology has often come to the Gulf Council and presented and can answer questions, particularly related to like ongoing developments, things such as calibrations and the transition of the state programs to be incorporated into the assessments.

I think those things are coming down the pipeline for the South Atlantic, and they are ongoing, as Dale knows, in the Gulf, and so, if we need more information, they are really the experts on the MRIP, because they collect the data, and, specific to gag, because I think we're on gag here, there were two really high recreational catch events in the time series, but they are far back in the time period, and so they're going to be less influential, in terms of recent situations, and so I think, maybe for gag, it's not as bad, unless there is something that I am not aware of, but it looks like it was back in 1982 and like 1985, or something like that. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we've got a couple of hands up. My goal here is to kind of complete the discussion on what we have here on the table, see if this structure is an option that we want to add, and then we'll take a break, after we get through that, but there are hands up. I want to get questions and stuff answered. Spud had his hand up, and Tim had his hand up.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you. I am just trying to think of how we would implement the Griner imperative here, because we obviously have a great disparity between the Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates and the FES estimates, I mean, just giant orders of magnitude, and so, if we adopted this at some point in the future, would that not require MRIP to continue to generate the recreational landings in the Coastal Household Telephone Survey format, because, if they do it in FES, we're going to blow through it, and, I mean, it will never work. You will basically have a recreational moratorium. When it's at 38,000, but the FES -- Every FES estimate from 2015 to 2019 was over half-a-million pounds, and so that's why I am trying to figure out, is how is that going to work? How would we not end up with a catastrophic unintended consequence from this?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good question. I am not sure who wants to take that one. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: What I'm thinking is this is an approach, right, and so I think it would be better if you just didn't pay attention to the actual numbers, but concentrate on the concept, and is this an allocation scheme, or approach, that you would like to explore. I think the IPT would have to come back and make sure that we're using the right numbers and bring this back to you, but I think Spud is correct, in that you can expect that the recreational component is going to be larger than what you're seeing up on the screen right now, because of the FES estimates.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go back to the list of hands, we now have more hands up. I am going to go back to something that Myra said, and it is an approach, and I appreciate the questions, but what we're trying to do is look at this approach that Mel termed shared pain and then shared gains, and so definitely an approach here, and so Tim and then Chester.

MR. GRINER: I guess, you know, and I don't know if "heartburn" is the right word, but it's just this whole thing, and I keep going back and forth and back and forth between the telephone survey and the mail survey, and you look on the website, and you try to look up ACL monitoring, and they're done one way, and then that's not really the way it's done, and, to me, right now, the main thing is that it is a method, but we've been given an ABC, and that is what we have to deal with, is that ABC, and how do you fairly split that ABC, so that we're not all tied to the dock.

When that ABC was developed, what recreational numbers were used in the actual SEDAR assessment, and how did they come up with this ABC, and so, at the end of the day, we have 175,000 pounds to divvy up, and that's kind of where we are. Regardless of what currency you use, it's 175,000 pounds of that currency.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Chester and then Andy.

MR. BREWER: As a concept of equally shared pain and equally shared gain, I applaud that thought, and I applaud Tim's work, but I've got a little problem, or, actually, a big problem with the actual numbers that I am seeing up on the board, and I think that that problem comes about because we're using one year of landings, one year, apparently, to make our determination on what, at least on paper and what we're seeing, is a massive reallocation. Spud is right that, if you were to go with the numbers that we see on the board right now, you're going to shut down the recreational sector before it ever starts, and I've got a problem with that, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy and then back to Tim. Once again, this is a concept that we would be asking staff to come back with in the document, with more specific information, and so Andy, Tim, and then Chris.

MR. STRELCHECK: I want to applaud Tim for his creativity and thought in this. This is a challenge, not just for allocation, but, a lot of the times, when we do analyses to determine what reduction we're trying to achieve and what's the baseline at which we use, right, and so, in this instance, we do have allocations, and neither sector is necessarily harvesting their allocations, and so we're trying to take into consideration of, well, how is the fishery operating now and accounting for that equally shared pain, but also equally shared gain, in the long-term.

I think the results are going to be very different once we incorporate the FES. I would support at least exploring this further, and I think exploring it with probably at least a multiyear baseline as the starting point, just to take into account some of the variability in landings for the commercial and recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: I struggled with that a lot, but you have to start somewhere, and we're in such a dire situation right now that, to me, it almost makes sense just to forget where we were three years ago, four years ago, and don't worry about doing an average, and, interestingly enough, if you look at the recreational numbers, and Chester brought up a very good point, that it just doesn't seem right, but this is where we are, and, last year, the recreational numbers were exactly the same.

The currency that you're looking at up there right now, last year, the recreational, at the end of their waves, final numbers, were 50,000 pounds. That's where they were last year, and they're on pace to be right there again this year, and so it's not like it's a total outlier of a number. What it represents is where we are today, and it's what we're catching today, the current catch levels, both recreational and commercial. We're not doing very well, because there's not many fish, and so it's representative of where we are today.

If you will scroll down, Allie, and you look at the way this thing works, it's a sliding -- It's a sliding scale. Halfway through this rebuilding period, we are almost back to the percentages that we are at today, and so it does seem skewed in the beginning, Chester. It really does, and I looked at that myself, and I was like, wow, that doesn't look right, but, as you move through this, and you keep sharing the gains, you're going to work yourself right back to the percentages that we are today.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just going to ask the presenter if they could slide it on down, since Chester can't see that on his computer, down to year-nine or seven, whatever it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's year-four, and so that's the bottom of the table, and so I appreciate it.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, at some point, you've got to -- Like Tim said, these are the numbers that we've been managing with, whether we believe them or not, and this is what we have seen in the past, and we're going to have new numbers, or we have them, I guess, and it's going to be

completely skewed, and it's not fair, and, at some point, you've got to share it together, one man's livelihood and another man's hobbies, and what's more important, your children or your hobby? I mean, Jesus. I am going quit saying "Jesus". He's not helping me out here today.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am going to try to wrap this discussion up. We have two hands left in the queue. We have Andy and then Kerry, and then maybe we can wrap this up.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess a comment to Tim and then a suggestion. Tim is exactly right. The landings, as of today, are comparable to what we see for the entire year last year. We do have landings only reported through the end of August, and so we still have two more waves for recreational, and so there's potential for them to certainly go up.

I think the suggestion would be, in terms of pursuing this approach, like a stock assessment, they do sensitivity runs and look at a variety of different baselines, just to see how sensitive this is to especially that initial reduction, because I think that's really what Tim is after, is that initial impact of changing, obviously, the harvest levels, and what does that look like, and be able to bring that back to us and share the results.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, we could discuss this all day, and we're going to have lots of time to do it, and so my suggestion would be that -- I don't hear anyone saying that it's a total no-go, and so maybe we can just go ahead with direction to staff on the approach and take some of Andy's comments into effect and add it in there and move along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds wonderful. My thoughts exactly, but Tom Roller put his hand up.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. Thanks, Tim, for this out-of-the-box thinking and approach. Looking at the numbers that I'm seeing here on the table, as it stands, I am very uncomfortable with it, and I want to state that. Now, taking into consideration some of Andy's comments, I think, as a concept, I would be more supportive of this if we're using multiyear baselines and other ways to look at it, and I think just using 2021, just one year, is not something that would be very popular, particularly if we sent it out for scoping.

I can assure you aspects of the recreational industry would not be too favorable with this, because, even though we hear the word "recreational", and we always assume that it's just a hobby, I think it's important to state that there's a lot of jobs associated with that, particularly in the for-hire industry, and the sort of scale could be potentially pretty devastating, and so I would be curious to see this with other inputs, but I support it as a concept.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tom. Okay. I am going to try to wrap up all of our discussion. Back to what Kerry said, I agree, and I am not hearing people not wanting to explore this approach. It seems like we want to explore it. Of course, the devil will be in the details, but we need staff to bring some of those details back to us before we can figure out what exactly we think about it, but, right now, it seems like we are excited to have a new option here, thinking outside the box, and we really appreciate Tim working on this, and I know you've been working on this all week, and so I appreciate that, and I think we have adequate direction for staff, and we will take a ten-minute break and continue on with the next actions in this document.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Allie, I am going to turn it back to you to go through Action 4.

MS. IBERLE: Sure. The rest of the document considers other possible actions for gag grouper, and Number 4 considers modifying any commercial management measures, and so the council may choose to modify commercial management measures to ensure that harvest is constrained to reduce catch levels to that new ABC level that we have within the rebuilding timeframe.

The current commercial gag ACL incorporates a PQBM, and so a post-quota bycatch mortality, and so what this did was the commercial sector was allocated the total commercial ACL, and then, from that, 27,218 pounds gutted weight was then deducted from that ACL to account for gag bycatch not in the season, and so I made sure to check with other staff that SEDAR 71 now accounts for those discards, and so that additional reduction of 27,218 pounds gutted weight is not needed when you're looking at the total commercial ACL for gag. In the past, you have seen it, and you will not see it within the commercial values, as we move forward in this amendment. Monica, I didn't know if you wanted to pop in on that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I had this question earlier, and, Allie, you have answered it really well, and so my thought was, initially, are we still using the subtracted amount determined from the PQBM, which, as Allie explained, is the post-quota bycatch mortality, and are we still using that reduction in the new assessment, and you clearly state that, no, we're not, because SEDAR 71 accounted for discards, and so there won't be that additional subtraction.

What I was thinking is that, using Tim's allocation proposal, would that matter? Would it matter that, if the landings of the commercial sector were X amount, that didn't reflect their full ACL, because there was already a directed quota, and so the ACL -- The commercial had an ACL, and stepped down from that, to account for bycatch, was a directed quota, and so does that matter, when you're considering landings based on the last few years, versus what it would have been, potentially, without the stepdown of the directed quota.

I just asked Rick whether we have closed the gag commercial sector in the last few years, and I don't believe we have, and so they haven't met the quota, and so I guess my thought is that it doesn't matter, necessarily, for Tim's allocation proposal, because they have never reached the even directed quota, if you will, and so, anyway, it's just kind of an idea that the council ought to know what PQBM, and it sounds like some Latin phrase, but, anyway, what it is and then it kind of goes away in this assessment anyway for the commercial sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie.

MS. IBERLE: Kind of how I see it is that, with the previous ACL, that bycatch mortality is kind of addressed on the backend, and so you have the assessment, and you get the total commercial ACL, and then you account for that bycatch mortality, whereas, with the new assessment, it's already been addressed and dealt with in the assessment, and so your total ACL, or the total commercial ACL, at that point, is -- That's your actual number.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: With the total ACL -- We don't know what the total ACL is going to be, but I assume that, in the assessment, they address the discard issue for both the recreational sector and the commercial sector.

MS. IBERLE: I believe that is correct. I am getting a thumbs-up from Chip. Just reflecting on the current commercial management measures, and so Table 8 kind of sums it up for us, and so the current trip limit for gag is 1,000 pounds gutted weight until 70 percent of the commercial ACL is met, and then that trip limit steps down to 500 pounds gutted weight. The commercial season is currently May 1 through December 31, and so it has that spawning season closure, and there is a commercial size limit of twenty-four inches total length, and so, going off of that size limit, I provided some information for the committee, some life history information, and so, according to SEDAR 71, 29 percent of females were mature at age-four and an average length of 27.9 inches. 63 percent of females are mature at age-five and an average length of 30.7 inches.

Gag are hermaphrodites, and so they change sex from female to male, and then, according to the assessment, our most recent assessment, the average of transition is 10.5 years. Table 9 shows you, starting at age-ten, which the assessment is indicating is that average age of transition, the total length and proportion female, and so you can see, as they age, the length is increasing, and the proportion of females is decreasing, and so that just kind of gives you a little bit of information to base any discussion or decisions that you may make in modifying commercial management measures. I will stop here and see if the committee would like to add anything in for scoping on this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're looking for discussion, and so I'm going to throw something out there, and so I see that the AP is recommending increasing the minimum size limit or implementing a slot, and so I know that we're at twenty-four inches total length, and it seems like 63 percent of the females were mature at age-five, with an average length of 30.7, and so I'm not sure if we want to consider an option to increase the size limit here. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I think we do, because, if you remember from reading the Gulf Council report, some of the problems that they're having with recruitment in the Gulf is the number of males. They don't have enough males, and so, if you're harvesting these fish before they have a chance to turn into males, we're going to end up with the same problem that they have in the Gulf, with not enough males.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I can kind of appreciate that, but part of me also says that you increase the size, and then we're throwing more fish away, and so I think twenty-four inches is a good size for the gag, but, as far as the problem with the lack of males, I think we're having that problem in the South Atlantic as well, and our fishery is much different. Our gag fishery is based around very small rocky outcroppings and ledges and very small areas. Areas where gag live are no bigger than what's inside this table right here.

One of the problems that I truly believe that we're experiencing is we're using some very selective gear to take these big males off. We're taking them off of areas where they can't be replaced, and so, when you use spear gear, and you take giant males off of a spot, then you cannot replace that

male on that spot for many, many, many years, and, when you start talking about the way that our fishery works in the South Atlantic, these are very small areas where these grouper live, and it will absolutely cause localized depletion of males, if you start taking these giant males that you could not catch with a rod-and-reel, and there's no other way to do it, and you're not going to get them to the boat. You're just not going to do it, and so I'm not so sure that we don't have a problem with lack of males, but I don't think it has anything to do with the size limit that we are starting to harvest the fish at. I think it has more to do with the selective manner in which we're taking the large males out of the population.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: That's interesting, and I appreciate that. I didn't know that, and so I appreciate that information. I think that something that we're not addressing, in my opinion, is the gorilla in the room that we're not looking at, and that is the destruction of the estuaries and the nursery habitat that these fish need to start out in, and I will take the Indian River Lagoon as an example.

I mean, our seagrass has been depleted so bad that we had over 300 manatees starve to death last year, and so, if you've got that kind of condition, how can we possibly expect the recruitment for gag grouper, and any other species, all the different species that start out in the estuaries, and how can we expect them to continue at the levels that we have enjoyed in the past, and I don't know what to do about it, and I assume that this body has recognized seagrass beds in the estuaries as EFH. If we haven't, that would be one of the first things we need to do, but I think we need to be a voice to the regulatory bodies, like the city councilors and the county commissioners, to try to help them understand the economic havoc that is being inflicted on the fisheries by their lack of action to address nutrient overloading in the estuaries.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Kerry, I will just add that I feel like, at least in Florida, that there are a number of folks working on that, and I believe that the governor has made it a priority, and he has put, into his proposed budget, a certain amount of money to protect water quality and other things, and there's been some local commissions established to look into that, and so I think there is progress being made on that front, I guess is what I would say. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, Laurilee, I'm 100 percent with you, and you're right, and it's frustrating, because there is only so much we can do. To my knowledge, if I can recall back to 1998, we do have seagrass designated as EFH, and the council is working on our sort of making sure our habitat plan and -- You know, it's more accessible to people, and it's more useful in the future for agencies that need to consult it. You know, we've been working on that, and so hopefully that will pay off.

I think it would be good to get the SSC, if they haven't already, to sort of come up with a statement about how that's part of the recruitment uncertainty, maybe, because, if I recall, they said something about not knowing what was happening with the smaller gags in the estuary, but we're sort of stuck with what we can do here, and it stinks, because you're exactly right, but we can only do so much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Before I go to Trish, the thing that I was hoping we could have a discussion on -- We're trying to figure out what actions, if any, we want to recommend for commercial, and the three topics that the AP considered -- One, they recommended increasing the

minimum size limit, or a slot, and they also recommended expanding the spawning season closure to extend through May, and they also said that they would prefer a 250 or fifty-pound gutted weight trip limit. I am going to put those out there, and those are the types of things that I think we're looking for discussion on, to figure out if we want to have actions for those, with alternatives or options underneath, before we take this out to scoping. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Thanks. I just wanted to add to what you were saying about what Florida is doing. North Carolina is also working hard on water quality, and we just finished our coastal habitat protection plan, which a big piece of that was water quality and SAV and looking at water clarity standards, going by each water body, as well as increasing our monitoring on SAV, and so that's what North Carolina is trying to do right now too, and so we're all aware how important those estuarine habitats are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we're trying to get some ideas here. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I was thinking we probably need to have staff look at some options of 200-pound trip limits or 300 or 400, just a range, and we've got to start somewhere, and so maybe we start at 200 pounds and work our way up to 400 or 500 pounds, but look and see what that does and how that plays out and how long the season may last. I would not want to necessarily look at changing the size limit or a slot limit or anything like that, and I think that may, at the end of the day, exacerbate our problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tim. We're trying to get that on the board there. Did you say 200 up to 500 or 400? What were your options that you threw out there, one more time?

MR. GRINER: I think you start at 200 and then work your way up. I guess, right now, under our current management, 500 is the step-down limit, and so maybe you run the numbers to see what that really does, but I really don't see us getting -- At this small amount of quota, I think you're probably going to probably have to end up somewhere in that 200 range.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that. All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I am going to bow to the Carolina folks to set the trip limits, because, in Florida, we don't target gag as a trip limit. However, I do object to the recommendation about extending the spawning closure above 20 degrees North latitude, because, when May 1 comes, our guys -- The tilefish has been over for a month-and-a-half, and they haven't been able to catch anything for like a month-and-a-half, and so they're really looking forward to the shallow-water grouper season starting.

You have allowed the red grouper to remain open in May in Florida, and I would ask that you consider allowing us to catch -- We catch them as an incidental catch, but we need those fish in order to survive, and so, since red grouper doesn't close in Florida in May, I would ask that we not close gag in May either, and just keep it the same as red grouper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, so far, the only action we have talked about for commercial here is a reduction in the trip limit, and we've got a range suggested for staff. Does anybody else want to comment here on consideration of size or extending the spawning season closure? We've

heard a couple of comments on each. Any more discussion on that? Remember that this document is being prepared for scoping. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. My comments here are a little bit tied to recreational and commercial. I would be interested in seeing a change in the size limit, increasing that, and what sort of benefits we could potentially get from that. I understand that we could increase discards, however, but I would be curious on that.

Comments from stakeholders and some of this that had been relayed to me, to kind of build upon some of the comments that Tim made, specifically, proliferation of spearfishing in southern North Carolina, and I am curious if that is taking some of the larger males, because, as Tim said, you can't really catch a lot of those on hook-and-line gear. It's almost impossible. Another comment that has been made is we haven't really seen -- This is my experience, but I haven't really seen much benefit from the spawning season closure, and I am wondering if it needed to be expanded, particularly in the northern part of the South Atlantic, or parts of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I heard another suggestion about looking at the size limit. Once again, this would just be something that would go out to scoping, and they would have some options in there, and it doesn't mean that, in the end, we would have to select it, but Chester has his hand up. Let's go to Chester.

MR. BREWER: Building off of something that Tim said, and that is a lot of these males are being targeted by spear fishermen, and it seems to me that it might be a good idea to go to a slot, because we know that, by the time they're thirteen years old, the total length is 41.8, and only 13 percent of those fish are female, and so, as you go up to 41.4, it's 24 percent, and so maybe you want to put in a slot, where you can't keep one, can't possess one, over say forty-one inches. I think that would probably accommodate everybody, except people that want to go out and shoot giant males.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we've heard a comment for including an action to increase the commercial size and a comment, because of spearfishing, to consider a slot limit. What do we think about that? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: My comment is not about a slot limit, but it seems like maybe some additional MPAs might help preserve some areas where the males could survive, but I am looking at the Oculina HAPC, and is spearfishing allowed in the Oculina at this time, because the Oculina HAPC is like the major spawning area for a lot of the shallow-water grouper, and so maybe, if you did something like prohibiting spearfishing just in the Oculina, that might help somewhat with the males.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip is coming up here to try to answer those questions.

DR. COLLIER: Within the Oculina Bank, there is the area called the Oculina Experimental Closed Area, and, within that, gag grouper harvest is closed, and, actually, all snapper grouper harvest is closed. Within the HAPC itself, anchoring is not allowed, and so that would eliminate some of the fishing. If you remember back, and I know you weren't on the council, but you were still associated with the council, but Nick Farmer had done an analysis looking at potential reductions due to that anchoring restriction, and he indicated that there was a lower efficiency for fishermen when they're not able to anchor.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I am just thinking out loud here on this slot limit for spearfishing, and so, just thinking about me, I am not really good at eyeballing size, and so I just kind of wondered, if you do a slot limit for spearfishing, and you spear it, and it's out of the slot limit, it's dead anyway, and so I kind of wonder if that's -- I am not questioning the slot limit as much as I wonder if that would not be good for that particular gear, and so that's just for questions and thoughts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have heard some additional things thrown out here of a size limit and a slot limit and MPAs. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think Trish is right, especially underwater. I mean, it's not only depth, but sizes are distorted in water anyway, and so it's going to be very difficult, and it's one thing to be able to look at a fish and see that it meets a minimum size, but it's going to be much more difficult to see if it meets a maximum size. You know, if you really want to do something -- If we really wanted to do something, we need to look at putting some gear restrictions, and maybe you look at having only certain months or certain times when that gear is allowed to be used, and maybe you don't allow that gear until June or July or something, and I don't know, but I just don't think -- I think a slot limit will be very difficult, even for the most seasoned guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It looks like we're amassing a list here, including restricting gear types during certain times of the year. Any other thoughts on items that we would like to see scoped as part of this discussion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I know we're just going out for scoping and we just need to define our range of options, but include an action to restrict gear types for certain times of year is incredibly broad, and, unless they listen to the minutes of this meeting, they would not know what we were referring to, and I suggest that that somehow is tailored a little more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we're capturing some more on the screen. Include an action to restrict spearfishing gear for -- Is that specific enough yet? All right. It sounds like it is. What else? I see that folks are reading. Let me just review it, if you can't see it. Include an action to reduce the commercial trip limit, and the range that we have is 200 to 500 pounds. Include an action to increase the commercial size limit. Include an action to establish a commercial slot limit. Include an action to restrict spearfishing gear for certain times of the year. I see heads nodding, and it looks like people are in agreement. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I was just going to point out that, when we've had all of our discussions in Florida, with regard to goliath grouper, the thought was that -- Unfortunately, the spear guys, if you give them a couple of weekends, they can take out a whole lot of the population, and, therefore, we went to this whole thing about having tags or something, and I am not suggesting tags here, and I am just saying, if you've got an appreciable amount of time that you're allowing spearfishing on gag grouper, you may not get as much help as you are looking for, or as much reduction as you're looking for, with regard to the take of the large males. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. We were having some side discussions here in the room, and it seems like folks are still wanting to include that as a discussion that could go out to scoping. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Can you put a limit on the amount of fish that can be taken by spearfishing?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, I think Chester brings up a good point, and so I think one of the alternatives then would be to eliminate that gear altogether during this rebuilding phase.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I think that Allie can add that.

MR. GRINER: That is both recreational and commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think that Allie could add that. To me, it's kind of a sub-action under that having spearfishing during certain times of the year, and you would also have this option that would not allow spearfishing, either commercial or recreational, during this rebuilding plan or for the first three or four years or five years or whatever, and I think that kind of the sky is the limit there. Mel.

MR. BELL: Just to be clear, and this is just being nitpicky, but, when we say "spearfishing", we're talking spearfishing and bang-sticking, and we're just using "spearfishing" as the generic description of diver-harvested.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie can add that, that spearfishing gear we intend as spearfishing gear and bang-sticks. All right. Anything else we want to consider here as options to go out to scoping for commercial? All right. I don't see any more hands. Allie is capturing all of those items that we just discussed. I believe next up is the action where we look at the recreational options.

MS. IBERLE: Before I move on, any other alterations to what I've got for guidance to staff for commercial? Okay. Tim, you mentioned the same, removing spearfishing gear during the rebuilding plan for the recreational, and I will capture that again as we move forward. All right.

Your other option for gag is to modify the recreational management measures. Table 9, again, shows you kind of a summary of what you're looking at for gag currently. The bag limit is one fish per person per day within the three-grouper aggregate, and so, within that three-grouper aggregate, no more than one can be gag. The recreational season runs from May 1 through December 31, and there is a twenty-four-inch total length minimum size limit. We have the AP recommendations, and that was short and sweet, and so I will hand it back to you guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Allie. I am going to call out some of the specific AP recommendations, but they are very similar to what we discussed for commercial, including increasing the minimum size, looking at a slot, possibly modifying the months of the closed season, which we didn't really go with here, and then they also talked about the permit for the recreational sector, which we are working on as part of another document and the workgroup, and so it looks like the first thing that Allie is going to do is capture the items that we had for commercial. I am

assuming -- We grabbed one of them, grabbed the spearfishing one, but I am assuming that we're going to want to look at the same size limits and slot limits that we had for commercial. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I would recommend that we also at least look at a vessel limit, in addition to the possession limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great idea. Do you have some specific suggestions or a range that you would like to look at?

MR. WOODWARD: I would probably look at from one to five or six, something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Allie is capturing that, one to -- We'll say six per vessel. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I am just curious, and would you want to include the headboats in that as well, or how would you tackle that?

MR. WOODWARD: Probably just, at this point, look at all of it, and, I mean, some of it we may reject, because it's just not going to be practicable, but look at all of it right now, as much as can be analyzed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to read some of the things that we're putting on the board there, as Allie is cleaning it up. Looking at a recreational size limit, looking at a recreational slot limit, looking at a vessel limit, establishing a vessel limit, looking to restrict spearfishing gear, including bang-sticks, for certain times of the year, as well as entirely during the rebuilding plan. Anything else that we're missing here? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: It was my intent to exclude headboats from that, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: To me, that's just part of the range of alternatives.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay. Including or excluding headboats. Okay. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, given the reduction in the catch limit, it seems prudent to consider alternative fishing seasons as well. Otherwise, we might be running into ACLs being met and closures being triggered based on accountability measures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good point. Allie is adding that.

MS. IBERLE: Did that capture it, and so include an action to modify the recreational fishing season, and that's a little vague, and I didn't know if you wanted to add in certain kind of shifts for that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Given this is early on in the process, I would be very interested in, if we were to shorten or modify the season, what are the regional differences that we would hear, and,

in Florida, where I'm at, I like to go fishing for gag in November and December, and that's maybe not the best time to go fishing up here in North Carolina, and so how would that look?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great point on the regional difference there. All right. Anything else that we're missing here on the recreational options? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I just wanted to reiterate Andy's comments on the regional differences, but I raised my hand because I was curious if modifying the recreational fishing season is also kind of including adjusting the spawning season closure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe that's a sub-action under that item, adjusting the spawning season closure. All right. We're getting that on the board as well. Anything else that we're missing? All right. I don't see any additional hands, and I am going to turn it back to Allie, and I think we're going to talk about the accountability measures.

MS. IBERLE: All right. This is the final item for gag, and so your last action is to modify gag accountability measures, and so Table 10 gives you kind of a summary of where we're at right now with the accountability measures, and so it splits it into commercial and recreational. Currently, they both have in-season AMs, and the commercial is dependent on the commercial landings exceeding the commercial ACL, and then, for the post-season for the commercial, the commercial landings need to exceed the ACL, and the total ACL needs to be exceeded, and the stock needs to be overfished for that AM to be triggered and then the same thing with recreational.

I know we have had a lot of discussion with kind of uncoupling those accountability measures, and we did not build those options into this, and we kind of kept it a little bit more vague for you guys, especially since the IPT hadn't met yet, and so I will open it up for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am just making an assumption that we want to modify this, but maybe we don't, but I am just assuming that we do. We could have guidance to staff that we want to include an action to revise the accountability measures, and you've also heard that, yes, the IPT hasn't met yet, and so they could give us some guidance, but any specifics that you would like to tell staff about these accountability measures? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just wrote this note to myself, and so, again, since I am green, but what kind of jumped out at me, looking at these post-season ones anyway, is you've got the total -- It includes the total ACL being exceeded and not just the ACL for the commercial or for the recreational, and, since this species is overfished and overfishing is occurring, I wonder if you should maybe drop that total ACL, and, if they go over an ACL, we close it. Would that work, or is that -- Instead of it being tied to the total ACL -- I mean, I kind of understand why that is that way, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's let Myra discuss it.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. Thanks.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. That's just for the post-season AM, and so, if the total ACL is exceeded, then there is a payback, but that doesn't get triggered until that total ACL is exceeded and the stock is overfished. In-season, the commercial sector closes if the ACL is projected to be met or is met, and so there is a closure in-season for that. Does that help, Trish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel and then Monica.

MR. BELL: Maybe the question we ask staff to look at is, is there any way that you could tweak these so that you could achieve some reasonable conservation value in it, any savings, and maybe not, and I don't know. There may be some specific things that they could recommend, or the IPT could recommend, that we consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Allie.

MS. IBERLE: I know we've been looking at those options that kind of started with red porgy and are kind of bleeding into other snapper grouper species, but those accountability measures remove that in-season accountability measure and untie the sectors, is how I think of it, so that the AM is only triggered by that sector ACL, and it's not tied to -- In the post season, tied to the total ACL or the overfished status, which this does have the overfished status, but it's kind of simplifying the AMs in that way, but it's your decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, we want that option, if that's what you're looking for, and I would even argue, in case that's not what you were saying, that, even though the stock is overfished, and that's not going to come into play now, that the status of the stock should not matter either, because, eventually, it's one less thing we have to do when we get that glowing assessment and get to revise everything, and, in 2025, we wouldn't have to mess with this. That's just my opinion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We might have enough guidance already, but, Monica, I saw that you had your hand up.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: It was probably more of the same, in a way, and I was just going to suggest that you direct the IPT to look at some of the other amendments that you've been dealing with for snapper grouper and look at the adjustments to AMs, and then they could come back with those kinds of options for you to consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's a great idea.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and so, at this point, I'm just going to have guidance to staff to include an action to modify AMs, and the IPT can kind of toss around and come back to you with different options. At this point, that's all I have for you guys, and so what we'll do is the IPT is --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry. We'll go to Chris, and then I guess my question would be do we not need a motion to send it to scoping, and so over to Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was just wondering, when this document comes back, can the allocation charts in Option 3, or Task 3, come back with the FES projections?

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so what you'll see with that is we'll be kind of outlining that method for you, and then I will update it, or the IPT will update it, with those FES numbers, so you'll kind of have an outline of the method that Tim discussed and then updated numbers for those.

The only kind of issue I see -- The IPT is not meeting until after the season closes, but it depends on when we're getting the landings data for 2021, because that would be what we were waiting on, is the landings to populate those numbers, but we can get the language built in for that method, and does that make sense?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: In Figure 1 on page 9, they already have the FES landings, and there is a blue line that should be flipped the complete other way, and then everything would be fine, but, anyway, and so we've got some kind of landings already, and so, if we could figure it out and find them, that would be good, to help us be able to make better-informed decisions.

MS. IBERLE: Those FES landings are from 2015 to 2019, and so, for Tim's method, as it stands now, we are only using 2021 landings, and we have to wait for the season to end and then get those landings in, and that's what we were waiting on.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and the tables in here are already the FES numbers for 2015 through 2019, Option 1, 2, and 3? I am sorry to re-track, but I just want to make sure that --

MS. IBERLE: Yes, and so Option 1 uses the ACL that is based off of FES numbers, and then Option 2 recalculates that, using that method of the distribution of landings from 1993 to 2003, using those FES landings, but it's the year, and we're using 1993 to 2003 for that method, to get those percentages.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay, and just one other thing. Is there a way that we could go back to before we like took the permit and started making rules about gag, where the commercial could use those numbers, which were probably very much higher, in our allocation decisions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Why would we do that?

MR. CONKLIN: Because I would imagine we probably caught a lot more fish, and we could go back and say that we caught a lot more fish, and there's like records to prove it, and it's real data. This might be the wrong place to talk about it, but I've just been thinking about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Before I lose my train of thought, can we also include an option in here where -- Just like Option 1, 2, and 3, except for -- We have the ABC, or the ACL, equal to the ABC, because you've got a buffer in here right now, and could we do the same thing without the buffer? Then, to Chris's point, I think Chris brings up a very valid point. I mean, if you're going to -- If we're going back to these FES numbers, then the commercial side was restrained.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I understand, but I guess I'm having trouble, because wouldn't you be able to see that in the analysis, and don't we need to see some analyses first? I mean, are you suggesting that the wrong years -- I am just --

MR. GRINER: No, and I think it's okay not to do it, but I am just saying, as a general rule, it's kind of -- It's kind of odd, to me, that we keep flip-flopping between currencies, but the commercial never gets to flip-flop between its constraints, but, either way, it doesn't really matter, I don't think, because we have 175,000 pounds to deal with, and that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess that was kind of part of my point, but I saw some hands go up. Chris and then Andy and then Trish.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, Tim I right, but, I mean, it's just how these numbers come out, and we think that one sector has been catching these fish, and they go back and start a new way of how they count them, and they say we caught all these fish, and now everybody is having to pay for it, because they caught way more than we ever thought they were catching. Well, the commercial sector has been constrained and held to a quota, and we had to stop fishing. If we didn't have to stop fishing, we could go back, and we could have caught more, and so I was thinking about looking at, in the future, some of the numbers before we had like trip limits and quotas and stuff like that. I mean, if they didn't have to play by the rules, why the hell should we?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate the comment, but, since we're going to be needing some significant reductions here, maybe that's a conversation that we have as we move forward, or as we have more fish on the table, I guess. Andy and then Trish.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess a similar comment that I made yesterday, and I want to reiterate that we need to be very careful when we're talking about recreational and commercial, and I know that allocation can be a sensitive topic, but the recreational fishery was operating within the constraints that they were provided, right, and what we know now is different than what we knew back then. If we knew back then that the catch limits were higher, we would have had different yield levels, right, and we may have reached different allocations.

The one thing that I will point out, and I talked about after our first session this morning, is the allocation is still shifting to the commercial under the alternatives, and so something is going on back in time with the FES that is a different pattern than more recent years, and I don't fully understand why.

In terms of the comments about allocation, I mean, you're welcome to, obviously, propose new alternatives and actions for consideration, Chris, but we just need to build a record then as to why we would want to consider that as an allocation and why there is reasoning behind changing the allocation to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Okay. I am going to pull my newbie card again, while I've got time, and so, going back to the AMs, and so it's just a question, and so, Myra, you might have to start walking up, but, on these post-season triggers, again, I was wondering, and does it have to be an "and", and can it be an "or" in these, because it just seems like that's -- Again, that's my green eyes, reading all this, it just seems like having "or" in there, instead of "and", and all of them are required, or if that is an option that you all can look at, and so, anyway, those are just some questions, thoughts, and, like I said, I am pulling my newbie card today.

MS. BROUWER: No, and that's fine, Trish, and that is something that we can look at. I mean, this is the way it's been set up right now, but there's no reason why we couldn't figure out if having that flexibility, added flexibility, could work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It sounds like that will be part of the discussion. All right. Ultimately, we're needing a motion to send this out for scoping, but, Allie, do you mind reminding us of our timetable, one more time, before we make that motion?

MS. IBERLE: Let me scroll up, and, also, Tim and Chris, I added a staff guidance to include options for Action 3 using the ACL equal to the ABC, and so Option 2 in Action 2, and I just wanted to make sure that was -- Okay. This is our current timeline for Amendment 53, and so, if approved for scoping, we would scope in January and February, and we would review scoping at the March meeting. The AP would see it again in April, and then we're looking at final review in March of 2023.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Would someone on the committee like to make a motion to send this document out for scoping? Mel.

MR. BELL: **I move to send Amendment 53 for gag out to scoping.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Carolyn. Any more discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That motion carries.** Let's take a five-minute break, and we will get set up to go into -- I believe that amberjack is next. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One more comment, and apologies that I missed it, and so, with the recommendation for the SSC to consider the rebuilding plan, and I've been talking with John about how quickly the Science Center could provide that, and I know the SSC doesn't meet until April, or at least scheduled, but, ideally, I think it would be good if we could have that information before the March meeting and schedule an interim SSC meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I don't know if everybody from staff heard that or if somebody wants to come up here, and so we just had a request to have an extra SSC meeting to work on this. Chip. It sounds like the answer is yes. All right, and so we're making some notes. Thanks for bringing that up, Andy. We're getting that on the board. Thank you, Allie, for walking us through this. Let's take a five-minute break before we get into amberjack.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's come on back to the table, and we're going to start working on amberjack, Amendment 49. The first order of business here under amberjack is the overview, and are you going to do that for us, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes. Amendment 49 is looking at catch level adjustments and allocations for greater amberjack, as well as some other management measures, and then also looking at the snapper grouper recreational annual catch targets. Just kind of scrolling down to our objectives for this meeting, in this meeting, the goal is to review the alternatives developed to this point, select any preferreds, as the council deems necessary, and then to consider approval for this

document to go out for public hearings. After any approval of public hearings, then there would need to be some discussion and direction on the timing of when those hearings would occur.

This document has expanded a bit since you last saw it in September, and we've added four additional actions, at the request of the council, and so I will highlight those as we go through, as well as some additional alternatives. The timeline that this amendment is on, right now we're in the consideration for public hearing phase, but we would be looking to conduct public hearings, and this -- Actually, I should highlight this, because the IPT has a bit of a different recommendation than this timing, as far as conducting the public hearings, but I will get to that towards the end of the meeting.

In March of 2022, there would be the review of the public comment, or hearing of the public comment there, and we would have final approval, potentially, in June of 2022, and that's the timeline that we're working with to this point, and so, continuing to scroll down, this amendment was brought about in response to the greater amberjack stock assessment.

Greater amberjack is not overfished, and overfishing is not occurring, and this is the drafted purpose and need. Since you last saw it, there have been some changes, and those are highlighted on the screen there. Mostly, these changes were to incorporate the new actions that have been brought into the amendment concerning minimum size limits, the Season 2 commercial trip limit, and changes to the specifications surrounding the April spawning closure.

I have got these on the screen, and I am just looking to the committee for, I guess, guidance that there are no additional edits or objections to these edits from the IPT, and we don't need a motion, but just direction that that is the case.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments here on the draft purpose and need statement? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to note, as we've discussed with the other documents, acceptable biological catch language has been added to the purpose and need, and that will be added to this eventually, and we didn't have to do it before this meeting, and the same will be the alternatives, and so I just wanted to give you a heads-up on that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Thank you for the reminder on that. Any other comments on the purpose and need? I don't see any other hands, and I would assume we're good with the modified purpose and need. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Scrolling on down to the OFLs and the ABCs that have been recommended by the SSC, those are captured in Table 1 of the decision document, and I forgot to mention that you also have, in your briefing book, the draft amendment, the amendment as drafted to this point, and we have quite a bit of information in there, and so a lot of that is summarized within the decision document, but, if we need to pull anything up from that, for some additional detail, then just let me know, and I can have that kind of on deck, as needed.

The updated ABC numbers have kind of moved us into Action 1, and Action 1, as Shep pointed out, is going to need the addition of ABC to the action language, and so, in follow-up to this

meeting, we'll have Action 1 as revised, the greater amberjack acceptable biological catch, along with total annual catch and annual optimum yield.

One disclaimer that we have for the draft amendment, as well as some of the information that's included in the decision document, is that, due to some of the personnel timing on the IPT, in between the September meeting and this meeting, we had to pause a little bit on when we were able to actually meet, and so what we have, as far as analyses behind these actions, is we do have, included in Appendix F of the draft amendment document in your briefing book -- There are landings and season projections there, and so we have kind of that start, but we haven't gone to the next step of taking that information and translating it into full quantitative biological, social, or economic effects.

That is something that we would do in follow-up to this meeting. If it's approved for public hearings, we do would that in follow-up to this meeting, but before the public hearing document is released, and we would ask for the council to give permission and leeway for the IPT to be able to incorporate that information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds good. Just to remind me what we're doing here, so we're making sure that we're fine with the range that's in there, and we're making sure we're good with the preferred alternative, because, ultimately, isn't the next step public hearing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right, and so then I'm assuming folks -- I am looking around the table, and I see heads nodding yes, that it looks like we're okay with the range that's in there, and then we're still okay with our preferred alternative, and I see heads nodding yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I did want to -- Before we move off of that, I did want to point out, because this is one of the actions that was revised since you selected your preferred, and so I just wanted to reconfirm that your preferred is still your preferred, and so we have -- Your preferred has ABC set equal -- It has ACL set equal to the updated ABC. Alternatives 3 and 4 are percentages of the ABC, but Alternative 5 was an addition that was requested at the last meeting, and this was based on recommendations from the advisory panel for a constant catch, semi-constant catch, type of alternative.

It's not a full constant catch, because, in the latter years of the projections, the 2.8 number that was directed by the council at the last meeting -- That exceeds the ABC in the final two years, in the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 fishing years, and so, in those last two years, we had to set the ACL equal to the ABC, but that is an additional option that was put into this action, and so I just wanted to give that description regarding that and look to the committee to see if Alternative 2 is still the preferred alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Thanks for the reminder that this was added. I think I'm still okay with Alternative 2, but I will look around. I appreciate the addition, and I'm also okay that this alternative is in there, but I think that Alternative 2 would still be our preferred, but, Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think it is too, but this may be a question for Dale. It seems to me that I remember, somewhere in the Gulf, where they were using a constant catch scenario, but, at some point, it did

exceed the ABC, but you were still able to use a constant catch scenario, even though, in the later years, it exceeded ABC, or am I thinking that wrong?

MR. DIAZ: I don't recall where we've been able to exceed it, and that's one of the problems that we run into sometimes. The constant catch in some year gets off, and it throws it out, but I don't recall that. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry and then Andy.

MS. MARHEFKA: Mike, there is still more -- The thorough analysis under the biological, economic, and social has not been done completely through for this measure, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Correct, and so we've gotten through -- We have kind of done the qualitative aspects, like, if you're harvesting more, than your population is going to be less, that type of basic understanding, but, as far as numerical, putting numbers to that, no, that has not been done. There is one thing, kind of to that point, that I do want to point out, and so we did look at the biological effects, and we looked at the biological effects in a little bit of a different way, because of this Alternative 5.

In some of our other amendments, where we've had this approach of having percentages of the ABC, and, really, it's pretty straightforward which one has the highest harvest over a five-year projection. However, when you throw Alternative 5 in here, that has this constant catch at the beginning, what you end up with you have some years where it's higher than other alternatives and so years where it's lower than other alternatives, and, when you add it all up over the five-year period, where it falls in between Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, it's in between 3 and 4, and so Alternative 2, over five years, gives you the highest harvest, total, and Alternative 3 would be the second-highest harvest, and Alternative 5 would be the third, and Alternative 4 would be the lowest.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, and because I know how much you all have on your plate, I mean, I don't see any benefit that we get from this alternative, and they have a lot on their plate, and I personally would err on the side of throwing it out, if we're not really intending to look at it, so that they have less analysis to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess two things. With regard to the Gulf, I mean, we have, I think, in certain situations where the yield levels are declining, recommended a constant catch, and, if it exceeds the ABC, we have to go back to the SSC with new projections and make sure that it complies, obviously, with Magnuson.

In this instance, I would speak in favor of the Preferred Alternative 2. We're in a really good situation, and biomass is about twice spawning stock biomass at MSY, and fishing mortality is about half, and so this allows for additional fishing opportunities, harvest, as we bring that stock back down closer to the SSB MSY level.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we've heard people reiterating their support for the current preferred, which is Alternative 2. Do want to remove Alternative 5? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Madam Chair, I would recommend that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are you wanting a motion, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I am not sure if we need a motion for that. Myra, would removing an alternative at this stage -- Would that just be direction to staff, or do we need a motion for that? We would need a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Spud, would you like to make a motion?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, Madam Chair. **I move that we remove Alternative 5 from further consideration.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Spud and seconded by Carolyn. We have already had some discussion of this. **is there any objection to removing Alternative 5?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** This is, once again, from Action 1.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. Next, we will move to Action 2. Action 2 is looking at the sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for greater amberjack. Alternative 1 has the current percentages that are based on the allocation formula used in the Comprehensive ACL Amendment that uses average landings from 2006 through 2008 and average landings from 1986 through 2008.

These percentages are based on the telephone survey recreational numbers, and so Alternative 2 applies the same equation, just to the FES numbers, and that results in percentages of 29.84 percent to the commercial sector and 70.16 percent to the recreational sector. Kind of as an in between approximate half-point between those two percentage values is Alternative 3, and that is 35 percent to the commercial sector and 65 percent to the recreational sector. These percentages -- They were derived as approximate midpoints, but they also happen to be approximate to the nearest whole percentage averages of the annual percentages of total landings between the sectors from 2010 through 2019.

We have those, and we do have analyses concerning the season projections related to these, if folks want to see that information before any selection of a preferred, if that's what you would like to do at this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Would we like to see that, so that we can select a preferred? Yes, and it looks like people want to see that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and, just kind of as a -- I guess I will bring it up as just a qualitative description, but I have it in the draft amendment as well, and so, here, we see the recreational scenarios, and we have -- In each of these projections, we have three scenarios. Scenario 1 is based on the three most recent years of complete data. Scenario 2 is based on the five most recent years of complete data, and both of those are the average landings, and then Scenario 3 is based on the five most recent years of complete data, but that's the maximum landings, and so that's kind of a maximum harvest scenario, whereas Scenarios 1 and 2 are more of the average case.

What we see from the different allocation alternatives for the recreational fishery are that there are no closures projected, if you think that the landings will look like the average from the last three

years. If you think that they will look like the average from the last five years, then the only closure that is projected is in the final year under Alternative 1, and that closure would occur in February. As a reminder, this is not a calendar fishing year. It starts in March and ends in February, and so that would be kind of in the beginning of the last month when that closure would potentially occur. Then there is a range of closures under a maximum harvest scenario, the earliest of which would occur in July.

I am going to scroll down here to the commercial table, and that's a bit lower. For the commercial sector, here we have the table showing the alternatives in the commercial ACL under Alternatives 1, 2, and 3, and, again, it's a similar situation. We don't have any closures that would be projected under that three-year average scenario. Under the five-year average scenario, a closure would be projected in the final year under Alternative 2, and that's the alternative that has the lowest commercial allocation, and then, finally, under the maximum harvest scenario, we would have -- Some years, the initial years for all of these, would be no closure, and, as you move later on into the time series, closures as early as June.

Additionally, this all -- Just keeping this in mind, and this is all based on current management measures being in place, and there are later actions that consider changes to the sector minimum size limits and the trip limits and the April spawning closure, and those could affect the actual playing out of these, depending on what the council selects in those actions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Mike, and so what is the pleasure of the committee? Do we want to select a preferred here? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I would move that we select Alternative 1, no action.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion to select Alternative 1, no action. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Carolyn. It's under discussion. We saw some tables indicating when things might close for commercial and recreational, and I believe that Alternative 2 is a reduction in the commercial and Alternative 3 is a midpoint between Alternatives 1 and 2, but is still a reduction. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was curious if there was any analysis, given the reduction in the commercial, and was there anything looked at of how it affects the different states and the migratory patterns of amberjack, given the seasonal catch of amberjack, and was there anything looked at that, because just reducing and showing a closure is going to have an effect, I believe, in certain states more so than others, and I was just wondering if that is any of these analyses to be put out there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We didn't look at state-by-state effects, but, given what you brought up in terms of when the amberjack fishery is executed in the different states, the timing of it, that is something that could be taken into account. The analyses that were done were done on a -- I believe it was a monthly basis for the commercial landings, and so the timing was there, and they were done as monthly commercial landings, and the closure dates would have been based on that. I would have to line up when the commercial fishery, state-by-state, are done, to see how that would differentially affect the different states.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think that would be good, if that's possible to include, just to give everybody a lay of the landscape on just how it affects, particularly if you're closing early and people don't have an opportunity to fish or catch fish. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess, before I speak, can I hear the rationale from Kerry and others, in terms of the selection of the preferred?

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just sitting here talking about it, and so my argument is that this has become an increasingly important fish to the commercial fishery, and I think it's the best use of the resource. I am not saying it never happens, but, in my knowledge, it's not a fish that is prized for actually eating in the recreational fishery, but, however, we can do a lot with it. It fills a lot of holes for us. We can smoke it, and we can add a lot of value to it. We're developing a secondary market to it, where the fish is processed in a certain way that makes it more valuable to us, but wouldn't to the average person just going out and catching their own. It keeps us at where we're at, and so that's my rationale, and hopefully someone can add to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Similar to Kerry, I have -- For me, knowing this isn't overfished and undergoing overfishing, taking fish away from the commercial sector, where we have lower uncertainty in landings, seems kind of punitive, when you look at recreational getting more fish, but knowing that FES still struggles with the uncertainty that it does, and I will argue that I don't know what the PSEs are for amberjack, off the top of my head, but, for me, taking fish away, in a healthy stock, from a commercial fleet just doesn't seem right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree, Carolyn. I'm going to go over to Mike, and I believe that he has a response for Dewey's question.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Dewey, just one additional thing, and so I am going to grab the draft amendment table one more time for the commercial, and so one thing, as it relates to affecting the different states, is we did see, in Scenario 1 and Scenario 2, shown here on the screen, and those are the average, the recent average, landings, and so, if we're projecting that average landings would occur in the future, then the scenario would be that none of the alternatives would result in closures to the commercial fishery, the only exception being under Alternative 2 in the final year.

Those years with earlier -- Those earlier years with higher ACLs would not have closures, but, when you get to the lowest value at the last year, that would have a closure in August, and so the majority of these alternatives would not result in a closure there, and that wouldn't affect the states, because nothing would be closed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Kerry, for your rationale, and Mike for the additional input. I am going to speak in opposition to selecting Alternative 1 as preferred, and the rationale is severalfold. Yes, it's a reduction in the allocation for the commercial, in terms of the percentage, but, in terms

of the assessment, keep in mind that we incorporated the FES data, and the yield levels have now increased based on that new estimation of recreational landings, and so, if we maintain the current allocation as-is, it's really actually a reallocation to the commercial sector, because they are benefitting from the increase in the overall yield coming out of the stock assessment.

The second reason is really kind of related to that, and so, even though you are shifting the percentage of allocation, because the assessment yields are going up, the commercial sector is actually allowed to take more quota than what they are currently harvesting, at least for the next three or four years, and so I would speak in opposition to making Alternative 1 the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I appreciate that, Andy, but I would support Alternative 1. I am not sure -- Even under the new FES, has the recreational side -- Do they experience a closure, currently?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're looking.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Tim, are you asking in regard to the alternatives that are here, and like would the recreational experience a closure under those?

MR. GRINER: No. I am talking about in the past, and, I mean, like, for instance, this past season, did they -- Even using the new currency, did they even get to 50 percent of their quota?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't have the FES readily available, but I do have just kind of the MRFSS, what it's tracked in, pulled up, because that's -- The ACL is in MRFSS right now, and the landings are in MRFSS, and so in the 2020 to 2021 fishing year, and so that would have been one that ended in February of this year, the fishery -- This is the commercial. Sorry. For 2020 for greater amberjack -- Recreational landings, 2020 to 2021, now I have it. The recreational ACL was the 1.167 million, and they reached 604,069, and so 52 percent of their ACL.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Yes, I would be in support of choosing Alternative 1 as the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I think the problem is -- I get Andy's point, because it is the allocation percentages, but the problem is that it's the penalization of the poundage, and that's where I have a hard time with it. When we look at the other options, and knowing that we're taking away 300,000 fish from the commercial sector, that you have as close to census reporting as you do, and the fishery is not currently in peril, and it just -- Like I said, it just seems punitive to the commercial side because of that, and, I mean, I don't know how you present it differently.

If you use those poundages that currently exist to determine what the allocation looks like in the newer defining of the pie, and I don't know how want to say that, because I think the hard part is that we're -- Because of the amount of fish that are coming in through FES -- If you look at the pie and the wedge that is there now, we're inflating what is the recreational sections, but the pie wedge for the commercial isn't inflating to account for that, and it's still its same size, lost in that bigger blowout on the other side of it, and so how do we appropriately inflate commercial so it's not because estimates are allowing to say that more fish has been removed, and I know that there's

a lot of confusion, as to how do we go about interpreting this, but, in the stock assessment, it's still looking at those numbers as fish.

If there's more fish available, in essence, there should be more fish available to the other side as well, and I think that's where I have a difficult time with it. I just keep seeing how the commercial side just doesn't really get that same ability to conflate, because we changed an estimation method. They are giving you the numbers, and they're the hardcore numbers. We've got other ones that they slip and slide, depending on how the estimation is resulting in those removals, and I just don't want to see them penalized in a fishery that isn't having problems.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Apologies if I get this wrong, and so, in looking at the annual catch limit for commercial currently, as it stands, and I believe it's around 770,000 pounds across the two seasons, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MR. STRELCHECK: So then put that in context of what we're looking at here, in terms of the alternatives, and you can see that, under every scenario of allocation, including no action, the commercial catch limit is going up by a good amount, right, and the lowest is about 400,000 or 500,000 pounds, and the highest is more than double, almost a million pounds, right, and so the commercial sector is benefiting from, obviously, an updated update stock assessment, even if the allocation changes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I understand that, and we can talk about that around the room here and understanding that, but it's the stuff that we struggle with too at the state level, and they're looking at it in terms of absolutes in front of them, and they are not necessarily going back through all of what we've done prior to see that, oh, yes, we're increasing by a million pounds. They are looking at it relative to what they're losing in contrast to the other fishery.

We went through this, and I will give the example of our bluefish. We're working through this stuff with *de minimis* right now with the commission, because we don't have a strong bluefish fishery, but, with what was coming out of the Mid-Atlantic's change in that assessment, we were dropping from fifteen fish to three fish, and we were allowed to look at conservation equivalency, because, for us, I'm going to the board, and I'm going to the public for comment, and the public is saying that you're dropping my creel by 80 percent, even though, in essence, we're really not. You're trying to explain to them what you're doing, and they're still looking at it in terms of that absolute.

We have gone on, for years, talking about how we're not giving more fish, based on higher uncertainty. We can't give you more, because we can't say what we know for a fact, but yet, in the situation here, you've got a fishery that has given you the numbers, and they are giving you -- I mean, again, we can argue on truly a census, but it is a census in comparison to the recreational, and, in comparison to the two, they're seeing a large inflation on the rec side, and now nothing is coming back to them, and, if anything, it looks like a reduction.

I think that is the hard dilemma of that, is how we sit down and have that conversation, because hard numbers are telling them something that, when they're doing their mathematics, it looks like they're getting hit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I had the same concerns that Andy expressed, and, to me, it is a reallocation, and it's just a matter of how much you reallocate, based on the source of the data, but I think some of this is leading us back to the fact that we've got this allocation decision tree that's sort of hanging out there, and I think the intent of that was to have that as a tool to help us push through some of these things, because, every time we deal with them on a case-by-case basis, everything is unique, but we really don't have a structured guidance mechanism to help us go through that, and I think we've got a lot on our plate, but I think that we really need to get that allocation decision tree to some point where we have some confidence in it and can use it and maybe help us, because, otherwise, we bog down here.

In a lot of these things, it becomes almost a value judgment and how you trust one set of data versus another, and we've all had our concerns with FES, but, you know, it's being used to generate stock status determinations and yields, and, to me, I am a little confused, because I know we've been given guidance in the past that we really can't use the Coastal Household Telephone Survey data to base historical decisions, because they really aren't the best scientific information available anymore, and so I kind of get confused on when we can and when we can't.

Anyway, I mean, I don't want to die on the hill here, but I was actually going to recommend Alternative 3, because it's kind of a middle of the road between the two. You are providing some benefit back, as a result of increased yield out of the population, but you are also considering the fact that you are using FES as source data to make your decisions, and so that's my two-cents.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tim, and then we'll go to Chester.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I can appreciate that, but, you know, I don't think there is a one-size-fits-all prescriptive way to look at allocations. I think you have to be able to look at this on a species-by-species basis, and I think, if you don't, you're going to pigeonhole yourself into being too prescriptive, and I keep going back to this whole idea of the way we came up with these percentages was an allocation formula using time series that we all -- That goes way back in time, and now we have this new methodology that we've converted back in time on the recreational side, and that is going into our stock -- That is being used in the stock assessments, but what's not being used in the stock assessments, going back in time, is the fact that the commercial catch was constrained during that time period.

I don't think you can discount the fact that, yes, there is more fish available, but these fish have always been available, but we just didn't know it, and so, if those fish were available today, they were available yesterday too, and they were available back in time, and, if we had known what we know now, the commercial catch, the commercial ACLs, would have been higher back then too, and so, to me, especially in a fishery where, as Carolyn alluded to, it's a great fishery, and there is no problems, and neither one, neither sector, is in danger of causing a problem or meeting their

ACL, and so why would you not just keep things like they are and both share in the gains here, just like you were sharing the same gains you had previously?

I think Kerry brought up a great point, that this is becoming a very, very important fish, commercially, and it's actually taking the place of what we were doing with these grouper, with the gag grouper, and it is a fabulous fish, and it has some stigma attached to it, and that's why the recreational people catch them just for the fun of it and don't even eat them, but, nonetheless, it's becoming a very, very important commercial fish, and the commercial side should be able to share in the bounty of having what we know now, that there's a lot more of them out there and the biomass is bigger, and it's in great shape. I really think that Alternative 1 is the way to go.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. So we've got lots of hands going up, including folks that haven't spoken on this yet. Let's kind of jump the line here, and let's go to Shepherd.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to respond to one thing that I think I heard Spud say, and so you have to revisit your allocations, because of the change, the FES/CHTS change, right, and that does not mean that you can't keep the status quo allocation because it's tied to any CHTS. What you can do is keep the status quo allocation and keep it for new reasons, right. I mean, it's the rationale that's tied to CHTS, and I would separate that.

The way we've structured these alternatives, that I view allocation, when you're looking at your allocation, you're looking at the percentage, right, and it is a percentage division among the sectors and nothing else, and, the way these are written up, the rationale for that percentage is included in the alternative, and that's all there for you, but then you could select the no action alternative that is here as the percentage and do it because you like the numbers, right, or for whatever rationale that supports the numbers are there, and it's a viable alternative, and it's the rationale that is not viable. I just wanted to throw that out and clarify it, because it really -- The percentage split is not -- Adopting that percentage split does not present a best available scientific information problem, because it was originally based on CHTS. Your rationale would present a best available scientific information problem, but not the percentage split itself.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. That was helpful. Once again, I am going to jump the line and go to Mike, but we definitely have hands in the queue.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Jessica. Along the lines of your comments, Shep, if the council wanted to select Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred for Action 2, if they wanted those percentages, would they have to add an action that had the same percentages and present a different rationale, or would they be able to do that through this motion?

MR. GRIMES: I think they could do it through this motion. I think clearing up what's in the documents would be not including the rationale for the allocation in the alternative, the language of the alternative itself, but we've done that across-the-board. I think, so long as the text made it clear that you're keeping the same percentage, but what is changing is the rationale to support why we like that percentage.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, did you want to comment on that? Then I'm going to go back to the hands. We have Chester, Carolyn, Tom, and then Chris.

MR. BREWER: I wanted to speak to the notion that, somehow or another, kind of staying with the same quota allocations is unfair, and I didn't say that well. I want to speak against selecting Alternative 1, the reason being that it is a reallocation, and, in reality, it is a reallocation, and Tim has pointed out that we all need to share when there is good times. Well, we are sharing in the good times, and, in fact, the poundage that the commercial people are getting is going up in every scenario that I have seen here. It's just a question of how much they're going to go up, and so, for that reason, I really think that, if we continue on down this road, it's going to present problems in other areas, and so, for that reason, I just do not think that we ought to select Alternative 1. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chester. Next up is Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I mean, I think some too -- At least in trying to move it forward, it's more of a cleanup, if anything, but I think what Andy brought up, in the context of what the current ABC is for the allocation, or the amount is for the commercial fishery, and, not having that readily accessible to them, I can tell you that's -- What people are focusing on isn't necessarily where they've come from. They're looking at what is immediately in front of them and looking at what you're proposing to do.

In any of our step-downs, we're taking away, and so, if you have a way to at least make sure that, as people are looking at that, there is that context to look at, of where are you currently, that at least helps with softening what's going on. In the situations where it is actually taking away, you're going to have that problem, I think.

Again, I think it's just making sure that the information gets out in a way that people will put it in the appropriate context to come through, but, to Shep's thing, I think too, I mean, if I'm understanding what Shep said correctly, by changing Alternative 1, we basically just drop out all of the additional, beyond saying this is the current allocation, and it doesn't matter how we got them, but this is what we've been operating under. We have all agreed that this is how we got to them, and numbers are used, and then we wash our hands and we walk away, where all that other stuff that's part of that, the rationale, is really what we're choking on, and is that not correct?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just add just one thing. I mean, Chester is correct that it is a reallocation, and the analysis would have to discuss all that, because, I mean, it's one of those where your no action, not changing the underlying numbers, is, in effect, a change, and it is going to have effects that would have to be analyzed, but we're not really changing the numbers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a couple more hands, and then I'm hoping we can vote on this, and then, after that, we will go to lunch. Tom and then Chris.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. I just wanted to reiterate Spud and Andy's comments from earlier and just express my lack of support for Alternative 1. Obviously, all these alternatives do increase the commercial ACL, but I think we're underselling the importance of this fishery to the recreational community. They are extremely important to me, and they're extremely important to the for-hire industry in this area, as well as recreational fishermen in general. There is more interest

in eating them then there has been in years past, and I think, as Tim said, a lot of people just go out and catch and release them, and that's part of their value, is their abundance.

I don't know how the other alternatives would impact that, but I do have concern there, because I think that there is going to be more increasing -- They're going to be increasingly important, particularly with what we're looking at with gag grouper and whatnot. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris and then Myra.

MR. CONKLIN: I am not going to prefer one thing over another, but, in my experience in dealing with commercial fishing, is every amberjack we catch goes in a vat, and we sent it somewhere, and it gets eaten. My experience over the years with the recreational anglers is they either throw them back or they waste them. They go in a freezer and get thrown out every year, and I don't know any guys that go around and say, hey, let's have some amberjack fried up, and this shit is awesome. I mean, I get both sides of the argument, but I just want to say, as far as eating a worm-infested animal on someone who can afford a \$300,000 or \$400,000 or \$500,000 or \$800,000 boat, versus somebody who lives in the slums in the intercity that can eat this stuff, that's all I've got to say about it. If you guys want to eat 2.85 million pounds of them, then go for it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra, did you need to talk about anything before we take a vote?

MS. BROUWER: I just wanted to just add to the discussion, and, just for clarification, all of the no actions for actions that address sector allocations in all of your developing amendments, at the moment, are structured the same way, where no action is going to retain the current percentages, and recall that there was a discrepancy with the king mackerel amendment, where you had two alternatives that looked almost the same, to allow for that additional rationale that we were talking about that Shep brought up, and then we consolidated all of that, and we'll encourage, as Shep said earlier, that you come up with different rationale if you intend on retaining the same percentages, and so I just wanted to make sure, because I know we've talked about this a lot, and we will continue to talk about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. No action is an action on all of these. All right. Let's go ahead and take a vote. Does everybody know what we're voting on? **What this is, it's, under Action 2, selection Alternative 1, no action, as the preferred alternative.** All right. **All those in favor, raise your hand; all those against, raise your hand; any abstentions.** Tom, how did you vote?

MR. ROLLER: I voted no.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Chester, how did you vote?

MR. BREWER: I voted no.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. One more time, Tom, your vote is no, and is that correct?

MR. ROLLER: My vote is no. Correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Lieutenant Copeland, I'm assuming that you're abstaining?

LT. COPELAND: That is correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I have eight in favor, five against, one abstention. **The motion passes.** All right. Thank you for that discussion. I am going to turn it back to Mel to tell us how long we can have for lunch.

MR. BELL: Can you do lunch in an hour-and-fifteen instead of an hour-and-thirty? Okay. Let's still get back at 1:30, because remember that we've got to finish amberjack, and we've got porgy, and we've got yellowtail on the menu still, and we've got a hard stop at 3:45, and so grab something to eat.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We're getting back into amberjack and starting with Action 3. This is one of the actions that was added on since the last meeting, and this was at the request of -- Before going into like the specific alternatives, Actions 3 and 4 -- I just want to note that they do have the same range, and these actions were directed for inclusion at the request of the AP and then the council at the last meeting.

The AP, when they made this request, was looking primarily for a reduction of the commercial size limit, but also had discussions about equity between sectors, and so that's just something for your consideration, and the council directed a similar range for both, but that just gives a little bit of additional context, when you look at these.

For Action 3, we have three considered minimum size limits, and they would be twenty-eight inches, which is the current minimum size, twenty-eight inches fork length, and then thirty-two or thirty-six inches. Considering the projections for the seasons, no closures were predicted for any of these under a three-year average or a five-year average catch scenario.

Closures were predicted for some years under that five-year max harvest scenario, as early as June, with earlier closures at lower minimum size limits, and so the response, at this point, is for you all to review the range of alternatives considered and, if you would like to make any modifications or select a preferred, then we can do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think I asked this before, but why were -- When that was originally passed, why were the two different?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If I remember correctly, the commercial was put at a higher level to correspond with the Florida state regulation, which was thirty-six, but the twenty-eight for the recreational corresponds -- I believe that's above the size at maturity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: From what I found, it looked like 50 percent maturity was at twenty-nine, and so one inch above that, and maybe, when this was originally enacted, that literature wasn't available, but, when we looked that up, it looked like that was twenty-nine inches.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay, and it may have been the difference between the assessment at the time that this was passed and the current one, because I believe that size limit has been in place for quite

some time and going a way back, and so it may have been that difference and considering those things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there comments or thoughts? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: **I would like to propose a fourth alternative and word it to increase the recreational minimum size limit to thirty inches fork length, and here is my reasons.** It would give the recreational fishermen more opportunity to catch more fish, and it would give them a better fish. It would reduce the shark depredation, and so what is happening is the sharks are so bad, and especially for the commercial guys, trying to catch the bigger fish, and, when you hook into a bigger fish, it's making so much racket and noise in the water that the sharks are coming in, and you can't even get it to the boat.

You've got a lot of waste going on with shark depredation, and I am going to propose, when we get to Action 4, that we reduce the size limit for commercial down to -- I was going to say twenty-eight inches, but, now that I hear the sexual maturity at twenty-nine, I am proposing thirty inches for both sectors, and for those reasons, and we can get into food safety when we get into the commercial, but it's a better-quality fish, and it would eliminate the waste from the shark depredation, and it would make it easier for law enforcement if everybody is the same, and I think it would just be better all the way around. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Does that need to be in the form of a motion? I am just asking, since we're getting this ready for public hearing?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, I think we can do that in the form of a motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I am going to take that as a motion, Laurilee. Would someone like to second that motion? It's seconded by Mel. All right. It's under discussion. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I was just going to second Laurilee, but Mel beat me to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Under discussion. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: With that said, are there any in here that we may want to remove? I am trying to save the staff from doing analysis. If it's easy to do all of them, great, but, if there are any we know we aren't going to do, and we can save them some work, maybe we should.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Can you scroll back up, so we can see them?

MR. MARHEFKA: I mean, I don't know how hard the analysis is for this, and so maybe Mike can speak to how much it's going to save you, or what would you prefer, as a staff member, as far as number of alternatives for this?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Well, I'm not running the analysis, and so that's Mike Larkin, but my impression is that another iteration, because he's already run it for three different size limits -- Like changing the size limit wouldn't be a huge lift, to just add another one with an additional size limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. More discussion on this? This is the recreational minimum size limit. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I've heard a little bit of discussion about consistency, and I've heard some discussion about size at maturity, and, typically, when we change size limits, it's because we're trying to get some savings in harvest, but, in this situation, what we were presented a little earlier showed that we weren't likely to be closing these fisheries under most of the allocation alternatives, and so I'm just curious, in terms of the need for this and in pursuing an increase in the size limit, because, every time we increase the size limit, that means more fish are going to get discarded and be a little more wasteful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would say I don't know what the discard mortality is on amberjack, and I would presume that they're kind of hardy. I always wanted to point out that Gulf amberjack haven't necessarily been doing well, and the minimum size in the Gulf off of Florida is thirty-four, and so I just wanted to throw that out there, that it's not the same as the size limit that was originally -- That they were trying to match to. I saw another hand up down there. Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I don't have a problem with changing the size limit, but, like Andy said, sometimes, when you start changing size limits, you end up creating another problem, but, for me, with amberjack, they're either all too small or you just move on to larger fish, and there's plenty of those fish, and so I think that, if we just left it with no action on the recreational, I think that would be the way to go. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Remember what Tom -- We'll go with Tom, and then we'll talk about this some more.

MR. ROLLER: I will reiterate what Judy said. I don't have an issue with adding this as an alternative, but I guess I just don't see the need for it, because amberjack is a lot of different sizes out there, and, at least in terms of my customers, they seem to want a smaller fish, because they just don't tend to want to keep a big amberjack, and they might have a smaller one or two, plus they have less of the cysts in them, and so --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so just let me try to restate Laurilee's goal here would be to get recreational and commercial the same, and she is going to be suggesting thirty for commercial, and so that's one argument. Also, I get a little twitchy about the fact that the size limit is below the size at 50 percent maturity on the recreational side, and I just don't want us to end up with a problem with amberjack, especially since, as we've heard, the commercial folks are relying on amberjack more, and I don't want to end up in a place like what is happening in the Gulf. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I was originally going to make a motion to do the -- To propose the commercial limit to be at twenty-eight inches, to match the existing recreational minimum size limit, but that was before I heard that there was a change now in the sexual maturity, and that's why I changed it. I was okay with twenty-eight inches, but I agree that it doesn't make sense for us to be harvesting fish that haven't reached, at least half of them, sexual maturity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to Dale and then back to Mike.

MR. DIAZ: I just wanted to elaborate a little bit more on what's going on in the Gulf. I think the Gulf amberjack might be a lot like you all's story with gag over here. Anyway, our reports on amberjack keep going down, down, down over the years, and we did just get a stock assessment, SEDAR Number 70, and it says that amberjack is overfished and experiencing overfishing.

Our SSC is looking at amberjack before our next meeting, and they're going to report to us with some catch advice and different things, but we're going to be probably doing some more management measures on amberjack, to try to get it back to where it's on the right track, but it's been difficult to deal with, and, over the last several years, we've made several changes, trying to accommodate people, and that's mostly been in the way we lay out our seasons, but more is coming. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dale. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just a couple of points, just information related to the discussion. The discard mortality rate for greater amberjack is estimated at 0.2, and so 20 percent, for both sectors. Also, it wasn't directly tied to amberjack, but, back in the discard reduction document, I kind of showed the level of landings versus discards and, compared to something like gag or red snapper, the number of discards -- Like this isn't dead discards, and this is discards for greater amberjack relative to the landings, and it's much lower than some of the other species that we see in the snapper grouper fishery, and so not as many fish being discarded, and the mortality of those fish is 20 percent.

The other piece of information is I looked at -- I kind of grabbed SEDAR 15, and that was the last time that they did the estimation of the size at maturity, and it may have been a rounding thing of why it was twenty-eight instead of twenty-nine, but 28.86, and they may have rounded that down when making the regulation, and I'm not sure, but that's what the size was at the time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've had some discussion on this, and do you mind scrolling down to the motion, Mike? All right. The motion is to add an alternative to Action 3 to increase the recreational minimum size limit to thirty. I guess, technically, you could increase it to twenty-nine, and I'm just saying, but any more discussion on this recreational minimum size limit, before we vote? Okay. We're in the post-lunch lull. All right. **I guess let me ask if there are any objections to adding this alternative for a minimum size limit of thirty inches fork length. Any objections? I see no objection.** If we want to, we could pick a preferred. The next stop for this document is public hearing. Do we want to indicate to the public the intent by picking a preferred? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't care which one we choose, but I have always found that it's much better to have a preferred, if we can, and you just get more comment, and you get better comments, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee, would you like to make a motion to pick a preferred?

MS. THOMPSON: **I would like to make a motion to pick Alternative 4 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so that's the new alternative for thirty inches fork length for recreational. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Spud. It's under discussion. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I was raising my hand to second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Chester. All right. We've had some discussion on this already. Any more discussion on this recreational size limit, once again selecting the preferred of thirty inches? **Any objection to this motion? Seeing none, that motion carries.** I'm going to pass it back to you, Mike, to go into the commercial size limit.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. Next, we will scroll down to Action 4, and that is looking at the commercial minimum size limit. As I said, the same range of sizes is being considered here, and there was the preliminary analysis done for the season length. That was done for the recreational, but that was not done for the commercial. We couldn't predict season length from the current data, because fish under thirty-six inches can't be kept, and so we couldn't get an estimate of how many would be kept in a lower size scenario.

In the appendix -- I will pull up this figure though, and, in the Appendix F of the draft amendment, there is this figure that shows the percent of greater amberjack lengths for discarded greater amberjack, and there you can see kind of the breakdown of sizes that these fish are discarded at, with about 37 percent being less than twenty-eight inches, but the bulk of fish, the majority in this category, fall somewhere between twenty-eight and thirty-six.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee, would you like to make a motion?

MS. THOMPSON: **I would like to make a motion to add Alternative 4, reduce the commercial minimum size limit to thirty inches fork length.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mike is getting that on the board. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Kerry. It's under discussion. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: It's going to give the market a better quality of fish, less worms, less change of ciguatera, and the food safety -- Some of the bigger fish are carrying ciguatera, and so that would reduce the change of ciguatera going out into the market. It would eliminate the waste from the shark depredation and all of these things that are listed. It would make -- Trip efficiency would be better, because they could catch their limit faster and get back to the dock faster, and it would reduce the injury to fishermen and fish when trying to bring the bigger greater amberjacks onboard, and those fish -- They can't -- They often can't survive, because of the fight to get them onboard, and then, as soon as you throw back in the water, the sharks are on them anyway.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Laurilee. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I can say, from a dealer standpoint, that most of my buyers pay a significantly lower price for any fish over forty pounds, and so that's about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on the motion to add an alternative to this action, which would decrease the commercial minimum size limit to thirty inches fork length? All right. Is there any objection to this motion? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I am going to vote in favor of this, but I just wanted to correct something that Laurilee said. You're not going to eliminate the possibility of shark depredation, because it's everywhere, and it's for most of the species that we catch, and so you're not going to eliminate it, but this might help somewhat in reducing it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chester. All right. **Any objection to this motion? Seeing none, that motion carries.** Laurilee, would you like to make a motion to select a preferred?

MS. THOMPSON: **I like to move to select Alternative 4 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion. It's seconded by Kerry. Mike is getting it on the board, but this would be to select the alternative that we just added as the preferred alternative for the commercial minimum size limit. **Are there any objections to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** I am going to turn it back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Next, we'll move to Action 5, which is considering an increase to the Season 2 commercial trip limit. We did have an analysis looking at this, and I believe this one operated under the assumption that, if a vessel was hitting the trip limit under the current restrictions, that it would make use of the additional poundage and hit the trip limit in an increase scenario, with a 1,200-pound limit.

Under that assumption, with three-year average landings, there were no closures that were estimated for the commercial fishery. Under a max harvest for the last three years, a max harvest scenario, a closure occurred as early as January, and so that was the information associated with this, and I would look to see if this is an appropriate range of alternatives for public hearings and if there is a preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. What is the pleasure of the committee? Is this the appropriate range, and, if so, are we wanting to select Alternative 2 as the preferred? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I am struggling in terms of whether it's an appropriate range or not, and so we have a lot of moving parts here. With the allocation that was selected earlier as the preferred, we're more than doubling the quota. We also just reduced the size limit, and, although we don't have a lot of good information, at least the observer data indicates that that could increase harvest rates by a good amount, right, and what that amount is is unknown.

The question that I guess I have is whether or not we're going to still be bumping up against the quotas, based on this amount, or we need some other consideration of trip limit, and so, given all those moving parts, I don't think we have the analysis before us to be able to make that decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just some additional context regarding this, and sorry that I didn't provide the background that I probably should have, but the 1,200 pounds is the Season 1 commercial trip limit, and that's why it was selected, and it was recommended by the advisory panel, and that's why that alternative was put into place as that level. It would make the trip limit the same between Season 1 and Season 2, and we don't have analysis that is incorporating all of the effects in addition

to the commercial trip limit, but we do have the commercial trip limit under the Preferred Alternative 2 of Action 1 and the different allocation scenarios, and I can pull that table up, so that folks can view that on the screen.

These are -- This would be under the 1,200-pound scenario. This is the greater of the two trip limit scenarios and how that breaks down into Scenario 1 in this is assuming that the three-year average of the most recent years of complete data is the case, and Scenario 2 is kind of that max landings scenario for the last three years of complete data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Season 2 ends on March 31, and is that correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: February 28 or 29.

MR. CONKLIN: Okay. Well, seeing this, I mean, we probably ought to make some -- See some options here with a higher range of alternatives for the trip limits, I would imagine, for Season 1 and Season 2, to try and catch what we're supposed to be hitting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do you mind scrolling back up, Mike? Do we want to see -- Do you have some suggestions for what those other numbers should be? Right now, it's just 1,200, and it's just Season 2, and so, if you're wanting to also modify Season 1, we need to add those as well. Go ahead, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would remind you -- I believe the split season was put in recently, and like the trip limits and the split season were put in in Regulatory Amendment 27, and so I think we're -- I think last year might have been the first fishing year that those were in place, and so we haven't seen what the effects of those necessarily would be, and there may be some assumptions that need to be made to complete analyses that would predict that.

MR. CONKLIN: It seems like our rationale, if I can remember right, was to have a higher trip limit during -- The 1,200-pound limit for Season 2. No. Sorry. We chose 1,000. Let me just quit thinking out loud.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just to maybe help with the setup, 1,200 pounds is Season 1, and 1,000 pounds is Season 2, and there is carryover of any unused quota from Season 1 goes into the Season 2 pile, and Season 2 does not carry over any further.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Mike is correct that we just now got this implemented, and the thought process behind it was because the Florida guys were hammering them so hard that, by the time the fish got to North Carolina in the fall, we didn't have a fishery open anymore, and so I do feel like we need to let this run its course for a little bit, and, if the Florida guys are fine with 1,200 pounds in the first season -- You know, I don't mind going to 1,200 pounds in the second season, but we do need to be cognizant of the fact that we did this so that we could all have equal access to the fish as they moved up and down the coast during the season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: We're okay with the way it is, or we're okay with going to 1,200 in Season 2. We're okay either way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy and then back to Chris.

MR. STRELCHECK: Don't take this comment the wrong way, but then why are we reallocating, because you're essentially going to limit yourselves from catching the quota that we're saying that you would be increasing up to. Right now, and I just looked at this year's landings for the first six months of the fishing season, and it was 361,000 pounds under a 1,200-pound trip limit, right, and so you're not going to be able to expand out and catch a heck of a lot more unless more trips are run, and, by lowering the size limit, you potentially are going to hit that trip limit faster, and so, to me, it would make sense at increasing the trip limit, one from an economic profitability standpoint, but, more importantly, to address the larger quota that you would want to be harvesting.

MR. GRINER: I think that's a great -- I think that's a very valid point, and so, if 1,500 -- If bumping both of them to 1,500 pounds gets us to where we can harvest more, and more efficiently, then, by all means, let's look at that as an option, as an alternative.

MS. THOMPSON: The only thing that we were talking about is how much more effort is going to get put onto amberjack when the gag trip limits go down, and so you may see -- Then, if we take gag away from the spear fishermen, you could see a lot more effort getting put onto amberjacks that is not there now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: With the decrease in the size limit, has there been an analysis done of how much more fish, just on paper, that's going to produce?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Not to the level of the fish. The only thing that's been done, to this point, is predicting the season length, and so I would have to go back to ask that question.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think that that needs to be asked and presented to the public at this, and fishermen know what does the paperwork say, because that's a six-inch reduction, correct?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, thinking about what needs to be done regarding that, the catch would still be constrained to the ACL, whatever it is, and so I guess is the thought the benefit to the population, like how many fish would be gained within the population, because the harvest would still be constrained by the ACL.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I understand that, but you're not doing an analysis of how fast the fish will get caught when you're using six inches less, and so the size limit is decreasing, and you're still held to a percent of poundages, but, all of a sudden, you used to discard the fish that was six inches more, and now you're keeping them, just thinking about that part, and then, also, it facilitates out what regions and how they're -- So you've got a few moving parts here that probably changing that size limit, which is probably a good thing for reduction of fish being eaten, but you need to

know that answer of what is it going to produce on paper, and it's speculation, but what is it going to produce on paper, when you look at these analyses and go out to the public.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think I understand. You're looking for an analysis of the combination of increasing the trip limit and decreasing the size limit.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Basically just decreasing the size limit, because I think that's going to have the heaviest caveat bang for the buck, because trips and weather and different things are going to take care of how many trips you're able to do, and so that caveat is -- That change in that six inches, it would be interesting to see what that does.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I can go back and ask if there's anything further, from a data perspective, that we have access to that could enlighten it more, but I know one of the hurdles is we don't know how many more fish under thirty-six inches will be caught by the commercial fishery, because they haven't been catching them. They haven't been allowed to, and so we look at the fish that have been discarded, and this is kind of the breakdown of where those fish fall, size-wise. How that translates into the population, you would have to look at how much of the population is within a certain size, and I don't know if we have the information to do that in a quick manner, or in a definitive manner, like more in detail than what we have here, but I can check and see if there's anything more in-depth that can be provided.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just think that better be looked at. Even if you don't have the data, that better be -- I think it's an important issue, of changing the size and how fast different things -- Because that caveat of changing size changes a lot of different other things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Chris and then Chester and then Andy.

MR. CONKLIN: **I am prepared to make a motion to add some trip limit alternatives for both seasons. I would like to see an analysis on a 1,500-pound, 2,000-pound, and 2,500-pound range of alternatives.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is your intention that those are for both Season 1 and Season 2?

MR. CONKLIN: **For both seasons.** Correct.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Can you say those trip limits one more time, please?

MR. CONKLIN: 1,500, 2,000, 2,500.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mike has got that on the board. I'm going to go back to the list. Chester and then Andy. The motion is seconded by Tim.

MR. BREWER: Thank you. I am getting a little hinky, because I would like to know what -- If we simultaneously -- If we're lowering the minimum size by six inches and then doing about a 250, or a 200, percent increase in the trip limit, and what are your chances that you're going to be shutting these fisheries down, and I know that the data to give us a definitive answer may not be

there, but I've got to say this is a lot of big changes all hitting at the same time, and I'm worried that we may have sort of the bit in our teeth here and we're going a little too far, a little too fast.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A couple of things of what folks are saying here that you might not be able to hear is so this would be to take out to public hearing, and, ultimately, it needs to get analyzed with whatever information is available to do the analysis, and so that's one thing, and so I'm just putting that out there. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess, speaking to a few prior comments, first to Chester, I kind of have similar reservations, when you get a lot of moving regulatory changes, especially for a rapid increase, and what are the implications of that. We're looking at, under the preferred allocation alternative, more than a doubling of the commercial quota, right, and so there is, obviously, room, in terms of allowing for additional harvest, if we stick with that.

With the size limit change, kind of getting back to Dewey's point, the challenge, obviously, is we don't have very good discard information, and we also don't know if trips would have targeted different areas with smaller fish, and so the best we can do is really to what Mike was showing, which was some observer data and kind of understanding the distribution of undersized fish that are being caught and released, but even that graphic that was shown earlier was showing 30 or 40 percent of the fish that are caught and discarded are within that thirty to thirty-six-inch size range. In terms of trip limits, I don't feel strongly, and I think it's a good idea to at least look at some larger trip limits at this point, to allow for greater utilization of the commercial quota.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So just possibly a clarification for the use in the motion, and this would mean that you all would need to adjust the action to be pertaining to both commercial seasons, or you would be adding a different action, and like you would be having an additional, and so can I adjust the motion such that it would be change the action so that it would be pertaining to both seasons?

MS. MCCAWLEY: **Yes, I believe that's the intent.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: But the analyses is going to show -- The analyses will be as if it's separate, and we'll still have the opportunity to pick and choose, among the alternatives, what we want to do per season, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, we can structure it that way. We can do tiering under the action, possibly, to have it that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have a question and then a comment. Mike, will this only be analyzed using the total allowable catch, or, sorry, but the allocation from Action 2, or will it be all of those allocations?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We've been doing it for all of the allocations. We've only been analyzing the total ACL that is preferred from Action 1, and then we've been doing all of the Action 2 allocation options for each of these, and so we've done all of the allocation scenarios under the increased trip limit versus the regular trip limit and that type of thing.

MS. MARHEFKA: My comment is in regard to sort of this missing piece of information that we're going to have would be smaller fish, and I think this is going to be a situation where we're going to have to use informed judgement. I mean, we have some information that Andy just mentioned, and we're going to have an advisory panel meeting. At public hearing, I think we need to -- This is what we really need to ask people, is are you going to be fishing on different spots, because they're smaller fish, and, at some point, we're going to have to almost do what the SSC does and decide -- If we don't have a real way to analyze it, because we don't have that information, we're going to have to use informed judgement and maybe come up with a percentage that we feel comfortable with and can justify to think about how that's going to affect these trips. I don't think we can do much better than that with what we have right now, but maybe that's one way that we can approach it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: If you're okay with it, I did see Mike Larkin raise his hand, and he would be much more informed of the analytical side of things than I would.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mike.

DR. LARKIN: My point was to address Dewey's question earlier, and it was, I guess, ten minutes back from now, but anyway, just decreasing the commercial size limit -- We don't have the data for it. We really need to know, as Andy pointed out, that distribution of discards, what are their lengths, what is the distribution of all of those.

I looked at the observer data, and I think I found less than ten lengths available below that minimum size limit to analyze decreasing the minimum size limit, and so I guess the point I'm trying to make for the commercial sector is we really don't have the data to do a quantitative analysis of decreasing the minimum size limit for the commercial sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion, and it's been seconded, and we've had some discussion. This is adding some alternatives for Season 1 and 2 for commercial. Any more discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just to, I guess, follow-up and make sure, before we move off of this, you all would want the analyses to be done on these additional levels before selecting a preferred, and so you would wait on selecting a preferred until after public hearings, potentially at the March council meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Based on the entirety of the discussion here and the questions that have been asked, I would say, yes, that's our intent.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then we'll continue moving along, down to Action 6. That is a revision of the April spawning closure. Alternative 1, the current situation, is that there was no commercial sale or purchase of greater amberjack from the EEZ, and the harvest and possession limit is one per person per day or one per person per trip.

The one per person per day, that's the same thing as the recreational bag limit. However, there is still a difference in the commercial and recreational fisheries during this time, because the commercial fishery is still subject to the commercial minimum size limit, which is different than the recreational minimum size limit. That is kind of one distinguishing factor that's still in place right now.

Alternative 2 would remove all possession of greater amberjack from the EEZ during the month of April, and so there would be no commercial sale. Also, there would be no possession for commercial or recreational during that month. This was brought up by the AP, and it was looking at sector equity, and it was brought up with the consideration of, during the current spawning closure, the commercial sector operates under a reduced scenario, whereas the recreational sector has its typical operations during that month, and it's the same bag limit in place. That is some of the discussion and previous motivation for considering this action and Alternative 2, versus the current scenario, and I will turn it back to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: How would this impact the charter industry, the for-hire boats? Would Alternative 2 prevent them from being able to catch an amberjack?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it would be no harvest. It would be all closure during April, and so both recreational and commercial sectors and both components of the for-hire and the private of the recreational sector, and all would be included.

MS. THOMPSON: Are they allowed to keep an amberjack now, the way it is now?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Right now, yes. During April, a person can catch an amberjack at the one-per-person-per-day bag limit, but it cannot be sold, and, if it's a commercial vessel, they are subject to commercial minimum size limits. If it's a recreational, then they're subject to the recreational minimum size limit, but, even if a commercial vessel catches an amberjack during April, it cannot be sold.

MS. THOMPSON: I guess I would like to hear from Judy and Tom.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Thank you. For us in Savannah, we don't really catch any amberjack in April, and so not being able to keep them wouldn't be a problem for us, but down maybe south there might be a problem, or up north of us, but we don't ever see them, and so I don't have a problem with not being able to keep them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Up here, we don't have quite as far as a run to where we catch amberjacks, and, particularly if we have a warm spring, we will see them move in not just to the wrecks, inside of the shelf, but inside of fifteen miles, ten miles, to the beach some years, and so I think it would impact harvest, to an extent, and, obviously, grouper is closed, and so it's going to be less bottom fishing in that time. Given the fact that we're essentially talking about a reallocation, adjusting the size limit upward, as well as the fact that the recreational are not going anywhere near our ACL, I guess I just don't understand why it's necessary to essentially take this harvest away during April.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: For me, this just brings up a bigger philosophical discussion, management speaking. I mean, are we having spawning season closures to constrain catch, or are we having spawning season closures to protect spawners, in which case it doesn't matter who catches it? I think that that's the discussion that we need to be having, and I think it has a far-reaching impact. If it's a catch constraint thing, then let's not call it a spawning season closure, but, if fish are spawning, we should all probably leave them alone.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: What is your catch commercially and recreationally in April that the data shows? What amount of poundage? That would give you an idea of just how much -- If there's an issue or just how many pounds we're talking about protecting during that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't think that we estimated commercial catch, given the closure and given the operation at the bag limit. For the month of April, these were the average landings off the past three-year and five-year, the three-year and five-years, for the recreational fishery, and so these are what was used in kind of the analyses to predict the landings that would occur in April, with or without this in place.

As you scroll down a little bit, this is the table of how those project into the season, and it doesn't do anything to heavily affect the closures, in terms of keeping the season open, and they're all predicting no closures. When you look at the average scenarios, the three-year average and the five-year average, the max harvest scenario does have some closures, and those would occur as early as July.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: My question was not for how the seasons are closing, but the action you're doing for the month of April, the spawning closure, and so how much does it affect either one, and so that's just -- I will quit asking questions, because, I mean, it's like, if you're doing something to protect the spawning, we should be able to know how many pounds are caught that it could affect commercial fishing or recreational fishing that's closed during that time.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The top table is the average landings from the last three years and average landings from the last five years, as well as the maximum that were landed in April, recreationally. We didn't have the commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Is that Wave 1, March and April, or is that just April? How did you ferret that out? I mean, for instance, for this year, the whole first wave of greater amberjack for 2021 was 46,000 pounds, and so are those 100,000 pounds -- Is that a whole wave, or is that just April?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I believe that it was just April, and you would also have to make sure that you're comparing the FES, versus looking at the CHTS, because this going to be using FES information, and it would also -- I believe we have the information to separate that out, if we need to, into the month. I think, Mike, if I'm saying anything out of line, then please raise your hand and let me know, but I believe that these are April landings.

MR. GRINER: I can see that now, and I see that this is in MRFSS instead of FES, what I am looking at anyway.

DR. LARKIN: It's just April, and so you have to make some assumptions within the wave, right, and like the headboat you can separate, and that's easy, between March and April, but, with waves, you have to separate and assume it's a uniform distribution within, but that is just April.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what's the pleasure of the committee here about what we want to do with this action? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I would like a little -- I don't know if we can circle back around and not choose a preferred, and maybe bring it back up in Full Council, because I think there's some question about what the intent was of having a spawning season closure in the first place, and let's do some research on that. I think we have to then decide, and is the spawning season closure a spawning season closure, or is it a tool to constrain catch, and then I feel like we can make a decision, but I don't feel prepared to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Then, Mike, back to you. We'll have more discussion on this action at Full Council.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Thank you. Then we'll move to our last action. This is not specifically for greater amberjack, and it's considering an action for the entire Snapper Grouper FMP, and the action would be removing the recreational annual catch targets from the Snapper Grouper FMP.

Annual catch targets were established through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and there was an equation that needs to be calculated based on the recreational ACL and the recent percent standard errors for recreational catch estimates that would be used to calculate the catch targets, and, as is the case currently, whenever a recreational ACL is changed, we're supposed to include an action that would also change the recreational annual catch target.

The annual catch targets are not codified and are not used for any management purposes at this time, and so there would be -- It's not a huge lift to calculate these numbers, but it would be one less action that would need to be included in these types of amendments, if they were just uniformly removed from the FMP. Alternative 1 keeps them in, and Alternative 2 removes them, and that's

pretty much it. There's no analysis to come from that, because they don't affect the landings in the current management structure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Once again, this would be for all the species in the Snapper Grouper FMP. We just took this opportunity to place it inside the amberjack document, and I am pretty sure that we're ready to select a preferred alternative here. We're not using ACTs for management purposes, and so would someone like to make a motion to select a preferred? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: **I make a motion to select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Laurilee and a second by Mel. It's under discussion. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I guess, if you remove it, is there -- This is showing my ignorance to the purpose with the ACTs, because I obviously, have spent much time in OFL and ABC land, but what is the hazard to leaving it in? I mean, I know we're not using them now, but is there a potential that we could use them in the future, and should it stay in there in case you need them, since it is under the comprehensive amendment?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's causing more analysis and everything in these documents, and we're not using it for anything.

DR. BELCHER: Right, but that's currently. If something came up and you needed them, would you then have to revisit it? That's the only thing that I am thinking about, and I didn't realize that it required additional analyses, per se, but it just seems like, somewhere down the road, if you needed to put one in, and you don't have the mechanism there, you're going to have to put them back in, but, again, I understand if it's a lift issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: That's a good point, but you can also accomplish the exact same thing, any time you want to, but just setting the ACL as a percentage of the ABC, and so you still have that tool to make a buffer, but it's just using a percentage of the ABC as your ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Here comes Shep, and then Mike has something to say.

MR. GRIMES: I was just going to say that, if you do need ACTs in the future, you're going to have to do something, some management action, to actually use them, and you could recreate them at that time. Right now, they do absolutely nothing except create work and create potential challenge, and, if we're not using them for management, I think the obvious answer is to get rid of them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I just needed that clarification, because I am just thinking about we went through the steps to put it there, figuring there was a use for them and not recognizing that they are active the whole time. I thought it was just something that you turned in and turned off as needed and not recognizing that it's a continual generation every time you do this, and so that's fine.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think they were put in as part of the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and they are actually used in the Coastal Migratory Pelagics FMP, but they just aren't used in the Snapper Grouper FMP, and so that was kind of how they got brought into the picture, and that's just what I wanted to let folks know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We have a motion, and we've had some discussion on it. **Is there any objection to the motion to select Alternative 2 under Action 7 as the preferred alternative, which would remove the ACTs? I don't see any objection.** All right. **The motion carries.** Then now we need a motion to consider this document for public hearing, approve it for public hearing. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: I am just going to throw something out there for your consideration, and I apologize to Mike, because I haven't had a chance to run this by him just yet, but, considering that you've added a lot of stuff to consider in this amendment -- Initially, we were going to propose that the public hearing be held at the council meeting in March. However, you also have the option of approving for public hearings at that meeting, once you've had a chance to look at some preliminary analyses and rethink your preferences, based on that, and then the timeline would take you through approving this amendment in September. I think the timeline that was in the decision document needed a little fine-tuning, and so I just putting that out there for you all to consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like that. That way, we could see some of these analyses, and so then we would not be approving for public hearing today. We would see it one more time in March and then approve for public hearing at that meeting. Are we good with that? It looks like heads nodding, yes, we're good with that.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think that's all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's take a five-minute break. We are done with this amberjack item, and we will move on to the next thing, which I believe is yellowtail.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to get going again. Next up is yellowtail, and I believe we're going to start with comments from Jimmy from the AP.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. The AP discussed yellowtail snapper, Amendment 44, and a couple of members on the AP are professional yellowtail fishermen, and we recommended that the council retain the current jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. Also, that we retain the current sector allocations for the South Atlantic, and also that we would adopt the constant catch level of the lowest recommended ABC for the South Atlantic as the total ACL for the South Atlantic. A comment was made that trip limits may not be needed in the commercial sector, since the commercial landings are not hitting the ACL in the last couple of years, and that's what I have on yellowtail, if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Jimmy. Any questions? Myra, do we want to talk about the document a little bit, and then I will talk about the updating? Okay.

MS. BROUWER: If you don't mind, Jessica, just to give everybody a little bit of background, and so this is Attachment 8a in your briefing book. The yellowtail snapper stock was assessed most recently through SEDAR 64, and that was with data through 2017. The stock status is not overfished nor undergoing overfishing, and so, right now, we have to revise the catch levels and allocations and all of that good business that we've been doing with all the other snapper grouper amendments.

This is an amendment that you indicated that you wanted us to develop jointly with the Gulf of Mexico. Yellowtail snapper is a single stock across the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and so it is assessed as such. The first thing the councils would need to agree on is how to split the ABC, and so that would be step one. The bullets here on your screen are the possible actions in this amendment, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, and it would be Reef Fish Amendment 55.

The tentative amendment timing, I'm going to hold off on that a little bit, pending discussions, and one thing that I noted, which is highlighted here on your screen, is that the allocations would be revised only for the South Atlantic, and there are no sector allocations specified for the Gulf portion of the yellowtail snapper ABC.

The current ABC for the South Atlantic is around three million pounds whole weight. For the Gulf of Mexico, it's around one million pounds whole weight. Here, on Table 1, are the recommended ABCs, in millions of pounds, per the latest assessment, as agreed upon by the South Atlantic and the Gulf SSCs using the MRIP-FES methodology for the recreational estimates.

In September, you approved this to go for scoping, and so we conducted scoping hearings, and there is, in your briefing book, the document that was utilized to inform the public what was going on with yellowtail, and that's Attachment 8b. You had also requested that we have some specific questions brought to the advisory panel, which Jimmy already touched on some, and so I'm not going to spend a lot of time over that.

You did ask us to add an option for a constant catch total ACL that was based upon the one year that has the lowest recommended ABC, and so we did that, and that was reflected in the AP's recommendation. You also requested feedback specifically on possibly limiting trips during the spawning season and looking maybe at step-downs, trip limits for part-time fishermen, maybe some trip limits for multiday fishermen, to try to accommodate all the user groups, and then to also bring you back any input from the Gulf Council and the Gulf Reef Fish Advisory Panel.

Again, these are the recommendations of your Snapper Grouper AP, as Jimmy already touched on. The Gulf Council met in October, and they had a little bit of discussion about this amendment. They were concerned over using the current jurisdictional allocation formula, and they indicated that those landings were not reflective of the current state of the fishery, and they were interested in looking at a broader range of alternatives, maybe using more recent years, and so that was the guidance they gave to the IPT.

They also discussed looking at a constant catch scenario that would be derived from the stock assessment projections, and so not a level that would be based on that lowest projected catch that is currently among the recommended ABCs for this stock, and so they wanted to go back to the assessment and request this constant catch projection, which, as you know, would probably need to -- More time would be allowed, and then the SSCs may have to go back and review that, before it comes back around to you.

They discussed the need for more information on catch and effort in the South Atlantic, to come up with options for apportionment, and they talked about some issues with concern about landings in 2017, I believe, recreational landings, and they had some other requests of their staff, as you see on your screen.

The Reef Fish AP is scheduled to meet on January 5, and they're going to be talking about this, depending on what comes out of this meeting, and so, as far as scoping, unfortunately, those hearings were not well attended. We held two webinar hearings in November, and we heard from one fisherman, basically just requesting that the councils consider managing this as a single stock and not splitting the ABC. Then he also talked about potential population shifts, possibly related to climate change, and shark issues, as you've heard plenty.

The IPT is very large, since this is a joint amendment, and so we got together, and we discussed potential recommendations, or any useful information that you guys might need to discuss how to move forward here, and so, if we keep the current recommendations for ABC and go with that lowest ABC, that would allow you to move forward with this amendment. That does not preclude you from kind of going back around and requesting that constant catch projection, if you would like, and we had all those bullets, and I'm not going to go over it, and those were just points that we wanted to bring to you, concerns that the assessment is quite old, and the terminal year is 2017, as I mentioned already.

Subsequent to that IPT call, another option was brought to the table, which would be that the councils could request an update to the assessment to include three more years of data, perhaps 2018 through 2020, and generate a constant catch projection based on that update. An update would require the SSCs to review it, but may only delay the amendment development for an additional -- Well, I have two months on here, but, realistically, it might be a little bit longer than that, but, regardless, it is something that you guys can opt to do. I think that wraps it up, and I will turn it back to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Just a reminder that FWC ran this stock assessment, and it went through the SEDAR process, and so I have spoken to Luiz Barbieri, and, yes, our folks can update these numbers and come up with a constant catch recommendation. However, the lead analysts on the yellowtail assessment are also the lead analysts for the mutton assessment and the hogfish assessment that FWC is conducting, and so, in order for them to stop and get us these numbers for yellowtail, there could be a slight slowdown in either mutton or hogfish.

I mean, I think we should get these numbers, at least the 2018 through 2020 data, before we take any final action on this or review it further, and we could also get some constant catch numbers as well, and just know that it might slow down things that are already underway on mutton. I don't know if we need to have any further discussion on this document until we can get these updated numbers. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Would it have to go to the Snapper Grouper AP then before coming back to us?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it needs to go to the SSC. I don't know about the AP.

MS. BROUWER: The AP has been meeting twice a year, and so, most likely, they would get informed on that, and we could get input at that time, based on the results of the update, and so yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Maybe this is a question for John, and I'm not sure, and I think I remember how they were doing it in the Gulf now, but can you have a constant catch that is equal to the average of those ABCs during that time period, instead of just a constant catch that is equal to the lowest?

MS. BROUWER: As long as it doesn't go above, and I don't think an average would really work, and I think that may have been the issue we ran into with greater amberjack. Here comes John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: The trouble with the average is that it would exceed the ABC in the earlier years when it's lower, assuming it's going up. An SSC could be asked to give an ABC based on an average, but, if they've given it for annual values, then you would be over whatever years were below the average, then you would be too high, but there is no reason that you can't ask an SSC to give us an ABC based on like a three-year average or a four-year average or what have you, and they will just have to do the projections that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would look to Dale, and I don't see any issues from the Gulf Council perspective on taking this approach, but, as the chair, do you have any thoughts?

MR. DIAZ: I think what you're proposing will work out fine. The timing of it will probably still work out fine.

MS. BROUWER: I guess I will just -- If that's okay with you, I will just reiterate, for the record, that the guidance is to suspend work on this amendment and request an update to the assessment to include those three additional years of data, and is that correct, and a constant catch projection?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and do you want to say request the FWC? That looks good. All right. I don't think we have anything else on yellowtail. All right, and so next up is red pogy. I am going to go to Chairman Bell first, to tell you the timing plan for the rest of the afternoon.

MR. BELL: Here's the plan. I would like to keep us on schedule. We will start this, and we've got a hard stop at 3:45. So far, we don't have a tremendous number of folks signed up, and so we could have a fairly brief public hearing, and, after the public hearing, we would reconvene and try to finish up red pogy, and then we'll be pretty much on schedule, and so that's the plan. Just keep that in mind.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, have we already gone over the AP comments, or do we need to go over the AP comments?

MS. BROUWER: We can -- Actually, the AP has seen this amendment a couple of times, and there were some specific requests of them, and so, if you would rather wait until we get to that action and then maybe get Jimmy to chime in, as needed, if that's okay. This is the decision document that was actually revised from what you got in your briefing book, and so I just wanted to point that out, and the revisions were very minor, but I have noted them in the document, and so I will make sure that I point those out to you, and it had to do with some inconsistent language that we identified right after the briefing book posted, and I didn't want to burden you with yet another late material file, and so, basically, we are at the point where you are approving all actions.

The management actions in this amendment are, as you know, to establish a rebuilding plan, adjust those catch levels, revise management measures for both sectors, and modify the recreational accountability measures for red porgy, and so this timeline reflects that you would be approving all actions and the rationale, which is what we'll probably focus on most at this meeting, and then with the intent to approve for formal review at your March meeting.

The purpose and need hasn't changed, and so I will just pause here briefly, so you can take a look at that. We're not requesting that you modify it, and we think it captures what you intend to do in this amendment. Again, a reminder for everybody that these are the OFL and ABC recommendations based on SEDAR 60, which was concluded last year, and this is based on -- It includes, I should say, again, the revised recreational estimates.

The preferred alternatives, to be more easily identified, are highlighted in this turquoise color. Any change in the language since September are highlighted in yellow, and the green highlights are these last-minute changes that I am going to point out as we walk through it.

Action 1, to establish a rebuilding plan, your preferred is to establish the rebuilding timeframe to rebuild at 75 percent of the MFMT during the rebuilding period, and that would take twenty-six years, with the rebuilding period ending in 2047. 2022 would be year-one, and so this has not changed from what you saw in September.

We are suggesting to take out this language that you see highlighted in yellow regarding the probability of success, and that is simply because that's not included in the language for other alternatives. We don't actually have a rebuilding for Alternatives 3 and 4, since those are kind of in between, and so we're just suggesting -- I will point out the various changes, and I don't want to spend time making a motion for every little change, but, at the end, you can make a motion to approve all the modifications at all once, and I think that will save us some time.

The summary of effects, again, I am not going to spend time going over those, and those have not changed since September. I will point out when we get to the one action that you may need to spend a little bit more time discussing, and so what I would like to do is make sure that the committee is comfortable with the draft rationale that staff has extracted from your discussions and various times that you have discussed this and make sure there is nothing else.

For the rebuilding action, the South Atlantic Council acknowledges that the red porgy stock in the region has been experiencing low recruitment for many years and that efforts to rebuild the stock

have not been fruitful. They are harvested incidentally with other snapper grouper species in the commercial fishery, mainly vermilion and gray triggerfish, and they are not a targeted species recreationally.

We also want to point out that the council recently implanted a split season for the commercial sector and removed the annual sale and purchase prohibition that was in place during March through April, and that was in an effort to reduce discarding in this fishery when red pogy were being targeted, along with other species, and that was done in Regulatory Amendment 27, and it was implanted in February of last year.

The council is selecting the longest timeframe for rebuilding, as it results in a greater than 50 percent probability of rebuilding, and it is the level that is mandated by the MSA. The preferred timeframe is intended to reduce the severity of the management measures and result in fewer short-term negative impacts on fishing communities, and it was pointed out, in September, that the council is also embarking on discussions that would address the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, and it is expected that those actions are going to help you evaluate what would benefit the red pogy stock in the long term. Is there any additional rationale that you would like us to capture for this action?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Not additional rationale, and you've heard me say this in prior meetings, and I want to reiterate it, and we have been unsuccessful, obviously, rebuilding red pogy for quite some time, and my concern here is that we're, obviously, addressing social and economic consequences of this latest rebuilding plan, by making it as long as possible, but, in doing so -- I view that as kind of a probability of success, as we're lowering that probability of success by extending out to the longer period of time. I think Tmin is too short, but I think we have some alternatives in between the minimum and maximum that would certainly be reasonable for the council to consider that might give us a better chance of rebuilding the stock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. Is there any desire to change our preferred? I don't see any hands.

MS. BROUWER: The next action looks at adjusting the total ACL and annual OY and acceptable biological catch, and so here's another action in which we have included the ABC in the language of the action and the alternatives, and that's why we're noting those changes, and so in the green is what -- The inconsistent language that was corrected just prior to the meeting, and so that was just to clarify that, under Alternative 1, the current ABC would be inclusive of recreational estimates derived from the CHTS telephone survey. Your preferred is to adopt the ABC that is equal -- To make the total ACL equal to the updated ABC, and that table there reflects what those catch levels would be.

Similarly, for the other alternatives, we have made the language consistent with how other alternatives have been worked in other amendments, to be consistent, and the effects analysis is the same as in September, and so I will just quickly go over the draft rationale. The proposed catch levels are based on the SSC's recommendation using the best scientific information available. Therefore, setting the total ACL and annual OY at the recommended levels ensures that overfishing is ended and the level of harvest doesn't compromise the rebuilding target.

Setting the total ACL and annual OY equal to the recommended ABC decreases the likelihood of accountability measures being triggered, thus reducing negative impacts to fishing communities, and, also, council members emphasized the need to try to limit negative impacts to communities over the short term, given that red porgy have been under rebuilding in the South Atlantic for many years.

As was pointed out just recently, the red porgy population in the South Atlantic hasn't responded as expected to management, indicating that other factors beyond the council's ability are affecting the population, and so I will pause here for any additional comments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any additional comments? All right. Back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. The next action revises the sector allocations and sector ACLs, and so this is similar to what you have seen for other amendments. Alternative 1 would retain the 50/50 split, and that allocation was originally based on the distribution of landings from 2001 through 2003, including estimates from the MRIP-CHTS survey. Your preferred is to apply the revised recreational estimates to the landings and funnel them through the allocation formula that is on your screen, using the mean landings from 2006 through 2008 and the mean landings from 1986 through 2008, and apply that to the revised total ACL.

We requested additional rationale from the council at the September meeting, and so I will just go through that. You discussed that, although commercial fishing tends to occur in deeper water than recreational fishing when mortality of discarded fish is higher, you reasoned that a slightly higher allocation to the commercial sector would potentially reduce the number of fish that are discarded if the commercial ACL is reached in-season.

Also, utilizing the allocation formula would incorporate these revised recreational landings from the Fishing Effort Survey, which would result in a slight shift of allocation to the commercial sector, and so that's pretty much just stating the outcome of this action, and so, again, if you would like to provide additional rationale for your preferred, now would be the time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any hands.

MS. BROUWER: Moving along, commercial trip limits is the next action, and so, here, you have selected fifteen fish per trip for both seasons. The commercial ACL is split between two seasons, January through April and May through December. Also included here is a link to the red porgy decision tool that you are all familiar with, in case you would like to go back and review the combination of effects, and the rationale here -- It was discussed that it is important to have a species to market all year. When a species is reintroduced to the market after a long hiatus, it can lose its place, resulting in negative economic effects.

Commercial fishermen want to maintain access to as many species as possible, so they can put a trip together throughout the year, and so limiting the commercial harvest to fifteen fish per trip, the lowest that was considered, would increase the likelihood of the fishery remaining open and available to consumers as long as possible. Again, we're restating that the council removed the sale and purchase prohibition of red porgy during January through April, and this was to allow fishermen to retain a small number of fish, instead of discarding them.

The council also discussed aligning the red porgy commercial season to when fishermen are targeting vermilion and gray triggerfish with small hooks, and I think this came up in September. However, given the substantial reduction in the commercial ACL, such a modification was not discussed any further, as it was deemed unlikely to offer much benefit to the commercial sector. Also, you talked about the commercial split season having just gone into place, and so more time was needed for the expected effects of that modification to be realized.

Also, the council acknowledged that the proposed reduction in the commercial trip limit would likely result in closures in both seasons, but a small trip limit would be helpful in reducing dead discards in that fishery. Again, I will pause there, in case there is any additional discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so this next action is where I think we may get somebody other than me talking, and so this is to modify the recreational management measures. We've split the action into two. The first one modifies the bag limit. Your preferred is to reduce the bag limit for red porgy to one fish per person per day, or one fish per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and so the issue here is you had requested whether removing the "per trip" portion of the current regulation would be something to consider, and whether it would cause any issues for fishermen or otherwise, and we received some input from the NOAA Law Enforcement representative on the IPT, who advised that that per trip portion of the current regulation is actually very difficult to enforce, as it is unlikely that a vessel would be boarded twice in one day.

Removing that language wouldn't impact current enforcement efforts, but, if you take that away, that would affect other possession regulations that are currently in place, and that is what is on your screen right now, and so, currently each passenger -- Provided that each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt to show the duration of the trip, then a person aboard a charter vessel or a headboat trip that spans more than twenty-four hours cannot possess more than two daily bag limits of species other than red porgy, and so that limitation would be removed if this language were to find its way out of this action.

The AP was asked what they thought about this, and, specifically, members of the charter and headboat industries, to see if this is something that would affect their businesses, and so it was kind of split, and I guess I will invite Jimmy here to chime-in in a little bit. Some folks felt that maybe the council should specify that there would be an exception for for-hire vessels, and they would be sort of like, I guess, exempt.

Other folks thought that the per-trip restriction could be removed, and it wouldn't be a problem, and it would in fact create more consistency with how other snapper grouper species are addressed, and there were some suggestions of specifying a maximum of two days' worth of limits, and so I will turn it over to Jimmy, to see if he can add more here.

MR. HULL: Not much more to add, Myra, except that the concern was a charter or for-hire vessel could have multiple trips during a day, and so, if you had a limitation of one per person -- You have to take into account that it's a whole new trip, maybe several times a day, and then there was the concern of the overnight trips that were going also to get the multiday trip in, and so I think

you've addressed it there, and it's just which way does it go, one way or the other, when you're looking at it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess part of my confusion is I don't understand why we can't just say one per person per trip per day, and that's -- I mean, is part of it just the confusion on the wording, because we think people are going to multi-trip, and so why couldn't you say per day, and then, the people that are allowed to have the multiday limit, it would still allow that.

MR. HULL: I think the distinction also between a private recreational, as opposed to a for-hire, and so the for-hire is going to be able to run multiple trips per day, where they're going to need a new catch limit for the new crew, whereas a private vessel -- If they go run multiple trips per day, then they're going to be multiplying individually, because they ran another trip, and so the concern, again, was mostly for for-hire and charter, but then, if you take that away, then the private recreational component could possibly multiple trip themselves and come to the dock and unload and go again, and all of that was talked about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have overcome this challenge at the state level, and, Myra, could we not put this back to the Law Enforcement AP, since we're going to have them looking at other things, about the wording, to allow both, to make sure that the private rec person isn't multi-tripping and it accommodates the for-hire folks making multiple trips, and that's why I was suggesting per-person per trip per day.

MS. BROUWER: We could go to the Law Enforcement AP. We're looking at maybe bringing them together in February. The only issue is, of course, we're looking to approve this in March, and so you would just be kind of running up against your targeted date for approving the amendment, and, barring any issues -- As long as we keep to the timeline, and this is one of those amendments that is under a statutory deadline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any thoughts from others? We could leave as-is and ask the Law Enforcement AP to look at it, and, if we need to change it at the March meeting, I guess we could. Andy, or, first, let's go to Shep, and then Andy.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Notwithstanding the discussion, and, clearly, the multiple trip thing is logically something to consider, but you're talking about one red porgy, right, and so how likely is that to happen? Let's keep it context, it seems, but thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Shep, you beat me to it. My thought was not only the Law Enforcement AP, and, I mean, we certainly can talk with the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement as well, and, if there's suggested language, we can bring that back to the council. I don't think this is a huge issue, even if we left it as-is, but, certainly, if we can improve upon it with law enforcement, we can work on doing that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Back to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. I will just quickly go over the draft rationale for this action then. The preferred is to lower the bag limit, to go with the lowest that was considered, obviously, to

continue to allow some access recreationally and to help constrain the harvest to the reduced ACL. We also point out that you considered vessel limits for charter vessels and for headboats, and that was included in the alternatives that the IPT analyzed for you, but you chose to not consider it further, citing concerns over creating complications for headboats to manage their take. You instructed us, and that has been put in the Considered but Rejected Appendix.

I will move along to the recreational fishing season sub-action, and your preferred is to establish a season that would be two months, and so May through June. As far as the draft rationale that we have in the document thus far, under the alternatives, there is still a probability that the catch limit could be met within the timeframe that the fishery is open. However, there is uncertainty surrounding those predictions, and so, the longer the season is open, the higher the likelihood that the ACL could be exceeded by a considerably higher amount, and so that's why Preferred Alternative 2, which implements the two-month season, is the best choice to ensure that landings remain below that new ACL and to prevent overfishing.

Also, you stated that, under the preferred, recreational fishing would not be occurring during the late summer, when weather events tend to be more disruptive with fishing activity. Is there any additional comments that you would like to include?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MS. BROUWER: I think this is the last action, and this one would modify the recreational AMs, and your preferred is on the screen. This would essentially remove the in-season closure that is currently in place, and that's because we have a very, very short recreational season, and then, as we've already discussed at this meeting, it would sort of uncouple the post-season AM from the total ACL and the status.

In terms of the draft rationale that we have, the preferred is what is the most suitable among the alternatives that you have considered for such a short season, and eliminating the in-season AM makes the most sense, as data aren't available to really implement the in-season management, and you all agreed that it would be best to uncouple the recreational AM from the total ACL, to prevent potential disruptions to the commercial sector as a result of the post-season paybacks. Also, Preferred Alternative 3 maintains the intent to adjust the season the following year, in the event of an overage, and so there is still a vehicle for you to tweak things, should an overage take place. I will pause here again, to see if you have any additional rationale to provide.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. At this time, I guess I would look for a motion to approve all the little edits and to bring this back to you in March for final approval.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Sure. **I will make the motion to approve all actions, as modified, in Snapper Grouper Amendment 50.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second? It's seconded by multiple people, and we'll go with Carolyn. **The motion is to approve all actions, as modified, in Snapper Grouper Amendment 50. Any objection to this motion?** All right. **The motion is approved.**

The next item of business -- Thank you, Myra, for working on the red porgy document with us. The last item that we have under Snapper Grouper is, I believe, to go back to Jimmy to cover any items that have not already been covered from the AP meeting.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Other items that the AP discussed were in regard to vermilion snapper. There was no widespread support for a 1,500-pound trip limit. There was a preference for a step-down, regardless of what the trip limit was, and a point that the fishery is very important, but changing the trip limit would not be a top priority at this time.

Also, there was some discussion and concern about barrelfish and a point that barrelfish are becoming more popular in restaurants and more recreational targeting in Florida. There was a point that reduced catch has been noticed in recent years and the point that the barrelfish are generally caught with the wreckfish, and so you could have some complementary or co-management with that fishery.

Then we went on into some discussion about aquaculture and the possibility of getting more information about how aquaculture could maybe help rebuild some of these stocks and wanting to invite the Waddell Mariculture Center to present some information to the AP at the next meeting. That was it, Madam Chair.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Jimmy. Any questions for Jimmy? All right. I don't see any hands. Thank you so much for being here with us this week and answering all of our crazy questions, in addition to presenting this, but I feel like we always delve into these discussions that the AP has, even more, to say, well, what happened here, or what do you recall about this discussion, and I just really appreciate your willingness to come to the meeting and present these items and let us quiz you on them.

MR. HULL: Thank you, Madam Chair, and you have a really good AP that works hard to help better inform you, too. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Over to Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just can't not get this on the record, and we have an amazing advisory panel, but you do such a good job getting the information out of them and making sure it's cohesive when it comes to us, and it is not an easy task, and I can't imagine anyone else doing it, and so I just wanted to make sure that everyone knew that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go, Jimmy. I believe we have already covered the Other Business for Snapper Grouper, and so I believe this concludes the Snapper Grouper Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on December 8, 2021.)

- - -

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
January 12, 2022

SAFMC December Council

Attendee Report: Meeting (12/6/21 - 12/10/21)

Report Generated:

12/07/2021 06:15 AM EST

Webinar ID

509-177-083

Actual Start Date/Time

12/06/2021 10:24 AM EST

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	Antonaras	Manny
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Batsavage	Chris
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Blough	Heather
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bubley	Walter
Yes	Burgess	Aurora
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Candelmo	Allison
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Cheshire	Rob
Yes	Conklin	The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Robert
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Diaz	Dale
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	FRANCO	DAWN
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Foss	Kristin
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Godwin	Joelle
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Griffin	Charles
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Hiers	Homer

Yes	Hoke	David
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Ingram	Jamal
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Kelly	Aaron
Yes	King	Heidi
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	Klibansky	Nikolai
Yes	Kolmos	Kevin
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lewis	Selby
Yes	Lindh	Ryan
Yes	M TARVER	TIM
Yes	McCallister	Kevin
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McLemore	Michael
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Merrifield	Jeanna
Yes	Muffley	Brandon
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Nesslage	Genny
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Donnell	Kelli
Yes	OShaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	O'Brien	Lauren
Yes	Peterson	Cassidy
Yes	Porch	Clay
Yes	Powell	Jessica
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Rawls	Kathy
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reeder	Kelly
Yes	Reichert	Marcel
Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Runde	Brendan
Yes	Sanchez	Joseph
Yes	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	Sawicki	Kim
Yes	Schlick	CJ
Yes	Scott	Tara
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shireman	Camilla
Yes	Siegfried	Katie

SAFMC December Council

Attendee Report: Meeting (12/6/21 - 12/10/21)

Report Generated:

12/08/2021 06:11 AM EST

Webinar ID

509-177-083

Actual Start Date/Time

12/07/2021 08:03 AM EST

Duration

9 hours 32 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Batsavage	Chris
Yes	Beaty	Julia
Yes	Beckwith	Anna
Yes	Berry	Chip
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Blough	Heather
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Bublely	Walter
Yes	Burgess	Aurora
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Cathey	Andrew
Yes	Caycedo	Mario
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Cheshire	Rob
Yes	Conklin	The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Robert
Yes	Corey	Morgan
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DOVER	MILES
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Devasia	Doreen
Yes	Diaz	Dale
Yes	Dukes	Amy
Yes	Eimers	Colin
Yes	FRANCO	DAWN
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Fitzpatrick	Eric
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Forrestal	Francesca
Yes	Foss	Kristin

Yes	Gamboa-Salazar	Keilin
Yes	Gentry	Lauren
Yes	Glazier	Edward
Yes	Godwin	Joelle
Yes	Gordan	Alexander
Yes	Gore	Karla
Yes	Gray	Alisha
Yes	Guyas	Martha
Yes	Hadley	01John
Yes	Hager	Beth
Yes	Helies	Frank
Yes	Hemilright	Dewey
Yes	Herrera	John
Yes	Hiers	Homer
Yes	Hoak	Karen
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Ingram	Jamal
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Kellison	Todd
Yes	Kelly	Aaron
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lewis	Selby
Yes	Lindh	Ryan
Yes	M TARVER	TIM
Yes	Matos	Jessica
Yes	McCallister	Kevin
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McLemore	Michael
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Merrifield	Jeanna
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Nesslage	Genny
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	OShaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	PLOWDEN	DAVID
Yes	Package-Ward	Christina
Yes	Peterson	Cassidy
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Rawls	Kathy
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reeder	Kelly
Yes	Reichert	Marcel

Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Runde	Brendan
Yes	Sagarese	Skyler
Yes	Sauls	Beverly
Yes	Scott	Tara
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Seward	McLean
Yes	Shutak	Mike
Yes	Siegfried	Katie
Yes	Sinclair	Fred
Yes	Sinkus	Wiley
Yes	Smart	Tracey
Yes	Smillie	01Nicholas
Yes	Sminkey	Thomas
Yes	Spurgin	Kali
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Yes	Thompson	Michael
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Vincent	Matthew
Yes	Walia	Matt
Yes	Wamer	David
Yes	Waters	Jim
Yes	Whitten	Meredith
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	Williams	Bryan
Yes	Willis	Michelle
Yes	Wiseman	adam
Yes	Wyanski	David
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	emery	jeff
Yes	gloeckner	david
Yes	griner	tim
Yes	locke	charles
Yes	moss	david
Yes	sandorf	scott
Yes	thomas	01suz
Yes	vara	mary

SAFMC December Council

Attendee Report: Meeting (12/6/21 - 12/10/21)

Report Generated:

12/09/2021 07:10 AM EST

Webinar ID

509-177-083

Actual Start Date/Time

12/08/2021 08:08 AM EST

Duration

8 hours 24 minutes

Attendee Details

Attended	Last Name	First Name
Yes	BROUWER	MYRA
Yes	BYRD	01JULIA
Yes	Beckwith	Anna
Yes	Bianchi	Alan
Yes	Blough	Heather
Yes	Bonura	Vincent
Yes	Brame	Richen
Yes	Brennan	Ken
Yes	Brodeur	Garret
Yes	Burgess	Aurora
Yes	Calay	Shannon
Yes	Chaya	01Cindy
Yes	Cheshire	Rob
Yes	Conklin	The Real Chris
Yes	Copeland	00 Robert
Yes	Cox	Derek
Yes	Crosson	Scott
Yes	Curtis	01Judd
Yes	DOVER	MILES
Yes	DeVictor	Rick
Yes	Diaz	Dale
Yes	Dicello	Matt
Yes	Eimers	Colin
Yes	FRANCO	DAWN
Yes	Finch	Margaret
Yes	Fitzpatrick	Eric
Yes	Flora	Corrin
Yes	Foor	Brandon
Yes	Foss	Kristin
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Yes	Hoke	David
Yes	Howington	Kathleen
Yes	Ingram	Jamal
Yes	Iverson	01Kim
Yes	Johnson	Denise
Yes	Karnauskas	Mandy
Yes	Kelly	Aaron
Yes	Kittle	Christine
Yes	Klasnick	01Kelly
Yes	LARKIN	Michael
Yes	Laks	Ira
Yes	Lawler	Sean
Yes	Layne	John
Yes	Lewis	Selby
Yes	Lewis	Selby
Yes	Lindh	Ryan
Yes	M TARVER	TIM
Yes	Martin	Drew
Yes	McCoy	Sherylanne
Yes	McPherson	Matthew
Yes	Mehta	Nikhil
Yes	Merrifield	Jeanna
Yes	Moran	Jonathan
Yes	Muffley	Brandon
Yes	Neer	Julie
Yes	Nelson	Paul
Yes	Nesslage	Genny
Yes	Newman	Thomas
Yes	O'Donnell	Kelli
Yes	OShaughnessy	Patrick
Yes	PLOWDEN	DAVID
Yes	Pugliese	01Roger
Yes	Records	David
Yes	Reeder	Kelly
Yes	Rhodes	01Cameron
Yes	Roller	00Tom
Yes	Sabo	Mary
Yes	Scott	Tara
Yes	Sedberry	George
Yes	Sees	Mark
Yes	Seward	McLean

Yes	Siegfried	Katie
Yes	Smart	Tracey
Yes	Smillie	01Nicholas
Yes	Sramek	Mark
Yes	Stemle	Adam
Yes	Stephen	Jessica
Yes	Sweetman	CJ
Yes	Thompson	Michael
Yes	Travis	Michael
Yes	Van Sant	Scott
Yes	Vaughan	Douglas
Yes	Venezia	Giovanna
Yes	Vincent	Matthew
Yes	Walia	Matt
Yes	Waters	Jim
Yes	Whitten	Meredith
Yes	Wiegand	01Christina
Yes	Williams	Bryan
Yes	Wiseman	adam
Yes	brewer	00chester
Yes	colby	barrett
Yes	curtis	Joseph
Yes	emery	jeff
Yes	gloeckner	david
Yes	griner	tim
Yes	moss	david
Yes	rindone	ryan
Yes	sandorf	scott
Yes	thomas	01suz
Yes	vara	mary
Yes	walter	john

SG Cmte
Monday, 12/21/21 3:55 - 5:30pm
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Representative
TBD

SG Crite
YMN ~~Tuesday~~, 12/8/21 - ~~3:30~~ - 5:30 pm

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Attendees - SC Cmte / ~~Wednesday~~ ^{Thursday}, 12/21 - 8:30 - ~~2:30pm~~ ^{5:30} DAY 2

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SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2021 COUNCIL MEMBERS continued

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Representative
TBD

MACKEREL COBIA

- Spud Woodward, Chair
- Tom Roller, Vice Chair
- Robert Beal
- Carolyn Belcher
- Mel Bell
- Chester Brewer
- Chris Conklin
- LT Robert Copeland
- Tim Griner
- Judy Helmey
- Kerry Marhefka
- Jessica McCawley
- Trish Murphey
- Andy Strelcheck
- Laurilee Thompson
- Mid-Atlantic:
- Dewey Hemilright/Joe Cimino
- Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

SEDAR

- Mel Bell, Chair
- Carolyn Belcher, Vice Chair
- Robert Beal
- Tim Griner
- Kerry Marhefka
- Jessica McCawley
- Trish Murphey
- Andy Strelcheck
- Staff contact: Chip Collier

SHRIMP

- Carolyn Belcher, Chair
- Laurilee Thompson, Vice Chair
- Chris Conklin
- LT Robert Copeland
- Jessica McCawley
- Trish Murphey
- Andy Strelcheck
- Spud Woodward
- Staff contact: Roger Pugliese

SNAPPER GROUPE

- Web* ✓ Jessica McCawley, Chair
- Web* ✓ Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair
- Robert Beal
- ✓ Carolyn Belcher
- ✓ Mel Bell
- Web* ✓ Chester Brewer
- ✓ Chris Conklin
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- ✓ Andy Strelcheck
- ✓ Laurilee Thompson
- ✓ Spud Woodward
- Mid-Atlantic:
- Dewey Hemilright/Earl "Sonny" Gwin
- Staff Contact: Mike Schmidtke

SPINY LOBSTER

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- Chester Brewer, Vice Chair
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- Staff: Christina Wiegand

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Genny Nees
Dewey Hemilright
Jimmy Gwin (SG Chair)
Devicta
Monica Dmit-Burello
Dale Day

LT Patrick O'Shaughnessy (web)
Chap Brines (web)
John Walter

Jimmy Hull (SG CHAIR)

SG Cmte
~~Wednesday~~, 12/8/21 - 8:30- 3:45 pm
Tuesday

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
COUNCIL STAFF

~~Executive Director~~

John Carmichael
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~~Deputy Director - Science~~

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~~Deputy Director - Management~~

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~~Outreach Program Manager~~

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~~Admin. Secretary/Travel Coordinator~~

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~~Quantitative Fishery Scientist~~

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~~Habitat & Ecosystem Scientist~~

Roger Pugliese
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~~SEDAR Coordinator~~

Kathleen Howington
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A Attendees - SG Cmte
Monday Tuesday, 12/16/21 - 3:55 - 5:30 PM.

DAY 1

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2021 COMMITTEE MEMBERS continued

MACKEREL COBIA

Spud Woodward, Chair
Tom Roller, Vice Chair
Robert Beal
Carolyn Belcher
Mel Bell
Chester Brewer
Chris Conklin
LT Robert Copeland
Tim Griner
Judy Helmey
Kerry Marhefka
Jessica McCawley
Trish Murphey
Andy Strelcheck
Laurilee Thompson
Mid-Atlantic:
Dewey Hemilright/Joe Cimino
Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

SNAPPER GROUPE

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SHRIMP

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David Stormer (DE state rep)
David.stormer@delaware.gov

Gi. Benny Nespolo (wes)
Rick DeVictor
monica Smit-Brunello
Dewey Hemilright
Patrick O'Shaughnessy
Shep Grimes
John Walter
Dr. Clay Purch

Dale Diaz (GMFMC)

Jimmy Hull (SG CHAIR)

Attendees - 12/8/21 (Day 3 of SC Cmtc)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2021 COMMITTEE MEMBERS continued

~~MACKEREL COBIA~~

- ~~Spud Woodward, Chair~~
- ~~web Tom Roller, Vice Chair~~
- ~~Robert Beal~~
- ~~Carolyn Belcher~~
- ~~Mel Bell~~
- ~~web Chester Brewer~~
- ~~Chris Conklin~~
- ~~web LT Robert Copeland~~
- ~~Tim Griner~~
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- ~~Kerry Marhefka~~
- ~~Jessica McCawley~~
- ~~Trish Murphey~~
- ~~Andy Strelcheck~~
- ~~Laurilee Thompson~~
- Mid-Atlantic:
- ~~Dewey Hemilright/ Joe Cimino~~
- Staff contact: Christina Wiegand

SNAPPER GROUPEE

- Jessica McCawley, Chair ✓
- Kerry Marhefka, Vice Chair ✓
- Robert Beal ✓ → arrived in pm
- Carolyn Belcher ✓
- Mel Bell ✓
- Chester Brewer ✓ web
- Chris Conklin ✓
- LT Robert Copeland ✓ web
- Tim Griner ✓
- Judy Helmey ✓
- Trish Murphey ✓ web
- Tom Roller ✓
- Andy Strelcheck ✓ web
- Laurilee Thompson ✓
- Spud Woodward ✓
- Mid-Atlantic:
- Dewey Hemilright/Earl "Sonny" Gwin ✓
- Staff Contact: Mike Schmidtke

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Casey Diaz (Quey Rep)
Rick DeVictor
monica & Mike Sunkelle
John Walker
Jimmy Fucci

Dr. Henry Massie
LT Patricia O' Shaughnessy
8
Jimmy Hull (SC Chair)

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
2021 COUNCIL MEMBERS

12/8/21 (Day 3 of SC Cmte)
Attendees

Cmte
Mel Bell, **Chair**
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12/8/21 (Page 3 of 56 Cmts)

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2021 COUNCIL MEMBERS continued

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Representative
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SG - 12/8/21 (Day 3 of SG)
Attendees

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Executive Director

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Habitat & Ecosystem Scientist

Roger Pugliese
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South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Meeting

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Beaufort, NC

PLEASE SIGN IN -

In order to have a record of your attendance each day of the meeting we ask that you sign in.

Name:	Mailing Address/E-mail: <i>(If your information is currently on file, just check the box.)</i>	How do you participate in South Atlantic fisheries? <i>(Check all that apply)</i>	
Jimmy Hill	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On File	Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational <input type="checkbox"/> Govt. <input type="checkbox"/>
		Charter/For-hire <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>Describe</i>	
Dick Brame	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On File	Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Govt. <input type="checkbox"/>
		Charter/For-hire <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>Describe</i>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> On File	Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational <input type="checkbox"/> Govt. <input type="checkbox"/>
		Charter/For-hire <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>Describe</i>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> On File	Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational <input type="checkbox"/> Govt. <input type="checkbox"/>
		Charter/For-hire <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>Describe</i>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> On File	Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> NGO <input type="checkbox"/>	Recreational <input type="checkbox"/> Govt. <input type="checkbox"/>
		Charter/For-hire <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <i>Describe</i>	

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