

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

Webinar

March 2-3, 2021

TRANSCRIPT

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Dr. Genny Nessler
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Additional attendees and participants are attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Now we're in the Snapper Grouper Committee, and our first order of business is the Approval of the Agenda, and I have one item for Other Business that I would like to bring up, and it has to do with golden tilefish and the recent closure and a possible reopening. I would like to bring that up under Other Business, and then I also got an email for something that Chris Conklin wanted to bring up that had to do with vermilion. Is there any other business that we want to go ahead and add to our agenda here under Other Business? Chester.

MR. BREWER: Jessica, I don't know if you want to do it here, under Other Business, or somewhere else, but I know that the Florida council folks have been getting emails from Jimmy Hull, and they were pretty interesting, quite frankly, and I think we, at the very least, need to bring them to the attention of all the other folks on the council, and I'm not sure what we can do about it at this meeting, and we may need to do some thinking about it, but I do think that folks ought to be made aware of the issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great point, Chester. I'm wondering if we can talk about that when we get to the next-to-last, or third-to-last, item, which is the red snapper recreational landings and the 2021 season. Maybe, under that item, we can bring up these other red snapper items, and does that sound good?

MR. BREWER: That sounds great.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any other items that we need to bring up under the Snapper Grouper Committee? I don't see any more hands. All right. Any objection to approval of the agenda as modified? Seeing no hands, we're going to assume this agenda is approved, and we're going to go into our next order of business, which is Approval of the December 2020 Minutes. Any modifications or changes to the December 2020 minutes? Any objection to approval of those minutes? All right. With no hands, we'll assume that those minutes are approved. Next up is Status of Amendments Under Formal Review. Myra, I assume that's Rick?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, that would be Rick.

MR. DEVICTOR: All right, and so we have a single amendment, snapper grouper framework amendment, under formal review right now, and that's Regulatory Amendment 34. This would specify thirty-four special management zones around artificial reefs off of North Carolina and South Carolina, and so that proposed rule published late last year, and so we are just waiting on the final rule to publish, and that would have an implementation to it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions for Rick? All right. Myra, it looks like we're up to the snowy grouper stock assessment, and I'm going to turn it over to you to introduce our presenters.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica, and I believe that Mike Errigo wanted to introduce Rob, and he is set up to take over, and so, Rob, when you're ready, go ahead and take over control.

DR. ERRIGO: Just Rob Cheshire will be presenting the assessment for snowy grouper, and he was the assessment analyst. Whenever you're ready, Rob, just take it away.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thanks, Mike. I am going to be presenting the update to the SEDAR 36 update for snowy grouper, and I should say, before I get started, that this presentation is in the late materials. I had inadvertently sent in the presentation for the SSC meeting, and so I guess the advantage to that is, if you want to see all the nitty-gritty details, they're all in that presentation, and this is just condensed version of that presentation.

This assessment didn't have any scheduled -- Since it was an update, it didn't have any scheduled data or assessment webinars. However, we did run into some items that we thought we needed input on, and we were able to get the SSC to weigh-in on those in a meeting back in August, and the assessment was reviewed in January by the SSC.

Just for a little bit of history, SEDAR 4 was the benchmark for the snowy grouper assessment, and there was an update assessment for SEDAR 36, and the SEDAR 4 determined that the stock was overfished and undergoing overfishing. After that, there were some pretty stringent management measures put into place, the 100-pound trip limit for commercial and one fish per person per day for recreational.

For the SEDAR 36 assessment, it was determined that the stock was still overfished, but not undergoing overfishing, and this update of that assessment determined that the stock is overfished and overfishing, and I will discuss some of the reasons why it doesn't seem to be meeting the rebuilding plan and that the status has not improved.

I won't read through all of these, but it's a typical terms of reference that were set up for this, in that we were asked to update the data and the base model with the most recent methods and data, to document all those changes, and to update the model with the parameters and variances and sensitivities. The sort of standard set of projections were requested through 2039, which was the terminal year for projections in SEDAR 36 and SEDAR 4, and then to provide a report of the findings.

For the data section, I'm going to be mainly covering what's in bold here, and this is what I consider sort of the major topics that we struggled with. We have the life history information, and the natural mortality estimate was modified based on a new maximum age that was in the observed samples for this assessment, and there was very little change to the commercial removals from SEDAR 36 for the years where we have overlap, which was through 2012. For the recreational data, we have the new MRIP data that comes in with the new FES methods, and we did have at least one year with significant changes, and I will talk about that.

The headboat index was unchanged, and the management that was put into place caused us to truncate that for SEDAR 36 to 2007, and it was not updated. However, the survey indices for the chevron trap and longline were updated with new methods, and I believe the data had some extra quality control. For the length and age composition data, I won't be presenting those, and it was fairly small changes to the data that was provided for 2012, and then the additional years, and all of that is in the SSC presentation and in the report.

For natural mortality, we had a maximum age of thirty-five in the observed samples for SEDAR 4 and for SEDAR 36. For this assessment, the data came in with a fish that was aged out to eighty years, and, since SEDAR 36, there's been some research by Dr. Philip Sanchez with Texas A&M, using bomb radiocarbon methods, ageing out to an age of fifty-six, and so the end result of this maximum age is to provide a natural mortality scaler. For SEDAR 36, that value was 0.12.

Since we didn't have a panel to address this issue of a new maximum age, which is a little more than double what it was before, we asked the SSC to provide us some input, and they did so. For this update, the discussion at the SSC -- We provided them with values for two different methods of determining natural mortality for three different ages, the age that was used for SEDAR 36, the age that was used from the bomb radiocarbon at fifty-six, and then the maximum age of eighty, and what was decided at that meeting was that there is some uncertainty about the eighty-year-old estimate, and the uncertainty increases with age. Also, that the bomb radiocarbon indicates that the age of thirty-five is improbable, and so what was really considered was two different methods for age-fifty-six and eighty.

In the end, we chose one value for that, which was the estimating method that was used for SEDAR 36, with an age of fifty-six, and that works out to a natural mortality scaler of 0.08. We asked for a range also for the MCB ensemble runs, to get the uncertainty associated with these values, and we didn't update the growth curve. These older fish that were found, there's not very many of them, and they were at the upper -- They were already maxed out on their size, and so it probably wouldn't have had much of an impact on that.

Just one thing we did was to run a sensitivity with this range of natural mortality, and you can see that it has a pretty big impact on the results of the status of the fishery, and the orange line here is what we consider the base run, and the lower, or I should say the upper line and the F over FMSY plot is the run with a low natural mortality, which also corresponds to the lowest SSB over SSB MSY, and the blue line here would be what would we have if we had used the same natural mortality value as in SEDAR 36.

For the removals, or let me go back. I did want to mention that, even since the August SSC meeting, we've had some good discussions about natural mortality in the scamp research track, and it look like there will be more information to base this value for the next snowy assessment, and I think the methods will improve for that, and so hopefully we'll have a little bit better idea of what natural mortality is.

For the removals, the commercial values for 2012 were almost identical, and the recreational removals were comprised of headboat and MRIP, where the headboat were almost exactly the same, but, of course, the MRIP values had changes to the new methods, and this caused a fairly large change in 2012, and that was due to small sample sizes, but there were also similar sample sizes in the years where we had values near zero, and our typical approach, in at least the Atlantic SEDARs, has been to accept the values that are provided and then run sensitivities where we think there might be issues.

The left two panels here are the commercial removals, and you can see there are almost imperceptibly different, and those are in thousand pounds. The MRIP values are the right panel, and they're not too far off, until you look at 2012, where we have an estimate around 20,000 removals in the SEDAR 36, and we have a little over 70,000 for this update, but you can see the

results of the sensitivity run that we did on this, where we took the geometric mean of the values for 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014, which scaled that 2012 value back to around where it was for SEDAR 36, and the stock status is nearly identical, and so that didn't have a big impact on the current status.

For the indices, like I said, the headboat was unchanged, and there were some modifications to the fishery-independent survey methods and quality control, and these had relatively low small sample sizes, and so even small changes can make the indices look different, and we did have one issue where the MARMAP longline survey was spatially limited in 2012, due to funding, and it was not included in the SEDAR 36 assessment. However, we included it here, and we did a little bit of exploration as to the extent of the reduction in the spatial coverage, and we determined it was better to leave that value in, in order to have a continuous index that goes through the end of the time series. These two surveys are the only indices that run through the end of the series, and so they're fairly important. That 2012 value was the highest in the time series, but it did have a fairly large CV.

These are plots of what the changes look like, and the headboat is the same, and the trend in recent years was fairly similar for these, and there's just sort of a shift in the year for the maximum from the SEDAR 36 to this update value, but these are seen as improved methods.

I will jump right into the assessment results and some of the key features that we saw, and the first is that recruitment since about 2011 has been fairly low, and that's these years here. What looks like an increase here is just a single projection year, and then, for the terminal year of the assessment, there wasn't information to inform the recruitment estimates, and so this is actually just from the stock-recruit curve, and, in the stock-recruitment relationship, all those values are here, and then the 2018 and 2019 values are basically right on this line, because they're not being estimated, and so we have a period of low recruitment at the end of the time series.

You do see, at least in the recent years, a little bit of improvement in the age structure, at least out for the last five or six years, and we're getting more older fish in the population, and it is a little deceiving. These last two years here are mainly driven by the recruitment, these age-ones, and, as I said, those are a little optimistic, given the recruitment in recent years.

This is a comparison of the stock size relative to the SEDAR 36, and you can see there's a great deal of uncertainty in these values, and a lot of that is driven by the range in natural mortality, and I think the natural mortality range pretty much covers this entire uncertainty at the end of the time series, and it does show the stock is overfished, and you can see the flat part of the series here relates to that low recruitment.

For F over F_{MSY} , the trends, compared to SEDAR 36, up through 2012 are fairly similar, except this spike here from the MRIP estimates, and they're relatively flat over the time period, with very stringent management in place. It does show that the stock -- We can take the average of the geometric mean of the last three years, and that shows that the stock is overfishing, slightly, but, when you look at the results of the MCB ensemble runs, the overfished and overfishing status represents about 55 percent of the runs from that analysis, and we have about 18 percent where the stock is not overfishing and overfished, and up here we have not overfished and not overfishing, and that represents about 27 percent of the runs.

For the projection scenarios, these were the four that were recommended in the TORs, and we did an additional couple of runs here where we took the average recruitment from 2011 to 2017 and projected those forward, and those were the low-recruitment years, and then, after the SSC, we provided a few more shorter-term projections to get the ABC and the OFL. This is just an example of that table that we provided for the projections, the short-term projections.

With that, I would like to thank everyone that provided input into this assessment, and it's certainly not a one-man show, and there was a lot of work done, especially by the ageing crew and the index experts and Dr. Sanchez weighing-in on the bomb radiocarbon during the SSC meeting, and, of course, the SSC weighing-in as a panel on this was very helpful, and then I had a lot of help from the assessment analysts in the Center, and then, of course, thanks to the SEDAR and council staff. Of course, when I put the credits together like this, I am inevitably going to forget somebody, but I immediately realized that I forgot Julie Sims, and I'm sure there's a few others, but, anyway, thank you, and I will take any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. I can't see our little hand-raise thing, but does anybody have any questions for Rob?

MS. BYRD: Jessica, I don't see any hands right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MS. BYRD: Sorry to interrupt, but I just saw Andy Strelcheck's hand go up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let's go to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Rob, for the presentation. When you were showing the natural mortality, early on in the presentation, I had picked up on kind of the flattening of the spawning stock biomass in the last five or six years, and you alluded to, later in the presentation, that that kind of flattening is largely being driven by, I guess, reductions in recruitment, but can you expand upon that, and I'm curious to understand the difference between the base run and the old natural mortality rate, which I believe was still projecting out that the spawning stock biomass was increasing, even under low-recruitment conditions.

MR. CHESHIRE: Andy, thanks for the question. You're talking about where the spawning stock is flattening out here, and I do think that's -- In part, we're not seeing an increase in that, and I do think that's driven, at least in part, by the low recruitment. I'm not exactly sure how to answer that. As far as the dynamics within the model, is what you're trying to get at?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess the -- If you go back to the slide that you were just on, I guess I'm struck by the steepness of the spawning stock biomass increase from about 1993 to 2010 or 2011 with the old model, and it's much flatter under the new model, and I assume that's being driven because of the higher natural mortality rate, and so that kind of older spawning stock biomass then is being killed off, essentially, in the model, or in population, and not contributing to the higher spawning stock biomass, and I wanted to understand that better. The more recent years, I can understand it's a lower recruitment.

MR. CHESHIRE: Right. The flatness of this here, compared to SEDAR 36, is definitely driven by the change in that natural mortality scalar. If you remember, the sensitivity run with the higher natural mortality had us even steeper, which eventually crossed into the not overfished range, but, yes, that is what is flattening out this part of the more recent assessment, and we did -- I did present to the SSC that we did some runs where we looked at the likelihood profiling on natural mortality also, and the model wants to be somewhere around 0.1 of the two estimates that we used, the Hewitt and Hoenig and the Then et al. methods, and we had input from the SSC, and they agreed that, since this was an update --

I think that's one of the reasons that we chose to go with the Hewitt and Hoenig estimate, which was the lower of the two, and so it was 0.08, and I think the Then et al. was around 0.1, but, like I said, if we had a -- If there was an operational even, I think we would have had a good discussion, and maybe even now, but we have even more information now, since the scamp research track data workshop, with methods where we would use the Then et al., and then, from that metadata, choose the species that made the most sense for this, and so I think, going forward, and in future assessments, I think there will be better information on how to get at natural mortality.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, anything else?

MR. STRELCHECK: No. Thank you, Rob.

MS. BYRD: Jessica, Dewey has his hand raised.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. I was wondering, what are some of the things that can be improved in the gathering of the data on size of the fish, both recreational and commercial, for future stock assessments, meaning like would it be helpful if you knew the size of the fish from the commercial industry, based on dealer weigh-outs up and down the coast and how they are segmented, and does it also show, in the recreational industry, a size between recreational fish and headboat fish and charter fish? I'm just looking at ways to -- Well, one thing, for me to understand a little bit about how it's used, and just is there anything, besides what we're doing now, that could be improved with just some phone calls and some general comments from the fishermen? Thank you.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thanks, Dewey. Absolutely one of the struggles we have with this species is we don't get a lot of size composition or age composition data. The sampling has improved, but anything we can do to increase the sample sizes in a way where the samples can be used, and so they can't be -- They have to be randomized samples, and so, if we could get a better sample and get a better idea of what the size structure is in the population, that would be very helpful, as well as to get some information on the oldest fish, and so we have -- I think, because sampling is increased, it might be one reason why we're seeing these older fish now, as well as maybe the stock is improving, but we kind of have to expect that, with better sampling, we'll see -- There's a better chance that we'll get these older fish, and so, in determining the size composition of the fish for the recreational and the commercial, increased sample size would be extremely beneficial.

We only had a handful of years where we had enough recreational age data to include those compositions in the assessment, and I don't know of anything that I can think of where it would

just be a matter of phone calls and collecting that sort of qualitative information, as far as information that would inform the model, but anything we can do to increase the sample sizes, and, also, I think the biggest thing for this, for improving this stock assessment, would be a good fishery-independent survey, and I think the deepwater survey that's getting started, I guess last year, will help immensely, if we can get good sample sizes for these deepwater species.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I had one more follow-up for that. Suppose, and maybe I can take this offline, but suppose something like -- I made a text around this morning to dealers in North Carolina and South Carolina about what size fish did they have, based on like their dealer grade, and I know, one particular year, in North Carolina, probably ten years ago, that I contacted one dealer and got his information, where he had his size grade in three different grades, and he accounted for probably 30 percent of the fish caught in North Carolina, and would stuff like that make any difference? Thank you.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thanks, Dewey. You know, I would have to think about that a little bit, as far as how we could use that information, and I think the model isn't run spatially, and so getting spatial differences in grades may not help that much, but it may help inform the landings estimates, which get converted from pounds to numbers of fish, and so I think that information could possibly be used in that way, but it would be interesting to look at what those grades are and how they have changed over time, because that does affect fishing behavior also, which is important too, but we don't have a commercial index in this assessment, but information like that would definitely be helpful for other species, where we have commercial indices where behavior changes could be accounted for.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. CHESHIRE: Thanks, Dewey.

MS. BYRD: Jessica, John Walter has his hand raised.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. John.

DR. WALTER: Thanks. Rob, you touched on it, the cooperative deepwater longline, and that's an exciting development that we think should really help with some of these deepwater species, and, as noted, it's a cooperative project that we did get out last year, and so hopefully it will create a time series that should improve our ability to assess these and some of the other deepwater species. Thanks.

MS. BYRD: Jessica, Dewey has his hand raised.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering, given that last year was the pilot program, could we, maybe at the next council meeting or something, get a rundown of species caught and some background information from last year's pilot program? Thank you.

MR. CHESHIRE: Dewey, I'm guessing that would be available. I don't have access to that data, but I'm not sure who on the call could answer that.

DR. WALTER: The Southeast Center would be happy to give a presentation on those pilot results at the next council meeting, if requested by the council, and we would be happy to do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. I will work with Myra to see if we can fit that in.

DR. WALTER: Okay. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Julia, do you see any more hands?

MS. BYRD: I don't see any other council members with hands raised, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Myra, do we want to go into the SSC recommendations and Genny?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and we're just queuing up that presentation, Jessica, and give us just a second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Great. Thank you so much, Rob.

DR. NESSLAGE: Are you ready for me to go, Jessica?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We sure are. Go ahead, Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: All right. Thank you. The SSC had the opportunity to review the snowy grouper assessment at our January meeting, and we heard from Rob, and we saw the lengthy, full version of his presentation, which we enjoyed, and we're happy to report that the SSC agreed that the assessment appropriately addressed the TORs provided and that it's best scientific information available and that it would provide an adequate basis for determining stock status and supporting fishing level recommendations for the council. The methods used addressed uncertainty, and they did it in a manner consistent with our expectations and the available information.

We were asked to comment on the factors affecting reliability of stock status estimates and fishing level recommendations, and it's probably no surprise that our number-one bullet here is uncertainty in natural mortality. Rob mentioned that there was new information available on the maximum age for this species, and so, as you saw in some of his sensitivity analyses, that adds some uncertainty, assuming we are characterizing that natural mortality correctly.

The other thing the SSC discussed was that, in the assessment, they were not able to estimate steepness within the Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment curve, and so they were -- The next best thing is to fix it, and that has some implications that I will discuss again later in the talk, but that could have an impact on the fishing level recommendations and stock status, or fishing level recommendations.

We also pointed out that there are some uncertainties in the MRIP information that could be impacting the assessment, and there were changes in the indices, and they were standardized to the new approach, which we all agreed was the appropriate method and approach to addressing that

data and the challenges in those data, but there were some significant changes, and I will go into that in a little bit as well.

Continuing on, the abundance indices were not fit well by the model, and that was something that we discussed a bit. The residuals, in other words the error in the model estimates, attempts to fit the abundance indices, appeared to be autocorrelated, and that autocorrelation was not accounted for in the model, and so that's something that, hopefully, when this assessment gets a little bit more TLC and is not an update, that is something that the assessment team can work on in the future.

The SSC also discussed that we may be in another situation for another stock where we may be in a new regime for productivity, as you saw in the recruitment estimate graphs that Rob provided, and it's been declining in the last few years, and it has been low, and so that's something for the council to consider.

The other thing that we discussed was that, if the assessment is accurate, then it may be -- We may be in a situation where the fishing mortality may actually be less than natural mortality for the fish that are most vulnerable to fishery, which really means that the stock dynamics, at this point, may be controlled more by natural processes than fishing, and so the ability of the council to enact management that could change the stock dynamics may be more limited than before.

Going back to the issue of M, the SSC was asked to comment on risks and consequences of the assessment uncertainties, and, again, the big question is what is natural mortality for this species, and we thought that the assessment team did a great job of trying to characterize it for this assessment, and we talked about it an earlier meeting, as Rob indicated, but there is still significant uncertainty in what the maximum age for this species is, and that affects the scalar by which we estimate natural mortality at-age, and so, ultimately, natural mortality could be underestimated, or overestimated, and that would change stock status, and so that's just something for the council to consider. That being said, we supported the base run configuration of the model, and we believe it's BSIA, but it's just something to keep in mind.

Then, as Rob mentioned as well, the 2018 and 2019 recruitment estimates were -- As you can see, they're a little bit higher than the previous, I guess, five or six years of estimates, which were the time series low, and just to keep in mind, with regard to risks and consequences of uncertainties, those two points, those two higher recruitment estimates at the very end, are coming from the stock-recruitment curve, and they are not informed by the age structure information in the model in those last few years, and there's not really any data to inform that, and so it's pulling from the stock-recruitment curve, and that's why it's higher, but we can't really rely on that being the truth, and so time will tell, as we add a few more years of data to this model, but, at this point, it's something to consider with regard to how you approach management.

Continuing on with risks and consequences, just a note that the projections will be particularly sensitive to changes in natural mortality for fish at those youngest ages, because they are the ones that are most vulnerable to the fishery, and we also, again, noted that the assumed steepness in the Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment curve would have a direct impact on the accuracy of those biological reference points. Again, that seemed to be the best approach at this point, but it's something to keep in mind, and then, also, we wanted to point out that, although the rebuilding timeframe is quite long, going out to 2039, and the projections are provided out that far, the

assessment and projection information really can only reliably inform management in a much shorter time period of around -- We recommend about five years.

Then we were asked if the methods of addressing uncertainty were consistent with SSC expectations, and we agreed that they were, but we always have suggestions for improvement and things to try in the future, and I will go into those in later slides.

We were asked to comment on factors that most contribute to risks and that impact stock status determinations and future yield projections, and so we broke this up into two categories, kind of the major uncertainties that you might need to worry about and then minor ones, and the two major ones are, again, maximum age assumption used in the assessment, and the resulting estimation of natural mortality is the big one. The second one that we wanted to continue to point out is that the steepness was fixed in the Beverton-Holt stock-recruitment curve, and that could have an impact on stock status determinations.

With regard to minor uncertainties, and these aren't in any particular order, but, again, the abundance indices were not well fit. The residuals appeared to be autocorrelated, and there was also -- With the change in standardization of the indices, there appeared to be a shift in the peak of the chevron trap index from one year to another, which was a little disconcerting, and it's something that we talked with the data preparers about a little bit, and they're going to look into that a little bit more in the future, but, again, the methods that they used appeared to be the latest and greatest and most appropriate approaches.

We did note, as Rob mentioned, the 2012 recreational landings were something of an outlier, a very high point, and, luckily, the sensitivity analysis indicated that there was little effect of that on the overall outcome of stock status, et cetera, but it's something to keep in mind, and we'll see, as the new MRIP numbers roll in, how that impacts in the future, but it's something to look into in a little bit more depth when this is not just an update assessment.

Again, I will point out that this may be a new productivity regime, and so it's something to consider when determining management, and then the issue, again, that the fishing mortalities are relatively low, compared to natural mortality, and, when you get into that sort of situation, stock assessments tend to be a bit more unreliable, and you may not have as many levers to pull as you normally might in management, and so that's something to consider as well.

We were asked if we had any difficulties encountered when applying the ABC control rule, and we didn't really have any difficulties, per se, but we did discuss, at length, some of the ambiguity in our control rule wording, and so, just as a heads-up, and this might be more for the ABC control rule amendment discussion, but we're going to discuss, in April, revising our Dimension 1 tier description, which has to do with assessment information used to determine the reference points, and, basically, it was unclear, when you specify steepness, whether or not -- But still provide MSY-based reference points, whether that should be a Tier 1 or Tier 2, and so we're going to try and clean up that language and recommend some new language for you at our April meeting.

In the meantime, we decided, for snowy, to apply a Tier 2 level rating, a Level 2 rating for our Tier 1, and that's getting complicated, because steepness was specified and not estimated in the stock-recruitment curve and in the ultimate estimation of the MSY-based reference points. In Tier 2,

regarding uncertainty, we applied a Level 2, because the uncertainty was indeed carried forward in the projections, which was great, but the environmental conditions were not considered.

In Tier 3, we applied a Level 4 rating, because the stock is both overfished and overfishing, and, in our Tier 4, we applied a Level 3 rating, because the stock has low productivity, high vulnerability, and high susceptibility, which, if you go to the next slide, leads us to a total adjustment score of 22.5, which resulted in a P* of 27.5. That leads us to a recommended P rebuild, should the council decide to go that route, of 72.5 percent.

We also, when setting the ABC, we asked Rob to calculate that using the P* of 27.5, but with an average 2011 to 2017 recruitment, and so that recent kind of lower-recruitment period over that five-year period, with management beginning in 2023, and, again, even though there's a long rebuilding period, we felt that this would really only apply over a shorter period and that an operational assessment be conducted sometime in the next five years. One other note, just as a reminder, is these projections are recommended for calculating the ABC only and are not rebuilding projections, and so just to remind everyone that the stock will not be rebuilt with this recruitment scenario under the current rebuilding timeframe.

If you look on page 11 of our report, that will provide you with the catch level recommendations that resulted from those P* projections, and then we were asked if adequate rebuilding progress was being made, and we did note some good progress was being made with regard to spawning stock biomass. It may be far below the reference points, but it has doubled in size since 1994, and that's a good thing. Spawning stock biomass and recreational catches both have increased, which are good things. However, the total biomass and the abundance have not, and so that's something to keep an eye on.

We thought that that whole rebuilding progress scenario, as it appears to have played out, may be affected by several factors, and it's possible that -- It's always possible, but it's possibly likely that natural mortality may have changed over time. Again, the young fish, which are more susceptible to natural than fishing mortality, now compose a larger portion of the stock biomass, and so that's something that kind of affects the ability of management to impact the stock recovery, and so natural mortality may be exceeding that of fishing mortality for those fish, which may lessen the impact of management measures overall.

Also, we noted that fishing mortality has been reduced, but that recreational discard rates are unknown, and so the one-fish-per-vessel bag limit may be causing significant recreational discards, and, if unreported discards are significant, then fishing mortality, our estimates, may be biased low, and, if recruitment continues to remain low, then rebuilding progress will be impacted, as Rob showed in the projections.

We were asked about indicators, or metrics, to monitor for the stock, and we suggested that -- We provided a lot of support for development of the deepwater longline survey, which you all were discussing just a few moments ago, and we also suggested that the age and size selectivity information for snowy grouper in the short bottom longline survey and the chevron trap survey be assessed for its potential, to either provide general data for the assessment or possibly serve as a recruitment index. We also suggested that possibly we could obtain information on numbers and size distribution, and perhaps other information, through a citizen science project, which may get, possibly, at what Dewey was discussing earlier.

We were asked about recommending trigger levels for these metrics, and we recommended that perhaps it could be explored looking at frequency of occurrence of individuals captured in the fishery-independent surveys that exceed certain age or size thresholds, as an indicator of stock recovery, and so, if we start seeing more bigger, older fish, that that may be something to monitor, to watch for rebuilding progress. Also, body size at sex transition could be useful as an indicator of availability of the larger individuals in the stock.

We were asked to review the research recommendations provided by the assessment team and indicate those most likely to reduce risk and uncertainty in the next assessment, and we highlighted that increased collection of fishery-independent data, particularly age samples, was something that would be highly beneficial. We also highlighted the evaluation of methods of estimating snowy grouper natural mortality be developed, and, of course, any tagging information that could be obtained would be fantastic. Then, of course, we also, I guess, highlighted the recommendation that an evaluation of the utility of selectivity blocks that are chosen be conducted the next time this is not an update assessment.

Then we were asked if there were additional research recommendations that we thought would improve the assessment in the future, and so, again, we grouped these into major and minor, just to kind of set them up so that they address the major and minor uncertainties that I mentioned earlier, and so, with regard to the major uncertainty of natural mortality assumptions in the assessment, we recommended that, in the future, if the Then et al. analysis is used to inform natural mortality, that only the grouper and snapper-type species be used, rather than a broader group of species.

We also suggested, again, that any sort of empirical studies, field studies, tagging studies that could be done to estimate natural mortality for this species would be really beneficial, and we also suggested possibly conducting a simulation study to examine what factors might reduce uncertainty in the choice of natural mortality for this assessment. We also suggested, regarding the steepness issue, that the team consider not specifying the stock-recruitment relationship by specifying steepness and model recruitment as an average value with random residuals and then considering alternative proxies to MSY and BMSY.

Then, with regards to the minor additional research recommendations, the abundance indices, we highlighted the need to possibly explore a little bit of the effect of the index standardization methods, the new methods that were used, and how best to treat the data. Again, we highlighted that the deepwater survey would be highly desirable for informing this assessment, given the overall low catches of snowy in most of our surveys that are out there right now, and that the assessment -- I guess the data team evaluate the use of inverse sampling methods to analyze the data.

Continuing on, the MRIP data had a couple of outliers, as we mentioned, and that's something to look into in a bit more detail, and there's also, as I mentioned, a potential for bias in the discard estimates that could affect our estimates of fishing mortality, and there needs to be kind of a -- We recommended that there be more work done determining how best to treat these data in the assessment, whether they are outliers that are very high-level MRIP estimates or zero catches, which we know possibly are not real, and then, also, we noted that there were some shore-mode captures, which didn't seem quite right for snowy grouper, and that those should be investigated

in more detail in a future assessment. Not a lot, but enough worth looking at when this isn't just an update assessment. Then we also recommended that the temporal autocorrelation in the index, abundance index, residuals be examined, and maybe the team could explore ways to account for that within the model.

We also suggested that they explore the effect of plus-group definition, and so, given the uncertainty in the maximum age, is fifty-six the best age to plus-up, or does it go all the way out to eighty, and how might that affect the performance of the assessment model, given there is very few observations at those older ages?

We also suggested that they explore alternative methods for addressing recruitment assumptions in the projections, which is something that the Beaufort team I know is working on, and it's something that they've given a lot of thought to recently, and so hopefully we'll have more work on that in the future. We also suggested they evaluate the efficacy of recruitment estimation by subdividing the dataset and projected forward using a shorter time series, and that's just another method for looking at that.

Then we also suggested that they explore the prevalence of descending devices in the fishery and how that might be impacting our understanding of the impacts of discard survival, and then we also suggested considering the use of the EwE model to explore hypotheses regarding snowy grouper and its ecological relationship with other species in the South Atlantic. That's my last slide, but I would be happy to take any questions. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Genny. Do we have any questions? Chris, it looks like your hand is raised.

MR. CONKLIN: It is, and I put it down, but I did want to comment that definitely we should probably be throwing out all those shore-mode catches, and it's just not accurate at all. Other than that, that's all I've got.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Does anybody else have any questions for Genny? I don't see any hands. I really appreciate that thorough presentation, Genny.

DR. NESSLAGE: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, are we going through the fishery overview next?

MS. BROUWER: That's what's on the agenda, and so, if that's okay with you, Jessica, and Mike Errigo is going to lead that, and so hopefully it won't take too much time, but we just want to make sure that you guys have plenty of information. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good.

DR. ERRIGO: Since Chip went over this basic layout yesterday, I will go over this fairly quickly. He already explained the welcome page to you, and it basically just sets up how to use the webpage and what graphics are available. The history of management is not nearly as long as it is for amberjack, that you were doing yesterday, and this one is nine pages long, but it has the history of management, like all the amendments, and regulatory amendments that have any effect, any major

effect, on snowy grouper are in here. Then there's the graphs, and we'll go over the graphs a little bit. You have seen most of the assessment graphs already.

DR. COLLIER: Mike, every time you click on it, it's going to reset, and so just stay on the page. Given that they've just went through this assessment output, you can probably go on to the combined data for both sectors.

DR. ERRIGO: I will do that. Here is the percentage of the ACL that was caught by each sector and then the allocations, and, as you can see, both sectors had trouble staying under their ACL for a lot of the time series, and the recreational was very spiky, and it spiked up to almost 400 percent in several years, whereas the commercial sector -- So here's the 100 percent line right here, and the commercial sector wasn't quite as high over, but it still exceeded its ACL in many of the years, and, in fact, it's been over its ACL since -- Let's see. 2013 looks like the last time it was under its ACL.

Here are the sector landings, and then this right here is 2012, and that was that spike in the MRIP landings that happened because of the switchover to the FES, and that's why the blue for recreational is so large in this particular year. This is landings by wave. Again, there's 2012, and that's why the rec is so gigantic there, and it looks like it all come in in a single wave, and there was very few data points there, and so it was probably only a couple of trips. Then landings by state, and the states had to be lumped together, and so the gray is Florida and Georgia, and the blue is North Carolina and South Carolina. This is commercial. I guess I should have asked if there were questions on the combined data.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see Dewey's hand up. Let's go to Dewey, real quick, Mike.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. Can you go back to your combined graph, where you had the spike in the recreational year? Right there. So, when I look at that blue there, and I see some slivers of blue in the years, is there an idea of how many fish that is?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, we know what the intercepts are, and I don't know what it is off the top of my head, but, with snowy, the intercepts are always very low, for the most part, especially in the later part of the time series, where it's only one per vessel.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Has there been any outlook or any type of program going on to look at Facebook and count the numbers, because I was doing some research last night, and it's almost like you can count more on Facebook numbers of fish than you do in any of these charts recreationally, and I was just wondering if there is going to be any outreach or looking at any type of citizen science and that aspect of the thing, because there might be a clearer picture, similar to some of the dolphin work that was done in some of the workshops that was held, and it might would help a lot in bringing up these really unbelievable intercepts to some reality, and I was just curious if anybody is looking at that, where you go and count on Facebook, and that might be a good thing to do. Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: There is nothing like that that I know of that's going on currently, but this is definitely a fishery that would be great for a citizen science program, because it's very lacking in many of its data sources, because it's rarely intercepted, especially in the recreational sector. However, you should note that the recreational sector -- The landings usually are very, very small,

and its allocation is very tiny, which is probably why, in the assessment, just because there was a spike in one year, it had no effect on the assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you. Dewey, there was a research paper done a couple of years ago looking at Facebook for some of these data-limited species, and I will try to get that sent to you, and then, within the participatory workshops that are being done for the dolphin and wahoo species, they are looking into correlations with Facebook and some aspects of that type of data and how it can be used to inform some pieces of management, and so I don't know if it would be able to get a true estimate of landings from it, but maybe it could be useful for some type of scalar or something along the way, or maybe providing some insight on when changes might occur.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. We had the same kind of -- In the Mid-Atlantic with blueline tilefish, and the council went to a private permit and reporting, because it's classified as a rare event, but yet you were seeing all these landings on social media, and so that might be something that's got to be looked at here, with this also. Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: Any other questions before I move on?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands, Mike.

DR. ERRIGO: All right. Here, we have the commercial landings stream, and you will see it takes a nice dive and then starts to come back up for the latter half of the time series. There are no estimates of discards for snowy grouper, which is why that graph isn't here, and this is the landings by wave again, and these are the commercial landings by state, and, again, it's broken up into Florida and Georgia in the gray and North Carolina and South Carolina in the blue, and it looks a lot like the combined, because a lot of the landings are coming from the commercial sector.

These are the unweighted length compositions for snowy from commercial vessels by gear. These are the pounds and the trips, and stars mean the data is confidential, and we couldn't show it. A hundred trips caught over 90,000 pounds of snowy grouper, and that's how you read that. Then this is like 800 trips caught around a hundred snowy grouper per trip, and that's how you read this graph, these graphics here, and so that's the commercial data that we have, if anyone has any questions before I jump to recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim has a question, it looks like.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Can you go back to that chart about the trips? You're saying there were 100 trips that caught 90,000 pounds of snowy? Is that what that says?

DR. ERRIGO: I think Chip is going to clarify.

DR. COLLIER: Down on the X-axis, the horizontal, that is the number of pounds that are caught on a trip, and then, on the Y-axis, or the left side, that is the amount of pounds that come from trips that had that level of landings, and so, if you're looking at that 100 pounds, it's actually --

MR. GRINER: I see.

DR. COLLIER: Does that make sense?

MR. GRINER: Yes, that makes sense, and so the majority of the trips are well under the 200-pound limit, is what that's telling you, right?

DR. ERRIGO: I'm sorry. That was my mistake. I misspoke, but yes. The majority of the trips are coming from under the 200-pound limit.

MR. GRINER: Okay. Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: The majority of the landings are caught under the 200-pound limit.

MR. GRINER: Okay. Great. Thank you.

DR. ERRIGO: Thank you, Chip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any more hands.

DR. ERRIGO: Okay. Let's jump over to the recreational data. There are some data for releases in the recreational database, and they're small, but they're here, and this is the 2012 spike in the new FES data, and here are the landings by wave, and you can see they're all -- Here is 2012. This is the landings by state, and gray is Florida/Georgia, and blue is North Carolina/South Carolina. You can see, in 2012, whatever trips were intercepted that caused that spike, they came from the Florida/Georgia area. Most likely it was Florida, because the expansion factors tend to be higher in Florida, in the southern part of Florida, because the effort tends to be higher, and that would be my guess, but I haven't looked at it for a while, and so I can't remember off the top of my head.

Here is the size distribution of fish, and gray is for the charter fleet, and blue is for the private fleet. In the years where there is more data, I think you can see that the peaks are around the same size, and so I'm not sure if that's real or not, and the amount of data is very small and spotty. This graphic is read the same as on the commercial one, and snowy grouper per vessel, and this is one right here, and this is the amount of the landings, in numbers of fish, that came from trips that landed one snowy grouper per vessel, versus back in time, and you can land more of them, and here is five per vessel. That's it for the recreational. Does anyone have any questions about that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like Chip does.

DR. COLLIER: I did want to point out a couple of things on this slide. One is, if you're looking at this bottom one, it is really one snowy grouper per vessel, and that's the current regulation, and so, like Mike said, going back in time, it wasn't that regulation, and so this number is going to vary depending on the number of people that are on the trip. Mike, if you could go up to the seasonal part as well for the recreational.

If you guys remember, you guys had established kind of a deepwater season for a few species, which it's basically the May through October, and I think it's May through October, and you can see that's playing out in the recreational catches. Sorry. It's May through August, and, for the most part, you're seeing that the catches are -- Even though they're small, they are showing up in

the time period when it's legal, and I think there's been some discussion in the past, with these early catches that occur, like in 2015 and 2018, and you're seeing some catches prior to that May season, and I think that occurs down in Florida. I think that's where that was occurring.

DR. ERRIGO: It should also be noted that these are MRIP landings, and the BIs could be dead discards. It's hard to tell, and it's extremely tiny.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any more hands.

DR. ERRIGO: All right, and I will really quickly go over what life history data there is, and so here's the length-at-age, with the error bars, and the length-weight relationship for snowy, and this is the proportion mature at-length, and so, for 50 percent maturity, they're here, around twenty-five inches, just a little less than twenty-five inches. Then this is the proportion that are female at-length, and so, when they're little, they're all female, and then they gradually transition to male, and that's it, and so that's all the information we have for snowy, and you guys can peruse that, and you can jump back to it, if we need to, for anything when you're making your deliberations.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you so much, Mike. Yes, it seemed like some of those things were a little small, but, if people pulled it up on their own computer, I'm sure it would be a little bit bigger, but I appreciate you walking through all of that with us.

DR. ERRIGO: No problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So then, Myra, to kind of turn it back to you and the committee action, don't we need to provide some direction here about starting an amendment?

MS. BROUWER: Right, and so that's what we're looking for, is whether the committee would like to recommend that an amendment be initiated based on these new catch level recommendations from the SSC, and then we do have the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel meeting coming up in April, if you would like to direct us to obtain some input from the AP, and I should mention that there is not a fishery performance report for snowy grouper, and that was one of the ones that sort of got hit by the pandemic, and it was on the schedule to be developed, and then things just didn't work out that way, and so the AP has not done one for snowy grouper, and then we can talk some more about that when we get to the topics for the AP later on, but, at this point, I guess, if you would like, Jessica, I could bring up just the document, if you would like to give some direction, or perhaps make a motion, and then we can move on in the agenda.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, Myra. A couple of questions. I'm assuming, since we need to look at allocation, this would need to be a full plan amendment, and is that right?

MS. BROUWER: That would be correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I would be looking to get somebody on the committee to make a motion to start an amendment. Mel.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica. **I would move to instruct staff, direct staff, to initiate a full plan amendment here for snowy grouper.** I don't know how much more detail they need, and they can populate the initial cut on it, with the elements that need to be in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we have a second?

MR. POLAND: I will go ahead and second that, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Steve. Steve, would you like to add to the discussion here?

MR. POLAND: No, I'm good. You can go on to Tim.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. So what would be the purpose and need of this, exactly?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I believe it would be to bring in the new information from the stock assessment.

MS. BROUWER: If I may, Jessica, Tim, because there was an update to the assessment that was just conducted, the council would need to adjust those catch levels, and the other thing is there's been adjustments to the recreational estimates, based on the FES revisions, which impacts those catch levels, and we need to adjust, so that you have sort of the same currency, the same sort of thing that we're having to deal with with red porgy and other species as they become -- As those assessments are updated.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica. To add, and I'm starting to learn a little bit about how the South Atlantic Council operates relative to the Gulf, and the Gulf typically is much more prescriptive with their motions, but, for this amendment, we're obviously needing to address the overfishing, as determined by the stock assessment, as well as modify and update the rebuilding plan, given we're about halfway through the rebuilding plan at this point, and, obviously, that comes in the form of adjusting catch limits and making other management modifications.

MS. BROUWER: If I could, Jessica, I will just kind of reply to Andy there, and so the IPT would take a look at this, Andy, and then assess what suite of actions, or options, the council could consider, and that would come back to them, I believe it's in September, or maybe later this year, and I would have to refer back to the workplan, but that's normally how we do it, and so we don't spend a lot of time trying to figure out the exact range of actions in an FMP, and the IPT kind of puts that together and brings it back to the council later on.

MR. STRELCHECK: Perfect. Thanks, Myra, and so that's helpful, and certainly, if you need more specification from us, please let us know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. Thank you, Myra. Mel.

MR. BELL: I don't have anything else. That's why I was -- I was leaving it kind of general, and I was relying upon the IPT to come back with the appropriate things in there, based on the updated assessment, and so I think we're good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mel. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Just so I'm clear and understanding the outcome of this new assessment, basically, the status was overfished before the assessment, and so now it's overfished and undergoing overfishing, but we're not reaching the quotas on recreational catches, and so where does the overfishing occurring come from?

DR. ERRIGO: I can help with that. Well, for the recreational side, it's very up and down. Sometimes we're four-times over the ACL, and sometimes we're four-times under, and it's very uncertain. Most of the overages are coming from the commercial sector, which is where most of the allocation is. 95 percent of the ACL is allocated to the commercial sector, and it's going over its allocation in most years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: That's what is so puzzling to me. I mean, the commercial sector, if it goes over, it only goes over by a few percent, and it's not much. I mean, it's monitored, and it's all accounted for, and so, when we do go over, it's a very small amount, and, when I look back that most of the trips were 100 pounds, with a 200-pound limit, I don't see how the commercial sector could be causing overfishing. They have been steady in what they're doing for a while now, and so I'm just having a hard time understanding where the overfishing occurring is coming from.

DR. ERRIGO: I can help with that, also, and I'm sorry. I misunderstood what you were asking. That portion of it is probably coming from the shift in natural mortality, and it's not that they weren't following the rules before, but it's that the assessment was overly optimistic, because the natural mortality was thought to be higher, and so it was thought that the stock was more productive. It turns out that the natural mortality is actually much lower than we thought. Therefore, if you apply that back in time, what we thought was an okay level of fishing turned out to be overfishing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Mike, thanks. That's sort of what I understood from our presentation earlier, is that, really, what we're dealing with, and someone correct me if I'm wrong, is that, several times, as mentioned, there's a potential new productivity regime, and it's unfortunate that we don't have a different term at our disposal, at this moment, for overfishing versus -- I forget what the other -- There's another term out there, where, Tim, it may not be it's what we're doing.

I think, as a commercial industry, I don't think anyone is pointing to us and saying we're to blame, and I just think what's happening is the stock isn't doing what we need it to do, and it may be completely out of our control, and it's all what's happening in nature, and that's the way I understand it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Kerry. Tim and then John.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Well, it just seems -- At least, in my way of thinking, it just seems counterintuitive that, if the fish live longer, and there is more older fish out there, then I don't see

that as a bad thing. I see that as a good thing, and I don't see how that change in natural mortality doesn't better the situation, and I don't know how that causes overfishing to be occurring, when you're taking the same amount of fish out as we have been, and the fish live longer than we thought they did, and, just anecdotally, we catch -- When we snowy fish, we catch our fish, and we catch them in two drops, and we catch little ones, big ones, medium ones, but we catch some fifty-six-year-olds too, and so I'm just having a hard time understanding that, if the fish live longer, which means there should be more breeders out there, then how does that -- How does that cause overfishing to be occurring?

DR. ERRIGO: Okay. I will try to explain this, real quick. It's not that there is more older fish out there, or all the fish that we thought were one age are older. It's that they can get to be to a really old age, but those age classes, those older age classes that we want to be in the fishery, are still not there, and they're still very, very small, or non-existent, in the data, but the data hasn't changed.

It's just we now know that natural mortality means they could get older than what we're seeing, which means the stock is not in as good shape as we thought it was. It hasn't filled out for the older age classes like we thought it was doing. Suddenly, there are more age classes out further, with nothing in them, that we didn't know were there before. Does that make more sense? It's not that, oh, okay, these fish are actually older, but it's that we still have the same fish at the same ages, but now we know that they can get even older, and that means that they have a lot more growing to do, which means that the stock is not in as good shape as we thought it was.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Jessica. I had raised my hand first to talk about the status situation and just to point out one of Tim's questions about the fishery and as it has performed in the last few years and the status change under the stock assessment, and it's because, Tim, between stock assessments, overfishing status is based on a measure of the ACL and what was harvested, and so, if you're not going over the ACL, then overfishing is not occurring, and that's just a pretty simple definition.

Then there's a more complicated picture, which is what's actually going on in the population, and that's what the stock assessment reflects, and so, every time we get the stock assessment, we get another look at that stock, and we get an actually more accurate picture of those past years, where we were just basing our expectation of performance and our thoughts on stock status on landings and the ACL from the last assessment.

As Kerry mentioned, now we're in a new regime, in terms of this stock, and so what we've seen in this assessment is the natural mortality is one of the things that has changed, but, also, we've been getting poor recruitment in recent years, which it means that, if we were to compare the projections from the last assessment, that supported the ACLs that we've been operating under, we might find out that those projections were overly optimistic, because the population has not been putting as many young fish into the population as was probably assumed at that time. I think, if you look at -- Recall the recruitment figures, and Genny highlighted this too, that the last few years show markedly better recruitment, and that's why the SSC didn't have a lot of confidence in those, because they were showing the recruitment that would be expected from the current level of spawning stock.

We've not been observing that, and so the SSC based their recommendations on something that better reflected what you've been actually seeing, and so all of those kind of changes within the assessment puts you in a very different situation, and so here, today, now, we're basing the stock status on this stock assessment and not just an evaluation of landings versus ACL, and we will get a letter from the agency that tells us exactly what that status says, and it will start counting down the clock for us to respond.

Then I also wanted to try to circle back on the natural mortality situation and productivity, and the simple explanation is that a stock that has a very low natural mortality and lives a really long time can just not be exploited as heavily, and so it can't have as high of a sustainable F level as a stock that is short-lived with a high natural mortality, and so, simply put, you can fish menhaden at a heck of a lot higher fishing mortality rate than you can fish a grouper, and so you're trying to get the population of older fish, to much older ages, and there's less available to be removed by man, by the fisheries or anything like that, and so just a change like that -- Because what we're doing in the stock assessment, and I don't want to get too complicated, but we're actually estimating the total mortality, which is the combination of F and M.

All other things being equal, if you raised the M, as we've done, the F that you're going to perceive that you can take is going to be lower, and so we're seeing a number of these changes between the recruitment and the change in M and the status of the stock sort of all coming to bear here and creating this situation where we are faced with a stock that is overfishing and overfished and is a little bit more challenged to rebuild than perhaps we thought last time around.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. John Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks for the opportunity, and I think that John really addressed it well. Basically, we originally thought the species was more like a Georgia pine, and then, as we've got more age samples, we realize it's more like a California redwood, and you can't harvest them at the same rate, and living to eighty years old means that it can't be harvested as rapidly and as intensively, and that's the main change that has occurred. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I will pass. I better listen. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester and then Andy.

MR. BREWER: This is, I guess, a question for Mike, or maybe for John, but how is it determined here that these fish have the potential to live a lot longer, which apparently is kind of throwing the prior assumptions out of whack, and what level of confidence is there that these older-aged fish did in fact exist in some quantity at some point in the past? I will leave it at that.

DR. ERRIGO: Well, they actually found fish -- They actually aged a fish that was eighty years old, and they aged several fish that were well above the last maximum age. They aged one in the sixties, one in the fifties, and I can't remember all the ages and how many samples there were. Then there was a study where they did a bomb radiocarbon, and it's a complex study that they do on fish, but it gives you -- It tells you that the maximum age is at least fifty-six years old, and so

we know that the fish can go to at least fifty-six years old, due to this method, and they have a lot of confidence in that, and there were snowy grouper aged around that age, or even a little older, and so this comes from both samples and a study that was done that has a lot of backing to it, that people trust, and so we do know that it's possible.

We don't really touch the question of did fish of this age ever exist in any sort of quantities, and the older age classes actually don't usually have a lot of fish in them, but they do usually have some, and there's an age distribution at MSY that can be estimated, and it will show you like how many fish should be in this age class and how many fish should be in that age class if the population is at MSY, and that's what we go by.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica. Just one other point, and so I think John Carmichael and John Walter have covered this well, but, I mean, if you look at the data that was shared with us from Rob, it indicates very -- I will say mild overfishing occurring, where it's just a little bit above the FMSY level. If you look back at the historical time series, we were harvesting at a fishing mortality rate three or four or five-times the rate that would maximize sustainable yield, and so, although we're using the term "overfishing", and it's correctly being used, just recognize that it's a very different level of overfishing right now than historically we've been observing.

The other thing that I would just note is that, although it is above the FMSY level, there's certainly a lot of uncertainty around the estimate, and, based on Rob's presentation, I think he indicated that there was like a 45 percent probability that overfishing is not occurring, and so the bottom line is that we're very close to what we need to be, in terms of achieving our fishing mortality targets, given the assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Andy. Chris, and then we're going to vote on this motion.

MR. CONKLIN: I know we put a recreational season in on the deepwater species, and we changed the recreational bag limit, and so we've already taken some pretty drastic measures from where we were, as far as managing the fish and the fishermen, and then the commercial ACL has, I think, consistently gone down over the years, off the top of my head, and so, if we're pretty close to it, I mean, what are the next steps, as far as what we're going to need to do, hopefully without closing the harvest completely?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that I understand. We're starting this plan amendment to bring in these new estimates. Myra, do you want to add on to that?

MS. BROUWER: Well, we can, if you would like to, but I think, in a nutshell, basically, the council would have to address overfishing, and put in measures to end overfishing, take another look at the rebuilding plan, and also look at tweaking management measures, sector allocations, and possibly accountability measures, and so the whole package needs to be looked at, and so it's probably going to be pretty similar to the red porgy amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Thanks for that clarification on what all is going to be in there. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I wasn't like asking -- It was more like a theoretical question, and I wasn't like asking for answers right now, but I just don't want us to get backed into a corner, and I hope that the information in the amendment, which I'm sure it will, will include the actions we've already taken that probably haven't been factored into this, and so I think we're on the right track, at least.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I'm good. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. **So we have a motion on the board here to instruct staff to initiate a full plan amendment for snowy grouper.** You heard from Myra what all would be in this document. **Are there any objections to this motion? I don't see any hands going up, and we will consider this motion approved.** Before we move on, let's go ahead and take another five-minute break, and then we'll move on to the next item, which is the wreckfish modernization of the ITQ program.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like we have most of the folks back. I'm going to turn it back to Myra, or, actually, it might be Christina who is going to go into the wreckfish ITQ modernization, and I think it's Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: It is, unless Myra is really itching to cover wreckfish, but I'm going to guess that she'll let me roll through it.

MS. BROUWER: Please do. No thank you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. So, again, just as a quick refresher, this amendment is a response to the wreckfish ITQ program review that was finished up, I believe, in -- The review was completed in 2019, and so this amendment is a direct result of the recommendations in that review. It does include the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan objectives, and these don't need to be formally incorporated in an action and alternatives sort of format, but they do need to be listed in a full plan amendment to be incorporated into the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan, and so that's what we intend to do here with this amendment, and these goals and objectives came from the snapper grouper visioning process, and they have been reviewed by the Snapper Grouper AP, as well as the council, a number of times. Unless there are any questions or comments about those goals and objectives listed here, I'm going to move into the main amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then let's dive into the meat of this. There are seven proposed actions under this amendment right now, and there are likely going to be quite a few more actions, and so what I really want to talk to you guys about right now is the expected timing for this amendment. It was originally scheduled for final action in December of 2021. After working with the Regional Office and talking with the IPT quite a bit, it's become clear that that timeline is probably unrealistic for completion of this amendment.

The way the regulations are written right now is very closely tied to the paper-based system, and so going through and updating everything that needs to be updated to transition into a modern ITQ program with an electronic reporting system is going to require almost a complete overhaul of the CFR, and so that's something that the IPT is working on right now.

At this meeting, what I would like to do with you guys is go over the actions and alternatives, as we've developed them now, and some are still in progress, and I will let you know when we get to those, and there's some guidance we need from the council in order to continue developing certain actions, and so I will go over all of that, but that's really sort of the stage we're at. Hopefully, by the June 2021 meeting, we'll have more fleshed-out actions and alternatives for you to formally approve for analysis, and then we'll work forward from there on the timeline. Is there any questions about sort of where we are with timing or why this amendment is going to take a bit longer to develop?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. I love it when I'm making myself clear. That's always a good sign. Diving right in, this is the draft purpose and need, as the IPT has developed it right now. The purpose of this action is to modernize the wreckfish individual transferable quota program, revise management measures, and update the goals and objectives of the fishery management plan for the snapper grouper fishery of the South Atlantic region.

The need for this action is to improve program monitoring and enforcement, as well as data collection and management, and provide more flexibility for fishers and increase profitability in the wreckfish ITQ program and ensure the goals and objectives of the fishery management plan provide for a comprehensive approach to addressing problems within the snapper grouper fishery. I will pause here for a second, to see if anyone has concerns about the way the purpose and need is written right now, or any recommendations or direction to staff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks good to me, and I don't see any hands. I think we're good to move on.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then let's get into some of the more complicated stuff. I want to note that one of the things we did for this amendment is include, above the alternatives, this little section called Purpose of Action, and this wreckfish ITQ review was approved back in 2019, and it's been a while since we've gone over it, and we've got a couple of new faces on the council, and so we wanted to just provide this little section to explain why action on this is recommended in the ITQ review, for those that may not be familiar.

Action 1 looks at revising sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and this is in this amendment from a recommendation from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, as well as the wreckfish shareholders, and there is concern that the recreational allocation for wreckfish is too high, and it's a bycatch fishery, and it's not really a targeted one, and they also noted that wreckfish are rarely encountered through the MRIP survey, and, in fact, as of 2019, there were no records of any recreational wreckfish landings, except for one intercept in 2019.

That being said, there is recreational harvest that does occur, and I think it was Dewey who brought up social media earlier. If you go on Instagram or Facebook and just search for "#wreckfish", a

number of images will pop up of recreational anglers having caught and landed wreckfish, and so we do know that it does occur, and so there are a couple of alternatives proposed under here.

We've got Alternative 1, which would retain the 95/5 percent split. Alternative 2 would allocate 98 percent to the commercial sector and 2 percent to the recreational sector, and Alternative 3 would allocate 99 percent of the total annual catch to commercial and 1 percent to recreational. Then Alternative 4 would allocate 100 percent of the ACL to the commercial sector, and I want to talk about this just for a second.

One thing to note is that this idea of the recreational sector being *de minimis* is not something that we've used at the council before, and so it may be precedent setting, which could delay this amendment quite a bit, because it would require a much more significant need to document, and it's also an idea that's written into the Atlantic States Commission's charter, which is why our council is probably a little familiar with it, but it's not something that's written into the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Even in the case where ASMFC has established that a sector, or, often, in their case, individual states are *de minimis*, they do have sort of a de facto allocation, where 1 percent of the total catch limit is reserved for *de minimis* harvest, and so the IPT has made a suggestion. To avoid that issue, the council could consider rewording Alternative 4, and, instead of using 100 percent, they could do what the Gulf does in their IFQ fisheries, where they use a de facto allocation, and so they set a buffer between the ABC, ACL, or ACT that then accounts for any recreational landings, and so that would avoid this sort of issue with using 100 percent to the commercial sector or *de minimis*.

Alternatively, the other alternatives keep the recreational sector allocation fairly low, at 2 percent and 1 percent respectively, for Alternatives 2 and 3, and so, with that, I will turn it over to get -- What we're really looking for here is some guidance from the council on how they would like to deal with the issue related to Alternative 4 and if this range of alternatives is appropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Let's go to Monica first.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So Christina raised some of the issues that I was thinking about with the problems of having something like Alternative 4, where we allocate 100 percent of the total annual catch limit to the commercial sector, and we know there is some recreational harvest, and so we're setting ourselves up for exceeding the annual catch limit. Christina did mention -- What I had looked into too was how the Gulf handles it, and there is -- For example, with other shallow-water grouper, they will have a commercial ACL, but there is a buffer between the total ACL and the commercial ACL, and so the commercial ACL is set at, I don't know, and I'll make up a number of 100, the total ACL is set at 100, and then the commercial ACL is set at 98.

In essence, you have a situation where there's a buffer, which is kind of what you have under this action. You have 1 percent and 2 percent, and it acts as a bit of a buffer to the commercial sector as well, and I understand that the commercial fishermen think that 5 percent is too high, and I think it's appropriate for you to look at different numbers, in terms of percentages, for recreational harvest, but I would steer you away from using the *de minimis* in Alternative 4, unless you're going to put in an additional buffer, as Christina mentioned. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Monica, and so a couple of things here. First of all, I wanted to say, Christina, I really like this purpose of the action section. Even those of us that have been here the whole time on the wreckfish items still appreciate the reminder, let me say, about that section, and so I really like that section, and then I'm looking for some committee discussion here about these alternatives.

When I look at this, and I heard the discussion here, it seems, to me, that it's easiest just to remove Alternative 4 and not even consider it, instead of trying to reword it with this buffer suggestion, and it seems easier to just change this, by totally removing this alternative, but I would look to others on the committee, to see what they think, and Mel has his hand up.

MR. BELL: Yes, ma'am. After listening to Christina and Monica, I think removing Alternative 4 would be probably the easiest thing to do, and it would keep us out of trouble, perhaps.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mel. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm just concurring with Mel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Christina, do we need a motion to do that, or is just direction okay?

MS. WIEGAND: Just direction is sufficient, and my apologies, and I should have mentioned this earlier, but this amendment is also being scoped during the council meeting, and so you'll be receiving public comments on this on Wednesday, and so there's no need for too much wordsmithing right now, and removing Alternative 4 is helpful guidance, and it's what the IPT needs to move forward, but, at this point, we don't need any motion, and it's just direction to staff.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Great. Thank you, Christina. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Christina, can you tell us how many fish 1 or 2 percent of the quota would equate to for the recreational sector? Is it like a thousand fish?

MS. WIEGAND: Off the top of my head, I cannot, but that's a number that I could easily get for you.

MR. STRELCHECK: The reason I'm asking is we're working in nice round percentages of 1 percent and 2 percent, and we're flying blindly, for the most part, in terms of being able to actually know how much is being caught by the recreational sector, but we know it's very few landings, and so there is the potential here to even allocate down to another decimal place, and so we might want to consider broadening the range of alternatives, just given how small the catches are, or the known catches are, for the recreational sector.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thanks for that question, Andy. Just based on the previous ACL, which was 376,000 pounds, and you take 1 percent of that, and that's going to be 3,700 pounds, and, if it's a thirty-pound fish, that's going to be right around a thousand fish, somewhere in there, 1,000 to 2,000 fish, just doing some rough numbers real quick for you guys.

MS. WIEGAND: Thank you, Chip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, any follow-up on that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so, given kind of the stage of the amendment, I would be interested in the IPT exploring allocations that would, I guess, be more consistent with what we would expect would be landed by the recreational sector, rather than just a round percentage, and so base it whatever limited data and information we have available to us, to get a better sense, so that allocation could be narrowed between the 1 and 2 percent increments to something else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like Christina is capturing that.

DR. COLLIER: Sorry. I did my division real bad, and it should have been 100 to 200 fish. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve.

MR. POLAND: I was just doing back-of-the-envelope, and a twenty-five-pound fish is about 160 fish, and so I'm curious. That one year that there was an intercept for wreckfish, how was that expanded up? What was the catch estimate for that one there? Do we know? I'm assuming the PSE was astronomical, but I'm just curious what that estimate was.

MS. WIEGAND: I'm sorry, Steve. I don't know that off the top of my head, but that would be something super easy to look up and provide to you guys, but I just can only keep so many numbers in my head, and I will make a note next time to include some landing information to be partnered with this action to present to you all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy and then Chip.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just looking at the MRIP website, they estimated twenty-three fish, with a PSE of 99 percent, and so highly uncertain, and that equated to 472 pounds. That's the only estimate in the last ten years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I actually went to SERO's site, and they indicated that the 2012 estimate was just right around a thousand pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Steve.

MR. POLAND: I was just going to say that I was on the website too, and I'm showing twenty-three fish for 2012.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So do we need to add some alternatives here, or no, or an alternative here?

MS. WIEGAND: If you would like, I can take the direction to staff back to the IPT, and the IPT can develop additional alternatives under this that we can then bring back to you in June for approval, if that's something the committee would like the IPT to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's great. Andy, does that work?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, that would be great.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else here on Action 1? All right. I'm going to turn it back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Rolling on to Action 2, Action 2 looks at modifying the commercial fishing year for wreckfish, and the purpose of this action is to reduce administrative burden. The electronic reporting system for IFQ fisheries has scheduled downtime near the end of the year, and so, under Alternative 1, the current commercial fishing year begins on April 15 and ends on April 14, with a spawning season closure from January 15 through April 15.

Alternative 2 proposes modifying that commercial fishing year to begin on January 1 and run through December 31, to address that system downtime and to ease the administrative burden of sort of end-of-year accounting for IFQ fisheries.

One of the things the IPT wanted some feedback from the council on is whether or not you guys would like to consider modifying the spawning season closure from wreckfish to January 1 through March 31, to sort of better align with the proposed modification to the commercial fishing year under Alternative 2. I will note that, when we talked to the shareholders about this, they were willing to look at changes, but they were cautious about moving forward and addressing that spawning season closure, and they did note that some shareholders participate in the golden tilefish fishery early in January, and so they rarely fish for wreckfish prior to January 14. What we would be looking for here is guidance on whether or not to consider that spawning season closure and whether you were comfortable with the alternatives as written under this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. I kind of would like to consider it, but, Kerry, do you have some thoughts here on considering that spawning season closure?

MS. MARHEFKA: I was distracted for a minute, and I was talking to Chris about something else, and so I really apologize. Give me a hot minute.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. While she's working on that, what do other committee members think about adding an action to have a spawning season closure here? Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just looking at it from the standpoint of which is more, I guess, beneficial, or practical, and, I mean, there's adjusting it a little bit to accommodate a spawning season closure versus trying to line it up so it works better for the fishery, and I'm not sure how much benefit you get from a couple of weeks one way or the other for a spawning season, versus maybe benefit derived to the fishery from lining it up in a different manner, and, I mean, you're still in the ballpark there, it looks like.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So I see the commercial fishing year changing as a different issue than a spawning season closure, and I know, currently, it's kind of one in the same, because of the way they've set up the fishing year and all that, but you could have a commercial fishing year that starts

on January 1, and you could have a separate action then that, for example, talked about different months that you would not want to see any fishing occurring, because of a spawning season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica, what I just heard there is, if we want to consider a spawning season closure, it needs to be in a different action, and is that what you're suggesting?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think that makes sense, because, otherwise, we're conflating the two things, right, and so I think it would be better if you had a separate action for a spawning season closure, if you're going to move forward with modifying the commercial fishing year, and when it starts and when it stops and that sort of thing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, that makes sense. Kerry, what are your thoughts on adding a separate action that's more of a spawning season closure?

MS. MARHEFKA: I think Monica makes a really good point. I really want to hear, especially now, because we only have a couple of guys to talk about it with, and so I think we separate them out and let the guys sort of guide us on how that time between the 31st and the spawning season closure will affect them, if that makes sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It does, and I like that. Christina is typing there about including a separate action to consider this spawning season. We have it listed as direction to staff, and Christina indicated that we don't necessarily need motions here. Any more discussion here on modifying the commercial fishing year or adding this action for the spawning season closure? I don't see any hands, and I'm going to turn it back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving on down the list, next up is Action 3, which looks at modifying the requirement to possess a commercial vessel permit for wreckfish. Just as a heads-up, this is one of the actions and alternatives that the IPT is still working on, and so we're sort of going to discuss with you what we've got now, but it's likely that these actions and alternatives will come back to you in June looking a little different, but the purpose of the action is to address what is sort of seen as this unnecessarily burdensome requirement for program participants.

They are required to possess two permits, and so the snapper grouper permit in addition to the wreckfish permit, plus owning ITQ shares, and it complicates the use of data by program analysts, and requiring NMFS to determine whether an entity is an employee or a contractor or an agent of the vessel owner can be difficult without requesting more information, and that can also make data confidentiality issues even more complicated and burdensome for analyses.

One of the big things we're looking at trying to get away from is the agent language right here, and so it says, to obtain a commercial vessel permit for wreckfish, the applicant must be a wreckfish shareholder and either the shareholder must be the vessel owner or the owner or operator must be an employee, contractor, or agent of the shareholder, and that "or agent" part is sort of the complicating language, and we're looking into the rationale for why that was originally included. Unfortunately, it's something that was included back at the very beginning of the wreckfish ITQ program, and so those meeting minutes and amendments have not all been digitized, and so we're going back to search through those documents, to get some rationale on why the council included it back then.

Alternative 2 removes that specific “agent” language, and then Alternative 3 would simply remove that last sentence altogether, to remove the requirement for the wreckfish permit. To commercially harvest or sell wreckfish, you would simply have to have a commercial permit for South Atlantic snapper grouper, and the permit holder must be a wreckfish shareholder, which should hopefully get at some of the concerns that the wreckfish ITQ shareholders have about opening up the fishery broadly.

One of the things that staff is working on is sort of creating an outline of different decision points for keeping the commercial wreckfish permit versus removing the commercial wreckfish permit, because it’s a little complicated, but one of the things to consider is that, as we move towards this electronic reporting system, eligibility requirements can be built into that system, and so, for example, anyone who owns an SG1 permit could join the program, but only those accounts associated with shares would be able to hold allocation and harvest fish, and so no public participants would be able to sort of access shares.

Like I said, this amendment is under development, or this action is under development, by the IPT as well, and we’ll bring more details back to you, but one of the big decision points for you guys will be, if you’re going to remove this permit requirement, what eligibility requirements do you want in place for the electronic reporting system? I hope that’s about as clear as mud now, and so I will stop there, and then I have one more question about this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Christina. That did help me in focusing in on that agent of the shareholder and explaining what the difference was between Alternative 2 and Alternative 2, and so that was definitely helpful for me. Kerry, what are your thoughts here?

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I’ll take a whack at the low-hanging fruit. In my mind, absolutely you have to be a Snapper Grouper 1 and not an unlimited snapper grouper -- I’m sorry. The 225 permit older, and so that’s an easy one for me. It seems easy enough to get rid of the “agent” language, and then I’m trying to recall what the shareholders’ concern was. The shareholders are fine, right, with getting rid of the snapper grouper requirement, but their concern is a rush -- Like there would be entrants into the fishery, but they can’t get into the fishery if they don’t have the coupons, and that part always my brain gets wrapped around a little.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, me too. My recollection was that they wanted to keep the permit requirement, but I’m hoping that we can get some more feedback from them on why, and, after they read this description, if they still think that we need to keep it.

MS. WIEGAND: My recollection, from the shareholders meeting back in October, was that they were concerned that removing the permit would encourage new entrants, and, in working with Jessica Stephen at SERO, it’s clear that there can be eligibility requirements built into the electronic system that would prevent this sort of open access to wreckfish.

The permit system is set up in an odd way, where the snapper grouper permit is limited access, and the wreckfish permit is open access, but then you have to own shares, which is sort of quasi-limited access, and it’s an interesting permit structure, but my understanding, and I agree that it would be good to discuss this more with shareholders, particularly in terms of what eligibility requirements the council would like to see and what the shareholders would like to see, but my understanding is that, even if the council chooses to get rid of the wreckfish permit, there are still

ways to have certain eligibility requirements in order to be involved in the wreckfish fishery, and it wouldn't become sort of an open access free-for-all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That helped jog my memory, and I do remember that they had an issue with the shares only being associated with the snapper grouper permit, and then, if you're going to put these eligibility requirements in the system, it just seems like why not just keep the wreckfish permit, but, anyway, maybe we can try to get more input from the shareholders, but Kerry put her hand back up.

MS. MARHEFKA: I've thought it through. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Christina, what do you need from us here on this action?

MS. WIEGAND: There was just sort of one question point the IPT wanted to bring to your attention, and Kerry already addressed it, but I will open it up, in case there's any other discussion, but I believe, and, again, I wasn't on staff when the ITQ review was being developed, but I believe, when the ITQ review was being developed, it was assumed, or thought, that it was a snapper grouper unlimited permit that was required to qualify for a wreckfish permit. It seems like the CFR may be a bit unclear, and so, again, the IPT is looking into it, but is the council's understanding, or desire, that it be only a snapper grouper unlimited permit that's required to qualify for the wreckfish permits, or the snapper grouper limited permit as well?

MR. BELL: If that's in there, I would go with unlimited, and I don't think I would deal with the 225.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anybody else? Okay. Christina, do you have what you need here? Kerry put her hand up.

MS. MARHEFKA: Not to beat a dead horse about the 225, but it does have me thinking. What I'm trying to wrap my brain around is, in any of this, are we creating a market for speculation with these permits? The 225 is an easy one, and we want those -- When they go, they need to go, and, if they had a 225 permit and then had a separate wreckfish permit, in a way, that's sort of a backdoor way of keeping those alive longer, in my mind. What I keep trying to wrap my brain around is how we don't create any kind of speculative market for the wreckfish permits, and I'm not there yet, but that's what I'm wondering if the guys were saying and I would like to sort of chew on a little more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree with that. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I am in agreement with the SG1 unlimited requirement. For some reason, I feel like, when I applied for my wreckfish permit, they made me prove that I had quota, but I can't be certain about that, and it's been several years, but, other than, that's all I had to say.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chris. Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: So there's no more input that I need on this action, and the IPT will just continue to work on it and, again, flesh out a bit more information for you on what the decision points would

be, should you choose to keep the permit or remove the permit, and that will come back to you in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds good.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, moving right along, next up is Action 4, and this is implementing an electronic reporting system for the wreckfish ITQ. Currently, it still works under that paper-based system, and so the goal of moving to an electronic system would be increasing timeliness of reported data, improving data quality, reducing costs and time for management, and providing some additional flexibility to fishermen.

This is, again, one of those actions that is likely going to result in more alternatives and more actions, and this is where the IPT is working on reviewing the entirety of the CFR as it relates to wreckfish and determining what needs to change, and, of what needs to change, what needs formal action by the council versus what's more administrative and something that NMFS will take care of.

Just sort of updating you on where we are with this, a great way to sort of wrap your mind around the changes that are going to be needed is to look at Table 1, and this table was put together, again, by Jessica Stephen, and she presented this to you in December, but we wanted to include it here as well, and it sort of illustrates the changes that need to happen when moving from a paper system to an electronic system.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that I think everybody is in agreement that electronic is the way to go, but, as Christina was saying, the devil is in the details here, and we have all the details, and that's pretty technical, and so they can just get back with us on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, that sounds good. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am wondering, for organizational state, we would not then move the modification of the commercial fishing year to after this action, since it's the electronic reporting, isn't it, that's triggering the reason for the modification of the fishing year?

MS. WIEGAND: That's correct, and so, if it makes more sense to the council, organization-wise, we can move that action down below the actions that will address electronic reporting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else that you need here, Christina?

MS. WIEGAND: No, there is nothing that I need here, and I just wanted to sort of illustrate the changes that are going to need to be made, and, again, this is something the IPT is working on, and it will likely be a pretty heavy lift, but we will bring you more detailed actions and alternatives back in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds great.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then I will move on down to Action 5. Action 5 looks at requiring all commercially-permitted wreckfish vessels to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems, and this is something that the council asked us to consider at the December meeting. One of the notes was that wreckfish shareholders have talked about VMS as sort of an option to get rid of the offloading site and time requirements, which we'll talk about in a little bit, and we did discuss this with the Law Enforcement AP, and they noted that VMS can be beneficial for enforcing offloading requirements, as well as closed areas, search and rescue, and communication between owners and operators.

The shareholder comments are included in this document, and I will note that I wouldn't necessarily characterize their comments as being big fans of VMS. However, they do see it as sort of a necessary evil, or a way to get around some of the frustrations they have with the offloading site and time requirements.

Right now, we just have two alternatives under here, the no action alternative and then Alternative 2, which would require vessels to be equipped with a VMS. Should the council want to move forward with considering VMS for this fishery, there are several decision points that will need to be developed into additional actions and alternatives.

Just to sort of give an example of that, the Gulf VMS requirements are listed on the screen, and there are things like reporting frequency and hail-in and hail-out requirements, whether they want to use satellite or cellular units, and there will be a number of things that need to be discussed, but, before the IPT goes along and starts developing all those actions and alternatives, we were hoping to get a little bit more guidance from the council on why the council feels that VMS may be necessary in this fishery and what would be the purpose of requiring VMS, and so, for this action, we're really looking for some guidance on that and then firm guidance on whether or not you would like us to move forward with developing actions and alternatives related to a VMS requirement.

MS. MCCAWLEY: At least, in my opinion, I would like to keep this action in there right now for the VMS requirement, and I know that this was something that the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel discussed, and I think it would be helpful in this fishery, and I think it would also discourage new entrants, which was one of the things that the wreckfish shareholders were looking at, in addition to they wanted to change up the offloading times and locations. Me personally, I like the idea of having it in there for this ITQ fishery, but see more hands. How about Mel and then Chris?

MR. BELL: I would agree with you, Jessica. I think it's worth leaving in, and for all the reasons you mentioned, and so Christina pointed out that the shareholders didn't exactly throw it out the door, and they did see some of the potential benefits of it, and, given the unique nature of the fishery itself, with some of the peculiarities of landing and reporting and stuff, I think it's worth leaving it, at this point, to explore it further, and so that's what I would do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: There's been a -- I mean, I don't think the wreckfish fishermen are going on and -- There's no really like closed areas out there, where they fish and stuff, and so it's really not like we have to monitor them fishing up against the Oculina, at least in my state, but, anyway, there is one vendor that has made a VMS that the unit is around \$500, and the annual airtime is around

\$350, and it should meet the requirement, and I know that it does in the Gulf, and so, as far as cost goes, it's not terrible, but I know that, other than that, VMS has come a long way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I certainly support inclusion of VMS alternatives in the amendment. With the existing IFQ programs in the Gulf of Mexico, this is a requirement, and we are, obviously, providing a privilege for the fishermen to have a share of the quota, and with that comes accountability measures, and so this is, obviously, an accountability mechanism to help with enforcement, to help with reporting, to help with all of the documentation with regard to landings information, and so I see this as a key tool for effective enforcement and reporting requirements in the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Christina, do you think you have enough direction on this one?

MS. WIEGAND: My understanding, from the conversation, is that you would like the IPT to go ahead and continuing developing the actions and alternatives that would be necessary to implement a VMS requirement in this fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I would say that captures the discussion. Andy has his hand up again.

MR. STRELCHECK: If I could add to that, I certainly see a lot of value in developing around the same requirements that are for the Gulf IFQ fisheries, and we have made some modifications to those requirements over time to address fishermen's concerns and provide additional flexibility, and so I think they're in a good place right now, with regard to us addressing kind of industry needs, while providing that flexibility, and so I certainly that's a great starting point, to align the wreckfish program with those programs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good point. All right, Christina. Back to you.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. We're trekking right along here, and so, speaking of VMS, the impetus for considering that was offloading site and time requirements for wreckfish, and the purpose of this action is to address some concerns that the wreckfish shareholders did express, particularly that the landings sites and the daily unloading timeframe are burdensome, particularly the current hours for offloading, which are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

They feel like these offloading times really affect the efficiency of their fishing operations and that, because they rarely see law enforcement while they're offloading, there's concern that it's not really an effective enforcement tool, and so Alternative 1, which is the no action, again, has those offload hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. local time, and it also notes that wreckfish must be offloaded at the fixed facility of a dealer with GSAD permit, or a Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic dealer permit. However, if the wreckfish is going to be offloaded at a location other than that fixed facility of the dealer that has the GSAD permit, the wreckfish shareholder has to be in contact with the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement not less than twenty-four hours before offloading.

Alternative 2 would modify the offload hours to be 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Alternative 3 would modify the hours to between 5:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., and Alternative 4 would remove the requirement hours altogether, but it would maintain the requirement to offload at the fixed facility of a dealer with GSAD permit.

Again, we did bring this to the Law Enforcement AP, and I don't want to go over this in too much detail, because I know it was talked about yesterday, but the OLE representatives did recommend offloading hours to extend from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., or Alternative 2, and that's what is specified in the Gulf program. A commercial fisherman on the LEAP, who is also a wreckfish shareholder, did note that, in general, that time is -- That the offload site requirement times are ineffective and supported an extension beyond 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Again, I will pull that up. We're not looking, necessarily, for any particular comment from the council at this point, but we just wanted to make sure that you all were comfortable with the actions and alternatives as they're currently outlined here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I certainly am, and I look forward to this discussion, and I know that the Law Enforcement AP discussed it, and our law enforcement officers definitely want these to stay in there, and they think that any way we can mirror the Gulf is helpful, but, yes, I'm good with this action and these alternatives, and I don't know if any other committee members have any comments on this one. I don't see any hands.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Well, then let's move on to the last action in this amendment, which is Action 7, which looks at implementing a cost recovery plan for the wreckfish ITQ program, and, again, the purpose of this action is to implement the cost recovery, because it something that is now directly required under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and so Alternative 1 under Sub-Action 7.1 isn't a viable alternative, because this is now mandated.

We've broken this up into a number of different sub-actions that essentially address the who, what, when, and how of cost recovery, and this is, again, one of those actions that the IPT is still working on fleshing out, but, essentially, under Action 1, we're identifying who is responsible, and so, under Alternative 2, the ITQ shareholder landing wreckfish would be responsible for collection and submission of the cost recovery fee to NMFS. Under Alternative 3, it would be the dealer receiving wreckfish would be responsible for collecting the cost recovery fee and submitting the fee to NMFS.

Under Sub-Action 7.2, we're looking at how to determine the cost recovery fees, whether that's based on the actual ex-vessel value of wreckfish landings or the standard ex-vessel value, and those are definitions that are specific in the CFR, and then we're looking at when those fees will be collected, and, again, it's mandated that that's collected at the time a landing report is filed, upon the sale of such a fish during a fishing season, or in the last quarter of the calendar year, and then, finally, when what is collected is submitted, annually, quarterly, or monthly.

This is sort of complex, as you go through, based on -- It's iterative, and so, based on what you choose under Sub-Action 7.1, it will then dictate the possible options that you could choose under 7.2 and so on and so forth, and so, again, this action and all of the sub-actions are still be developed by the IPT, but our intent is to put together almost a flow chart, or a decision tree, for lack of a better term, that will help walk the council through what they can choose, based on what's been chosen in previous actions, if that makes sense.

I wouldn't get too hung up on the exact wording of these actions and alternatives right now, because we'll bring back something that is perhaps a bit more clear in June, but I did want to give you guys sort of an idea of the decision points that you will be looking at when discussing cost recovery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments on this action? I don't see any hands.

MS. WIEGAND: That's all that I had for this amendment. I did, again, want to note that this amendment will be up for scoping during the public hearing tomorrow afternoon, and so you may want to make some changes based on anything you hear during public comment at Full Council, but, otherwise, the intent with this amendment is to go back to the IPT and continue to develop the actions and alternatives that still need work, particularly the actions and alternatives related to the wreckfish permit, implementing electronic reporting, and cost recovery, as the three big ones, and then bring that back to you in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sounds great. I'm wondering if, also, we could get another shareholder meeting, and I'm wondering if we do that after the June council meeting, or before the June meeting, and I don't know. Kerry, do you have any thoughts on that?

MS. MARHEFKA: I definitely would like to have another meeting, and I was just sitting here thinking about what the guys are doing during that time. Will we do that remotely, do you think?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so. I think they did it by webinar before, right?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and so the October meeting was done via webinar. I can't say what's going to happen, in terms of the current world environment, by fall or winter of this year, but I will say that those that attended the wreckfish shareholders' meeting in October were very engaged, and I felt like we were able to have a productive discussion via webinar.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm looking at the schedule that you just scrolled to, and I like the idea of doing it after the June meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good to me. Christina, does that work for you?

MS. WIEGAND: That should work for me, especially if we're doing it via webinar. It's fairly easy to squeeze in a half-day webinar, and so, off the top of my head, I don't see any reason why we wouldn't be able to have a shareholder meeting after the June 2021 meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds great. All right. Anything else that we need to do on this wreckfish amendment?

MS. WIEGAND: That's all I had, unless there is anything else that the committee would like to discuss or have addressed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands. I think we're good. I appreciate all the work on this, Christina. Myra, do you think that it would be better to try to squeeze in amberjack, and then do red porgy in the morning? What would you prefer?

MS. BROUWER: Good question, Jessica. I hadn't thought about that. Let me check in with Mike Schmidtke. I know that red porgy is going to take a little while, and, Mike, can you chime in?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would need a few minutes to get ready. What time are we trying to end by?

MS. MCCAWLEY: 5:30.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't know that we'll get it all done in that time.

MS. BROUWER: We could always get started and pick back up in the morning, Jessica. It's up to the committee.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am good with that, but Mel put his hand up. Let's see what Mel says.

MR. BELL: Short of a mutiny -- I mean, we stole some time from you at the beginning, and I don't know if another fifteen or twenty minutes would help, or if people are just done and would mutiny, but I just thought maybe amberjack seemed a little less involved, and perhaps we could make a little more progress with that than red porgy, just given that that will be more complex.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I can pull that up. If that's the direction you all want to go, I can get that up, and we can at least start it, if not get through it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that sounds great.

MR. BELL: So with hopes of maybe at least getting close to -- Do you want to take five to let him set up, Jessica, and we can all come back in five minutes?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good to me.

MR. BELL: Okay. Let's do that.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: It looks like we have a number of folks back, and maybe not everybody, but probably enough to jump into amberjack. Mike, are you ready?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and we can get started. We're going to be going over, for greater amberjack, Amendment 49 to the Snapper Grouper FMP. This amendment was initiated to consider modifying the annual catch limit, optimum yield, sector allocations, and recreational catch targets for South Atlantic greater amberjack following the SEDAR 59 stock assessment.

As a reminder, this assessment used data through 2017, and that included the MRIP-FES estimates for recreational catch, and that assessment found that this stock was not overfished and not experiencing overfishing. There is a link that Chip pointed out, or Chip created the fishery description site, and there's a link to direct you to that, and I'm going to go ahead and pull it up,

and there are just a couple of things that I wanted to highlight within this, and not getting too far in-depth.

He kind of went over the components of this app yesterday, and so there's the welcome page with the description of what's included here, the history of management, and, as it was noted yesterday, this is pretty extensive, because it includes actions that impact the entirety of the Snapper Grouper FMP, and it's not just those that are specific to greater amberjack, but some of the specific regulations that are in place right now are noted at the end of the decision document, and we'll come back to those a bit later.

The fishery performance report wasn't too long ago, and it was just a few years, and so much of that information still seems pretty pertinent to the considerations for this amendment, and I would encourage you all to take a look at that as we kind of move through this process over the next year or so, and I will hit some of the data-oriented information in the next tab, but that report also captures some valuable stakeholder observations that could hopefully aid in your decision-making.

Within these graphs, I'm going to hop around a little bit, and not hitting all of them, but just highlighting a few aspects that are captured here and kind of relevant for the discussions of this amendment, but, again, I would encourage you to take some time, in between now and further steps of this amendment, to go through and kind of poke around and see all of the different information that's included here.

Looking first at the assessment information, one thing that we see, from this first graph with fishing mortality, is that, really, towards the end of this time series, the fishing mortality has been pretty stable, and well below the FMSY, and so that indicates that overfishing is not occurring for this stock.

Then, scrolling down a little bit more to the spawning stock biomass, that has shown kind of a general increase over the last twenty years or so, but there is a downturn that was noted within the assessment in the last couple of years. Overall, this information indicates that the stock is not overfished, and, as we can see from a little bit down, this kobe plot, we really haven't -- The stock hasn't gone into an overfished state, according to the information in the assessment time period, and there has been some overfishing that has occurred in the early 1990s, but not really since then, and everything else has been pretty sustainable.

The next thing that I wanted to bring up was looking at the combined data for both sectors, and, as that comes up here, looking at this first figure that shows the percent of the ACL harvested by year for each of these sectors, and we can see -- Just to kind of highlight this, I'm going to put my mouse right here at this 100 percent line, so you can see the years where that harvest went above and below, but there were a few years when each of the sectors popped above their respective ACLs, and neither sector has consistently exceeded their ACL, but they are kind of bumping up against it in some of those years.

Of note, these are the landings and ACLs, as tracked by NMFS, and that means for the recreational sector is that means that these are landings in the recreational ACL that is calculated according to the MRFSS estimation methodology, and that's one of the kind of unique things for amberjack, relative to some of the other species, is that the recreational fishery is still using the MRFSS

methodology, and it didn't transition to the telephone survey, and so we would be moving straight from the MRFSS to the MRIP-FES through this amendment.

The timing of landings can vary a little bit across the years, but mostly landings typically occur for both sectors during Wave 3, and, finally, considering the regional breakdown, most landings typically occur in Georgia and Florida, with fluctuating smaller relative levels in the Carolinas. Now I'm going to close this out and come back to the decision document. I guess, before I do that, are there any questions on the information in the app? I'm not seeing any, and I will go ahead and close this out and get us back to the decision document here.

We've gone over some of that introductory information, and the objectives for today's meeting will be to review actions and alternatives as they are developed to this point and consider selecting a preferred alternative for Action 1, which addresses the total ACL, and consider approval for the amendment to go out to scoping.

Taking a look at the timeline, if approved for scoping today, we would conduct hearings in between now and the June meeting, and we would be on schedule for the committee to consider this action for public hearings in September and have final approval in March of 2022 and regulations in place by the end of 2022.

Scrolling down next to the purpose and need, the IPT reviewed the purpose and need statements, and they offered one modification, just adding "annual optimum yield" to the purpose statement, but, otherwise, it's unchanged from what you all had seen previously, and so I will go ahead and just read this through, just to note it for everybody. The purpose of this amendment is to revise the annual optimum yield and annual catch limits for greater amberjack in the South Atlantic based on the results of the latest stock assessment and revised sector allocations.

The need for this amendment is to adjust catch levels based on the latest scientific information and to modify sector allocations to address revised recreational landings estimates in the South Atlantic, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse socioeconomic effects and achieve optimum yield on a continuing basis, as per the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. I will pause here, Madam Chair, if you want to put it to the committee for any questions or comments or edits to the purpose and need.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Committee folks, any opinions here? Are we good with this purpose and need statement? Mel.

MR. BELL: I have no recommendations for modification.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Then I would take it that you are good with this purpose and need. Mike, I assume that we don't need any motions here, and it's just direction to staff?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: No, and it's just guidance, and so I think we're set to keep moving then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Next, moving down into the ABC and OFL recommendations, the SSC reviewed the assessment and recommended levels for OFL and ABC based on projections

where the fishing mortality equaled FMSY. Given the time delay since the completion of the assessment and the scheduled effective date for management, we requested additional projections from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and those shifted the start of management to 2022 and the projection period through 2026, and those were in late materials, and so I'm going to pull those up here, so that we can see what those numbers look like.

These are the revised OFL recommendations, and, as you can see, we have them 2022 through 2026, and ABC recommendations as well. One thing to note, related to these, is that the recommendations start at a higher level, that 4.38 million pounds, and decline to 2.67 million. This is similar to the discussion that was had earlier for king mackerel that has to do with the stock being in that not overfished status, and so there's a bit of an ability to fish on surplus here in these earlier years of the projections. These OFL and ABC levels were estimated in the same fashion as those recommended by the SSC, and it's really just with the time period shifting forward.

I will come back next to the decision document, and we can get into the actions language. Action 1 considers changes to the total ACL and annual optimum yield, and the distinction was brought up among the IPT that setting optimum yield in the fashion considered here would be an annual rather than a long-term optimum yield, and so that terminology has been incorporated into this language. Currently, the ACL and annual optimum yield are set equal to the ABC from the previous stock assessment.

Alternative 2 would maintain this relationship, but update the values to reflect the most recent ABC recommendations, and, actually, I'm going to interrupt myself for one second, and so I sent out -- Actually, you might consider this later materials this afternoon, where I really just sent out Action 1 again, but with those updated projection numbers, so as not to confuse folks while we're looking at Action 1, and I'm going to switch that over, before I get too deep into it.

This is the same language as what was sent out in your briefing document, but there are two changes of note in each of the alternatives, and the long-term annual catch limit is changed. Instead of being I think it was 2024 through 2025 in the previous edition, this one is the terminal year of this round of projections, and then we also have the updated numbers within this table, and so we'll kind of work on it from there.

Coming back, Alternative 2 would maintain that relationship of setting the ACL equal to optimum yield equal to ABC, but it would just update the values to reflect the most recent ABC recommendations, which, again, of note, they do incorporate the MRIP-FES recreational catch estimates, and future recreational landings monitoring would be done using the FES survey and estimation methodology. Alternative 3 incorporates a 10 percent buffer between the updated ABC and the ACL and annual OY, and Alternative 4 incorporates a 20 percent buffer between the updated ABC and the annual OY and ACL.

Today, we're asking that the committee consider whether this is the range of alternatives that you would want considered for scoping. Additionally, given that the poundages of the sector ACLs and the recreational ACT are dependent on this action, if the committee would like to select a preferred alternative, that could facilitate analyses moving forward. With that, I can pause and turn it back to you, Madam Chair, and ask the committee for any questions or guidance on the range of alternatives and if you all would like to select a preferred of these.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. My preference would be Alternative 2, to keep it equal to the ABC. That's what we've been doing, and I don't see any justification for doing anything different. In fact, that's how we do most of the grouper snapper species, I believe, but I think -- For me personally, I think the way to go would be just to keep it under the same rationale we have been, that the ACL and the optimum yield will be equal to the ABC, and I would be prepared to make that motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead and make it.

MR. GRINER: **I would like to move that we pick Alternative 2 under Action 1 as the preferred alternative.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tim. We're getting that on the screen. Is there a second?

MR. WOODWARD: I will second it, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Spud. This is a motion to select Alternative 2 under Action 1 as the preferred, and this will also allow staff to complete the analysis in the document. Any more discussion here or questions? Mike went over the fact that we have some new numbers and new wording here in this action. Any more discussion or questions? **Is there any objection to this motion? I don't see any hands, and we will take that that this motion is approved.** Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. I'm going to come back to the rest of the regular document. One thing to note for these following actions is that these numbers in Action 2 have not been updated, and these are the old numbers, and so I would ask that you're considering the allocation percentages and you're not looking at the poundages that are within those figures. Those were based off of the previous numbers. Just, with the timing, we haven't -- I haven't been able to update everything just yet, but those will be updated in the next iteration, using the information that you all have just given for your preferred from Action 1.

Action 2 considers changes to sector allocations, and the current allocations were derived through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, using the formulas shown in Equation 1, and I can scroll down, and you see that right there. These are just weighted averages of the commercial and recreational landings relative to the total landings from 2006 through 2008 and from 1986 through 2008.

The previous application of this equation applied it to landings that included the recreational estimates from MRFSS and resulted in a commercial allocation of the percentages in Alternative 1, 40.66 percent to the commercial sector and 59.34 percent to the recreational sector.

Alternative 2 would apply the same formulas and time periods to landings, including recreational landings calibrated to the MRIP-FES methodology, and that results in a commercial allocation of 29.85 percent and a recreational allocation of 70.15 percent. Alternative 3 was developed as kind of a midpoint option, and that would allocate 35 percent of the total annual catch limit to the commercial sector and 65 percent of the total annual catch limit to the recreational sector.

Scrolling down into the discussion portion for this action, there are a few tables listed there, and I just wanted to note a couple of things. Please take note of the recreational data streams that are listed. They're listed there in the figure, so that you can see what applies where. In Table 2, you see sector and total landings, using data and methods from the SEDAR 59 stock assessment, and so that means that the recreational landings in this table are MRIP-FES landings. Table 3 shows commercial landings relative to the commercial ACL, and we kind of went over this information within the app, but we've had commercial landings hovering near the ACL the last couple of years, and they haven't gotten as close to the ACL as they were kind of in those mid-2010 years.

Looking next at Table 4, these are recreational landings relative to the recreational ACL, and please note that these are MRFSS estimates, and so, while they are comparable, the landings to the ACL, they are not comparable to the recreational landings that you would see in Table 2, because Table 2 are the new FES numbers, and so please keep that in mind as you consider this information.

Given the increase in the total ACL for all of the Action 1 alternatives, and the increase in the recreational catch estimates resulting from the transition to the MRIP-FES methodology, something to note is that all combinations of Action 1 and Action 2 alternatives result in the recreational ACL poundage being equal to or greater than the current value. However, depending on the combination of alternatives selected in Actions 1 and 2, the commercial ACL poundage may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Given the recently-update projections, we're not asking for a preferred alternative for this action at this time, but we can develop analyses for your consideration, based on the Action 1 preferred for the next meeting, and so I will pause again and turn to you, Madam Chair, for questions and feedback on this range of alternatives for Action 2.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Once again, committee, we don't necessarily need to pick a preferred today, and we are just making sure that we feel like we have a good range here for the alternatives, and I see that Shep put his hand up.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to make the same comment that I made in Mackerel Cobia, relative to the assessments and the allocation in the assessments and changes in the assessment potentially warranting new runs, and that would be something that would exist here as well, and I just wanted to flag it.

As to the alternatives, I guess I would like to say that it seems to me that just three is a fairly narrow range for something like allocation, where you have so many possible options in front of you, and so I would encourage you, if you're going to stick with this range, to provide some justification for why you're only looking at these three, and that may be that you don't want to -- You like the way the fishery is operating now, and you don't want substantial changes in it, and you're just looking to address this FES issue, and that's why the range is so narrow, and that's just a suggestion. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Great points there. Yes, I know we want to fix the FES, and it is a great point about do we like the way the fishery is operating now, and we might want to consider additional alternatives, and so I don't know if folks want to try to add some of those today or they want to see some of the analyses, now that we've selected a preferred under Action 1, and

I know it's late in the day, and I promise this is the last thing we're going to do today, but are there any thoughts here on these alternatives? Mel.

MR. BELL: Again, I'm not sure what I would offer up today as an additional alternative, and I think that we've looked at other species before and had different approaches to how this would settle out, based on including the FES-based data, and so, I mean, we can certainly look at some additional analyses, and maybe add something, but I wouldn't know what to recommend at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel, I'm in the same boat, and I'm not quite sure what to recommend at this point either, and so I will just throw that out there, that I might need to see this again before I could make an informed recommendation. No hands, and it seems like maybe we're okay, and/or tired and hungry right now, and maybe, Mike, we're okay with what we have so far with those three alternatives in this action, but I see that Andy put his hand up.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was trying to understand exactly how the allocations were being determined, and so I was reviewing the equations at the bottom, which is why I didn't raise my hand earlier. One of the things we talked about earlier today was holding the commercial quota at the same stable level and then increasing the recreational allocation accordingly, and so I don't know if that falls out within this range or if that's something the council would want to consider for another alternative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like that idea for another alternative, and I can't tell, because this is so complicated, and I can't tell if it's included here already or not. Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We actually included that in the last iteration that you all saw, and it was -- That was one of the things that got, I guess, switched out since the last time, and I think the reasoning why, if I remember right, was because it was very close -- I'm scrolling back up, just so I can see it, but it was very close to the percentages that played out here in Alternative 2, and I think it was something like 31 and 69, something like that, and so the council, or the committee rather, decided that there was no point of having two alternatives that are that close in percentage, and so that was removed, and the IPT considered what additional options could be and kind of came up with this midpoint between the two, but, yes, the holding of the commercial allocation poundage the same, that was considered previously already.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm hoping that we can note that in the document. Mel.

MR. BELL: That's the one we definitely would want to capture, and I'm fuzzy on that as well, but I seem to remember something like that, that we were trying to make sure we had that approach in there, and that was close enough, I think we felt, and so I think that's how we covered that particular option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What else do you need from us here, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I'm just going to note here that holding the commercial the same was considered. I mean, I guess that level of guidance is fine, if you all are content with this range of alternatives at this point, and we can move on from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sounds good. Is that all we need to do on amberjack, Mike?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: There is one other action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We'll see how quickly we can get this to go. Action 3 considers updating the recreational annual catch target. The current target is about 993,000 pounds whole weight, and that's calculated using Equation 2 that you see there on the screen. Alternative 2 would update this ACT, using the same formula, but updating the recreational harvest estimates to those of the MRIP-FES, rather than the MRFSS, which was used last time around, and it would also update the timeframe. As you can see in Alternative 1, the timeframe originally was 2005 through 2009, and Alternative 2 would update the timeframe to the most finalized years from MRIP, which would be 2015 through 2019. Of course, we don't have a poundage estimate just yet for Alternative 2, as that would be dependent on what is selected in Actions 1 and 2.

Alternative 3 would remove the recreational ACT and not specify an ACT moving forward, and this was considered by the IPT, considering the fact that the ACT currently serves no management function, and the Comprehensive ACL Amendment established ACTs for several snapper grouper species that, similarly, don't serve any management function right now. If the committee -- One thing to consider is, if the committee does not want to continue updating these ACTs in future amendments, you could consider removal of all of the snapper grouper ACTs that are not currently being used in management.

If this is something that the committee would like to consider, it could be incorporated into this amendment as an action moving forward, and that was one of the comments from the IPT, is whether the committee would want to consider that, and so I will pause here once more for questions and guidance on how to proceed with Action 3.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. I agree that I don't think that the ACT is needed here for amberjack, and I also like the idea of removing it for all the other snapper grouper species that it doesn't have any type of action tied to it. Steve.

MR. POLAND: I agree with that, Jessica. If we decide to move forward and remove the ACTs for all the other snapper grouper species, we can handle all of that in this one amendment, this one action, or would it need an additional action or an additional amendment to take care of that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think, Mike, we could just add an action to this amendment, right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, that's my understanding, is that we could really change this Action 3, to expand it and generalize it for snapper grouper species, and we would have to list which ones, and I'm not sure if there are any active ACTs, but that's something that we would look into in the process of writing it, is specifying which species have inactive ones, so to speak, and incorporate that. Myra is in the queue, and she may have more information than I do on that though.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let's go to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Mike, and thank you, Jessica. I just wanted to clarify that, currently, under the Snapper Grouper FMP, there are no recreational ACTs that are tied, as Mike said, to any kind of management action, and so, because this is a full plan amendment, and, in order to remove our ACTs, you would have to do a plan amendment, the IPT suggested that it might just be addressed here very easily. I would remind you that, if you choose to do that, eventually, we'll have to go back and revise the purpose and need but then it could just be incorporated as an action for the entire FMP. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. Yes, that would be my recommendation, that we change this action so that it applies to all snapper grouper species, and it seems like that was where Steve was going, but let me go to Mel and then back to Steve.

MR. BELL: Same thing, and my concept was just convert Action 3 into an action that accomplished what we wanted to do in terms of removing the ACT, the recreational ACTs, and then, also, when that comes back to us, then there would be, as Myra just said, or suggested, the rewording of the purpose and need to accommodate that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve.

MR. POLAND: Yes, that's my preference, to modify this action to go ahead and address the ACTs. If we do that, I feel like we can also consider removing Alternative 2, because it's pretty obvious that we have no interest in modifying the current ACT.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I like the efficiency there. Mike, do you think you have what you need from the committee here?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just to clarify the process, Myra, or John, can you clarify -- Do we need a motion to make this change, or is guidance good enough?

MS. BROUWER: I think guidance is good, with the understanding that it's either -- The IPT will sort out whether the Action 3 is just going to get replaced or reworded, and so I think we're good.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mike is getting this direction on the screen there. Also, as part of that, you would remove that extra alternative that would modify this just for amberjack, but that might be clear.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Do we have anything else on amberjack?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The last thing is so here's just kind of a review of the regulations and accountability measures that are in place, and I'm not going to go through each of them, because we don't have an action tied to any of these items, but I would just remind you that, based on changes that are made in those previous actions, there may be some consideration of changes to the regulations.

The committee has already asked that this information go to the advisory panel, and they are schedule to talk about this amendment in April, and so it will get brought up to them, and we'll ask for their feedback, if they have any recommended changes to the regulatory measures, and so, unless there is any additional guidance to give on modifications to these measures today, then the last thing would be a motion to approve for scoping, if the committee wants to move in that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Mike. Would someone like to make that motion to consider this for scoping? Steve.

MR. POLAND: **I move to send Snapper Grouper Amendment 49 out for scoping.**

MR. SAPP: Second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded. Mel.

MR. BELL: That accomplished where I was going.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on sending this out to scoping? **Any objection? I don't see any hands, and we will consider that approved.** I think that's it for today. Thank you, Mike, for hanging with us here on amberjack, and so, in the morning, Mel, I believe we'll start at 8:30, and we will go back to red porgy. Is that right?

MR. BELL: Yes, ma'am. That's the plan, and thanks, Mike, for jumping in early on this. I was glad we could make use of the time and get this accomplished, and so we'll start at 8:30. Eat your Wheaties tomorrow. It's going to be a long day, but we'll begin the day with red porgy, and so thank you very much, and good job, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Mel. Thanks, Mike. Thanks, Myra.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 2, 2021.)

MARCH 3, 2021

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar on Tuesday, March 3, 2021, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're still in the middle of Snapper Grouper, and we went a little bit out of order yesterday, and so we took up greater amberjack before we took up red porgy, because we thought that red porgy was going to be a little bit longer discussion, and so, this morning, we're going to go back to red porgy, and, Myra, I'm going to turn it back to you to start this discussion.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica, and good morning, everybody. I'm going to start going over Amendment 50, and this is Attachment 3 in your briefing book, and so this is the amendment that would adjust catch levels and the rebuilding schedule for red porgy. Here is just some background, for those of you who weren't at the discussions in December. The red porgy stock was recently assessed, and the assessment results indicate that it is overfished and undergoing overfishing. The council has two years to revise the rebuilding schedule and end overfishing, and so that's why we're here.

There are currently four actions that the council has already discussed and four new actions, as a result of looking through alternatives for different management measures, and so I will walk you through the first four rather quickly, and you've already seen a lot of this, and then we'll spend a little bit more time on the management measure alternatives. We have some preliminary analyses to show you.

On your screen is the timing of this amendment, and this is an amendment that's under a statutory deadline, and so the council has until June of 2022 to put this in place. We conducted scoping hearings this past month, and they were conducted via webinar on February 3 and 4, and we did not have any scoping comments during the hearings, and there was one comment that was received in the online form, and you can see what that comment was, and there's this little link here.

At this meeting, we're going to review comment, the preliminary analyses, and we'll be asking you for some guidance on finalizing the range of alternatives and the actions that will be included, so we can proceed with putting the draft amendment together for you and do some more analyses and come back in June, and, as I said, the intent is to approve this either in December, or it may have to move to March of 2022, with the intent of having it all done by summer.

The one comment that we received was from a fisherman who indicated that he would like to see trip limits set at levels that will avoid closures and excessive discards, and he also suggested that the council consider reducing the minimum size limit to twelve inches, to reduce discards, and not changing the commercial allocation.

Moving on, this is the purpose and need, and it has not really changed since December. I'll go ahead and read it for the record. The purpose of this fishery management plan amendment is to revise the rebuilding schedule, acceptable biological catch, sector allocations, and annual catch limits and recreational catch target for South Atlantic red porgy, based on the results of the most recent stock assessment, and modify management and accountability measures. The need is to end overfishing of South Atlantic red porgy, rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects.

As we've done in other amendments that you've been discussing this week, this is here just so that you can take another look at it, and we can always come back to it, and I would suggest doing that, since there are some actions that you guys haven't yet discussed, and so the purpose and need may need to be revised accordingly. Are there any questions so far? I see no hands, and so I'm going to move on.

The decision document has a little bit more background on the ABC and the overfishing limit, the OFL, and the different projections that were used, and I'm not going to go back over that. The SSC provided the recommendations to the council last year, and so this table here is just to remind

you, refresh your memory, and it has not changed. The OFL and ABC recommendations are in the blue column, and they are in pounds whole weight, and this would be with management starting in 2022, and those catch levels would remain in place until 2026. I should mention that the numbers of fish, over here on the far-right column, is included for completeness, and this is how the recommendations from the SSC were presented to the council.

Moving to Action 1, the first action establishes a rebuilding timeframe for red porgy. Red porgy has been under rebuilding in the past, and there was a rebuilding plan in place that was expected to rebuild the stock by the end of 2017, and so, currently, it is not under a rebuilding plan, and it has to be, and so the council has to take action to put one in place, and the alternatives that you have on the screen is what's been put together by the IPT.

I don't want to take a whole lot of time going over these, and these are the same ones that you saw in December, and Alternative 2 would use the minimum amount of time allowed to rebuild, and that would be eleven years. Alternative 3 takes that T_{min} plus one generation, and that is equal to eighteen years for red porgy. Alternative 4 is T_{min} times two, and so you would have a twenty-two-year rebuilding schedule, and then, finally, Alternative 5 looks at the T_{max} , the maximum time allowed to rebuild, and that would equal twenty-six years, and so the stock would reach a 50 percent probability of rebuilding in 2047.

We just added a little bit more discussion, and you can read that if you're interested, about what each of these alternatives would do, and so what we would need here from the committee is for you to just direct us to include all of these, or modify them, as needed, so we can, as I said, continue the analyses for this amendment, and so I will pause there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Do we need to also try to select a preferred on this particular action, so that it will be easier to do the analysis on the other actions?

MS. BROUWER: It would be. It would be fine if you wanted to. It's not going to really affect the other actions, and you've already picked a preferred for the catch level, for the total ACL, in Action 2, but you're welcome to indicate which one you would prefer.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you for the clarification, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would look to the committee. As Myra mentioned, trying to make sure that these alternatives reflect where we want to be, that this is a good range, and so we want to make sure that these are the right alternatives, and then, if we wanted to, select a preferred, and so I think that, if it was up to me, I would lean towards Alternative 5, which appears to be the maximum allowable rebuilding timeframe, and so I will just throw that out there, but I will look to the committee for do you think that this range of alternatives is good, or do we need to add anything else, and any thoughts you have on Action 1 here. Mel.

MR. BELL: I would agree with you that I think the range is sufficient, in terms of what we've got available to us, and I -- I mean, I understand the interest in Alternative 5, and I don't know if we need to -- We've had the scoping already, and I was just questioning, I guess, whether or not we

needed to commit to that at this point, but given -- As Myra said, I guess it doesn't really affect the analysis too much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Why don't you stand-by, and there is other hands going up, and so why don't we hold, at least for a minute or two, until we can get through these folks, on a preferred, if that's okay, Mel. All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Good morning. I was inclined to go for Alternative 5 as well, because I think we need a lot of time, because I think there's other factors outside of fishing mortality at play with these red porgy, but, under the discussion from the IPT, it's saying that it would exceed the current recommendation for ABC, and I don't know if that's what Andy is about to say too, and so that's just my only concern about Alternative 5, and can we really do that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: That's certainly one of the points that I was going to make, and I guess two other comments, and I think Shep will emphasize this as well, but, to me, I don't feel comfortable choosing preferred alternatives, given the limited amount of analysis and information in the document at this point, and I think we should wait until there's additional information to base that decision on.

I also would say that I believe this is now our second attempt, and this would be our third attempt, at rebuilding red porgy, and it has not gone successfully, and so going to Tmax and extending the rebuilding plan as long as possible does not make a lot of sense to me, given that it hasn't successfully rebuilt in past attempts, and I would discourage that going forward, but I would not recommend selecting a preferred at this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great points, Andy. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Andy, for some of that. I was going to say, predominantly about Alternative 5, the same sort of things that Andy has said, that it's the longest time period, and going to the longest time period, I guess at least implicitly, involves allowing the highest level of catch, initially, because you have the longest time period.

I think, given what Andy discussed and the history of this stock, there is some questions about the wisdom behind that, and there's been a lot, or some, discussion, and I think it was in the document, and I know I've read it, but, if you increase the length of the rebuilding period, you can increase the probability of rebuilding, right, because you have a longer time to do it all, and there is logic to that, and given, I guess, our past rebuilding success, I can understand that, but, even if I were to select the longest rebuilding period, I think the council should be looking at catch levels that would be consistent with rebuilding over a shorter time period, right, and I think that's something that the council could decide to do that, that you would pick -- So here's the time period that we want to select for rebuilding, but, because of the problems we've had in the past, and because of low recruitment, we're going to set catch levels that might be associated with rebuilding over a much shorter time period, or at least a shorter time period. That's just stuff to keep in mind. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Those are also great points. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I'm good. It's already been answered for me. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mel.

MR. BELL: That was just a leftover hand, but I think we ended up where I was kind of suggesting, that we've got the range, and maybe not commit at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I just wanted to clarify that the catch levels that are associated with Alternative 5, that those projections are actually higher than the recommended ABC, and so, theoretically, if you stick with the ABC and the catch levels that your SSC has recommended, then rebuilding may actually, theoretically, take a shorter time period.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've had some good discussion on this action, and it doesn't seem like we want to pick a preferred here, and a couple of folks have mentioned that the range is probably good, and so I'm going to turn it back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica, and I guess I'm going to just capture that on the screen, real quick. Moving on, the next action is revising the total ACL and the optimum yield, and so the current catch levels and OY for red porgy are at 328,000 pounds, and that's set equal to the ABC. Your preferred, on the screen, is the recommended levels from the SSC, using the updated ABC to set the total ACL, and so that would put that catch level for 2022 at 75,000 pounds whole weight, and you can see what the levels would be thereafter, and the level for 2026 would remain in place until modified. Alternatives 3 and 4 have a 10 and 20 percent buffer, respectively, between the ABC and the ACL. Is there any desire to revisit your preferred at this time?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking for hands, and I don't see any. No hands. Back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and these values here, under Preferred Alternative 2, is what the IPT has used to conduct the preliminary analyses that I'm about to show you and so I will just clarify that. The next action would revise the sector allocations and the sector ACLs, as I said, based on those catch levels, and this is showing you the breakdown of what the commercial ACL would be under the two seasons that are currently in place, and that was put in place last year, through implementation of Regulatory Amendment 27.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn has her hand up. Do you mind if we stop?

MS. BROUWER: Not at all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Sorry, and it was more to Action 2. I was kind of waiting to see if we had any conversation, but just a point of clarification. I noticed, yesterday, when we were doing the amberjack, that there was the inclusion of "annual" in front of "optimum yield", and I was kind of wondering about it yesterday, and I just assumed it was housekeeping and keeping wording consistent, but, in Action 2, we don't use "annual" in front of "optimum" here, and, if it's

semantics, I'm fine with leaving it, but I just didn't know why one IPT would recommend, or the IPT would recommend, the insertion in one and not in the other.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great point.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Carolyn. Jessica, go ahead.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, you go ahead, but I just thought that was a good point, and a nice catch. Do we have an answer for that?

MS. BROUWER: Well, I was going to mention that, and thank you, Carolyn, for bringing that up, and that is something that's been coming up in discussions on IPTs, and it's been guidance from NOAA GC that we need to specify that the OY levels that the council selects are annual levels, and so we would go back and revise this action, if that's what the committee would prefer, to make that language consistent across amendments.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I see that both Andy and Shep have their hands up. Let's go to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am going to let Shep go first, and then I will follow him.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good.

MR. GRIMES: I thought I had made the recommendation to the IPT, and I thought we had changed these to "annual optimum yield", but, yes, we should be consistent across-the-board, and the basis for it is simply that, as discussed in the National Standard 1 Guidelines, the optimum yield is a long-term average, and annual catch limit is an annual catch, and so they're not exactly the same concept, and a council can choose to specify optimum yield on an annual basis, and so the intent was merely to add "annual" to it, so that it was clear, and it would more clearly demonstrate that we were in compliance with the language in the guidelines.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. I see Myra taking some notes here about that. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess my confusion is related to how these relate then to the previous action and the rebuilding plan, and we need to endure that, obviously, we have ABCs for the various rebuilding plans and that the ACLs are then set equal to or below those ABCs, and so can Myra or others talk about that and whether or not we have the full range of alternatives for Action 2 that would align with the various rebuilding plans being considered in Action 1?

MS. BROUWER: The projections for the rebuilding -- We have projections for Alternative 5, which is the Tmax, and, as I mentioned, those catch levels are actually higher than the recommended ABC, and so, if the council chooses to go with the recommended ABC, they're going to be below the projected catch for rebuilding, and so there's really no need to have projections for the rebuilding alternatives, of course, unless the council wants to go that route, and I see that Mike Errigo is probably going to clarify that much better than me.

DR. ERRIGO: Normally, the SSC would simply, for a rebuilding plan, set the ABC equal to the F rebuild, the yield at F rebuild. However, for this particular stock, if you use that particular scenario, you're using the recruitment from the stock-recruitment curve, which, in this situation,

seems to be overly optimistic, because the recruitment coming from the stock-recruitment curve is higher than what the recruitment has been over the last -- Over the recent time period, probably eight years or so, and I can't remember, off the top of my head, how many years that it's been very low, and so what the SSC decided to do was to be conservative in their ABC recommendation, even for the rebuilding plan, and to use the low recruitment that's been seen in the most recent time period.

That's why these ABCs are given in this manner, rather than being perfectly consistent with each of the rebuilding scenarios, and so these should be more conservative. In fact, under this recruitment, low-recruitment, scenario, if that recruitment were to stay that way, under the actual rebuilding plans, the stock wouldn't rebuild, and that's why the SSC gave these lower ABC recommendations under the lower-recruitment scenario.

MR. STRELCHECK: Jessica, can I ask a follow-up?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Of course.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks for that. That's helpful, Mike, and I guess, as a follow-up, given that there's a disconnect between the F rebuild projections and the SSC recommendation, is there any way to then compare the range of alternatives here, to ensure that ACLs would be set in a manner that would be consistent with the shortest rebuilding timeframe? I am just wanting to make sure that we have the adequate range of alternatives captured here.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes. Let's see if I can remember this. The issue with red porgy was, even at F equals zero, it wouldn't rebuild in ten years, and so, even under the recruitment scenario where -- It came from the stock-recruit curve, and so average recruitment, and so you could -- I suppose one of the alternatives would be to set the ACL equal to zero, but that's not -- That could be an alternative here that would be consistent with T_{min}.

However, if that's not an alternative that the council wishes to consider, that might be why it's not here, and so that would be the only one I think that is not represented here, but, otherwise, these projections here, under the low-recruitment scenario, cover all of the rebuilding timelines, because the rebuilding timelines were all projected under the average-recruitment scenario. Under the low-recruitment scenario, the stock can't rebuild. We couldn't project -- We haven't projected out far enough to see the stock rebuild under a low-recruitment scenario.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, do you want to add to the alternatives here, or, based on that explanation, are you okay with the range that we have?

MR. STRELCHECK: I am going to let Shep speak on this and see whether it's a legal matter that we should include that alternative or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. 10-4. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'm not entirely clear on this either, and so, the way we have been proceeding through a lot of these actions now -- Action 1, let's say we make a decision on, and then Action 2 and moving forward, and usually it's the buffer between ABC and ACL, but then all of the actions that flow are based on the preferred alternative that you pick

before, and it seems to me, with this one then, especially after what Mike E. just said, we don't have any ACL or ABC options that would be associated with Tmin, which is Alternative 2 for rebuilding.

Most of what we have, in terms of ABC -- We have the SSC's ABC recommendation for the stock, independent of the rebuilding question itself, and then everything in here, in terms of annual catch limit and optimum yield alternatives, are building off of that ABC recommendation. I guess that had been lost on me until now, and I don't know that that's necessarily a problem, but, again, it does sort of beg the question of, in terms of the analysis and a comparative analysis, what would the catch limits look like for those shorter rebuilding timeframes, and, unless we put it in the document the way it is now, it wouldn't be addressed. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep. So I know you guys are kind of still working through this in your minds, but I am thinking that what Shep is saying is that we need to add an alternative that would be equivalent to Tmin. Andy, is that what you're thinking here?

MR. STRELCHECK: I think so. I'm still a little confused, but I think I'll just wait and talk to my team, rather than belabor the conversation, and so we may have to come back during the council meeting later.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. 10-4. Myra is getting some information here on the screen about adding an alternative that would reflect rebuilding at the Tmin. Back to Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I would encourage us to let the IPT think about this some, and maybe there's a way -- If we structure it like we have structured the others, and say, all right, the council makes a decision on the rebuilding period in Action 1, and the council wants to go with whatever the rebuilding period is, then the alternatives for ABC and optimum yield would flow from that rebuilding period projection, or decision, and so -- That would mean that you wouldn't have to have alternatives in there that would compare what the other rebuilding plans would look like, and maybe we can add that kind of discussion just in the analysis for Action 1 and not actually require new additional alternatives in Action 2, because of the way we've chosen to proceed through the analysis.

We often, at the IPT, will call it tiering, and I think that's an inappropriate description, and it's not NEPA tiering, but you've made a decision in Action 1. Then, when you're analyzing Action 2, it's based on the preferred alternative in Action 1, and it's not comparing every alternative in Action 2 to every alternative in Action 1.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep. I have a suggestion, but I'm going to go to Myra first.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. We kind of got caught in this discussion in December also, but the IPT has discussed this, and, because the ABCs are more conservative than those catch levels under the rebuilding scenarios, we didn't think it was necessary to request those rebuilding projections from the Center, because that would take extra time, and those projections were not requested, and so that would definitely have an impact on the timeline for this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for the reminder on that, Myra. I am wondering if the statement that you typed -- Maybe it says to have IPT consider whether adding an alternative, blah, blah, blah,

and so maybe that's the way to word that. That way, they can figure out if it's needed, based on all the discussion that we've had here, plus the fact that we have discussed this before and decided against it, et cetera, but let's turn it back to the IPT. John Carmichael.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I was just going to add to that, to the IPT, to have some discussion of how this situation occurred, and it's very similar to snowy grouper. You have a rebuilding strategy based on the long-term presumption of what the yield would be and what the recruitment would be in the stock-recruitment curve. You have a current situation of you're getting less recruits than you expected from that curve.

As I recall, when this was initially discussed for rebuilding, the SSC, and the analysts and others, weren't quite ready to presume that the overall productivity of red porgy was really going to be that low and that it may turn out to be a shorter-term discussion and situation, and so that was discussed a lot at the SSC, and I think the council, if I recall, and so I think it would be helpful to have the IPT, perhaps, include some text about that, to better illustrate this situation and how it occurred, because there was a lot of discussion of how some of those things under the current recruitment -- As mentioned earlier in this discussion, this stock hasn't rebuilt, and so we're dealing with a real challenge within a number of these populations with current recruitment. It's going to create situations like this, and we just need to have the text to describe it and make it understandable.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great point, and I like what Myra captured there about what you mentioned for the IPT to discuss, and so I think that that's helpful. Myra, I think we've had good discussion here on this action, and I'm going to assume that we don't need any more discussion on this action, and we're okay to move to Action 3.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, I think we're good. Action 3 is sector allocations and sector ACLs, based on the current preferred, and so, in Action 1, the total ACL is allocated for this species 50 percent to commercial and 50 percent to recreational, and then the commercial ACL is split into two seasons, and this was done fairly recently, and 30 percent of the commercial ACL is allocated to January through April and 70 percent to the remainder of the year. You can see, on your screen, what those catch levels would be under the preferred ACL for red porgy under no action.

If the council chose to apply the allocation formula that's been used for other snapper grouper species, the allocations would be pretty similar, and so that formula uses the mean landings from 2006 through 2008, average mean landings, and the other half is the average landings of the historical period of 1986 through 2008, and so this is a formula that was put in place through the Comprehensive ACL Amendment, and it's been used to determine sector allocations for many of the council's managed species, and so then you can see the catch levels under that formula, which is, like I said, very similar to the 50/50 split that's currently in place.

Alternative 3 was just put in there for your consideration, and that would remove sector allocations and manage red porgy under the total ACL. One thing that I would note here is, if the council were to remove sector allocations, then they would have to go and revise the accountability measures, since those are split by sector, and so that's the range there, and I will pause for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to sound like a broken record a little bit here, but I will say the same things that I said with mackerel, and particularly Amendment 41, and just that allocations have the potential to change assessment output, and so making a decision on allocations will allow us to determine whether we need to request new projections, and I would say, similar to greater amberjack, or even more so here, because you really only have one alternative for sector allocations, one alternative to status quo, which is a narrow range, but, again, if the council is not looking to change things much, perhaps you could provide justification for that narrow range of alternatives. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep. Shep is right that we really have only kind of one alternative here about allocation, other than status quo, and so are there other suggestions about alternatives that we want to add here? These are allocation alternatives, or are we good with this narrow range that we have? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well, I haven't really heard, whether in comment with my discussion with fishermen or comment here, any sort of desire to shake up how the fishery is operating and change anything too much, and so, in my mind, this narrowness is what I would go for, and I don't think we need to add alternatives for the sake of alternatives when we really don't want to shift how the fishery is operating, and I think we want to keep it as status quo as possible, and so I don't see the need to add more, and I think we can justify keeping the fishery operating the way it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Thanks for those comments. I don't disagree with you. I'm just looking to see if anybody else on the committee has anything to add here on this narrow range of alternatives. I don't see any -- Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just trying to make sure that at least one of them -- That we were kind of following the similar pattern that we followed in examining all the other allocation, and so this was done with the new FES, I gather, and so, as long as we've got sort of that in there, to maintain sort of the status quo on the commercial harvest under the new numbers, that's fine, but is that -- That is actually Alternative 2 then?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, is that true? Wait. Mike E. raised his hand.

DR. ERRIGO: Well, it's a little different for this one. In the other cases that we were looking at, the ABC went up, and so we were looking at holding the actual commercial poundage as it was. In this situation, it went down significantly, and so we can't do that.

MR. BELL: I've got you. I've got you. This is a different critter.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I think that actually helped. That reminder helped us in thinking about why we have this narrow range. Any more discussion on this allocation action, Number 3, before we leave it? I don't see any hands, and I'm going to pass it back to you, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica, and so my understanding then is that you would like to retain Alternative 3 within the range that you're going to consider, to remove sector allocations for red porgy as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that it's a viable alternative here, and it helps us establish a range.

MS. BROUWER: Perfect. Thank you. Moving on to Action 4, Action 4 would revise the recreational annual catch target, and, before we get too far into it, I will remind you that, yesterday, you approved including an action in Amendment 49 to consider removing recreational ACTs at the FMP level, and so, with that intent, I would suggest that you consider perhaps removing this action from Amendment 50.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I agree that I think that this action can go. Do we need a motion to do that? Do you need direction to staff, based on what we did in the amberjack amendment? What do you need, Myra?

MS. BROUWER: I think direction to staff would be good, and I will capture it on the screen, and then you all can tell me if that's okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Myra is indicating that we would be removing this action, because, in the amberjack amendment, there is an action in there that would remove ACTs for all species in the fishery management plan. Any more discussion on this? I don't see any hands, and so I think we're good with this action. Back to you for discussion on Action 5.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica, and so this is where we get into actions that you have not yet seen, and you did have discussions in December and gave us sufficient guidance to prepare analyses for you, and so Action 5 would modify the commercial management measures, and you see on your screen two alternatives besides no action. Currently, there is a sixty-fish trip limit from January through April and 120 fish from May through December.

Alternative 2 addresses the trip limits in that Season 1, and you have a range of sub-alternatives from fifteen fish per trip to forty-five fish per trip, and Alternative 3 has the trip limits for the second season, and so May 1 through December 31, and that range is a little bit wider. It's fifteen to sixty fish per trip. This is based, as I said, on the guidance that you provided in December. Before I take you to this decision tool that staff has put together, I will just walk you through some of the information in the decision document, and you have this table here showing you previous landings on the panel on the left and the proposed ACLs, so that you can sort of compare, keeping in mind, of course, and not so much for commercial, but for recreational, that you've got those FES numbers that are incorporated.

Similarly to what you saw in December, you have the distribution of red porgy harvested per trip, and this is using data from 2015 through 2019. Then you have the estimated reductions from these potential trip limit changes for each of the two seasons, and then, on the far right, you have that percent change in landings. These are the predicted monthly landings, as you can tell, there in the blue columns, those had to be backfilled, because there hasn't been harvest allowed for red porgy in those months until recently.

Then here is where you can look at the predictions for how long the season would last under the various trip limits at the proposed ACL for the commercial sector, and so I'm going to scroll back, real quick, to the top, where I have the link that will show you this graphically in a better way, and so this is a decision tool.

You've got your two tabs at the top, and so we're looking at the commercial management measures, and you can choose the total ACL alternatives here, and the preferred is 37,500 pounds for the commercial, based on that 50/50 allocation, and then you can manipulate the commercial trip limits for each of the seasons, and so this would be the sub-alternatives under Alternative 2, and you can see how the landings would change, and you have the proposed ACLs on the dashed lines here, and so the council could potentially reduce the trip limit for both seasons or reduce the trip limit for just one season. As you go through here, you will see that, regardless, there is always going to be closures, in-season closures, at any of the trip limits, since the reduction in catch is so high.

The percent reduction that is needed, looking at the current -- The proposed catch level and comparing to average catch from 2017 through 2019 is actually 69 percent for the commercial sector, and so, if you go -- Here's the no action, and so you have in-season closures happening here and here, and then I will just show you the lowest that you could possibly go, and you still have closures occurring, and you can see, at the top, in the red letters, it tells you what those dates are, and so I'm going to pause here for discussion and bring us back to the decision document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't see any hands. I'm glad that you went over the decision tool, because -- I'm sorry. Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am, I think, good with the range of alternatives, and I think the decision tool is very helpful in kind of exploring what can be done in both of the split seasons, and I know the split seasons have been kind of more recently implemented, and I would be curious to hear from our commercial reps on the council, and, given the short duration of the seasons that we may have under these trip limits, if we should be thinking about any kind of different start dates for the seasons, given the potential for early closures.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just to add to that, I guess -- Since, when I played with the decision tool, it looked like there would always be this early closure, which Myra confirmed, and, I mean, we just recently removed the closed season, and peak spawning is December to March, and that closed season, I believe, was January to April, but I think that we removed it because of high discards, maybe when fishing for triggerfish or vermilion, and so I guess I'm just questioning -- Since the stock is -- We're going to be in the third rebuilding plan, and do we want to put a closure of some sort back in, which is what seems like it might be needed here, at least during the spawning season, but I would love to hear some comments on that, too. Tim, I see your hand up.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a pretty tough pill to swallow here, but the whole reason for opening this back up in this first season is to eliminate those discards that we were experiencing in big numbers when the triggerfish and vermilion opened back up, and that's still the case today. I mean, if you look at what we've already caught to date on this first season, we've already caught 11,000 pounds of red porgies, and so that's -- If we did away with that season completely, then we've already discarded 11,000 pounds of fish, and that's just going to be exacerbated as the weather gets better.

I mean, the weather has been horrible, and they've caught 11,000 pounds of fish, and so I really don't want to see us move backwards on this split season, and I think that's very important. I think, at this point, given these dramatic cuts in the ACL, that, really, what we're talking about here is this species has turned into a bycatch species for the commercial sector, and, with that in mind, then, really, the whole idea here is to pick a number that we think will help us minimize discards the most, and, like you said, it's going to close either way, but, to me, the only way, the best way, to minimize the discards is going to be able to try to stretch it out as long as we can.

I hate the thought of fifteen or twenty fish per trip, and I don't know if I want to go that low, but I really think we need to try to keep this split season in place, and it's got to marry up with the vermilion and the trigger fishery. Either way you look at this, it's going to close at the second season, before that triggerfish and b-liner season is over, and so we're going to have a problem either way, but I don't see that eliminating the first season is going to help us any. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree with Tim, and, based on my conversations with people, I think the sort of prevailing consensus is let's go to lower numbers if we have to, to keep the season open the longest. I mean, we accepted, back in I think 1998, or probably before then, that this is an incidental fishery, and this isn't a targeted fishery, and it hasn't been for well over twenty years. Obviously, we're interacting with them, and we want to do our best not to do harm while we're doing that, but, also, there's a little bit of a market component for the fish we have, and the longer -- The more that fish has a little place in the marketplace all year long, the more we can make use, better use, of what we are catching.

Granted, it's a small amount, but there is a little niche market for it, and I would like to see that be there as much of the year as possible, and so I would be in support of keeping the split seasons, keeping the numbers low, which we obviously have to do, but I just think, as a council, and as a commercial fishery as a whole, we just really need to reframe what red porgy is to us, and it's just simply an incidental fishery, unfortunately, and it probably will be for quite some time, if not from now on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Kerry. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to say that I'm fine with the alternatives there, and I don't support removing the Season 1 alternative, if somebody were to make a motion to do that, and so I'm good with these.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so let me try to summarize what I heard from Tim and Kerry and Chris. So they like the split seasons, and I think that they're saying that these alternatives that are here seem to represent a good range, even though we know that, even at the fifteen fish for each season, that we would encounter early closures. You also heard Kerry talk about kind of reframing this fishery as more of simply a bycatch fishery. Any more discussion on these alternatives? I appreciate folks chiming in here to talk about -- Sorry. On this action. I appreciate folks chiming in to talk about the range of alternatives here. I don't see any more hands. Myra, do you think you have what you need here on this action?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, Jessica. Thank you. I guess what I'm hearing is we'll keep this as-is, and we'll just bring you back more fleshed-out analyses, based on this range, at the June meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's what I heard.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I am going to scroll down then to Action 6. Action 6 then addresses modifying recreational management measures, and, again, these alternatives -- You have not yet seen them fleshed out like this, and you did give us direction, in December, that you were interested in looking at a reduction in the bag limit, as well as a potential recreational season, and also vessel limits, and so that's what we've gathered here for you.

Currently, the recreational sector is limited to three red porgy per person per day, or three per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive, and harvest is allowed year-round, of course, until that recreational ACL is met. Alternative 2 looks at reducing the bag limit, and, of course, you only have two sub-alternatives there, and that should be 2a and 2b, and 2a goes down to one fish per person, and 2b is two fish per person. Alternative 3 looks at establishing a season, and so these are the months during which a season would be open, and we just picked a few waves there, and we can go and play with the recreational tool here in just a minute, so that you can see what that would look like.

Then, finally, Alternative 4 would establish a vessel limit for red porgy, and, there, we've just selected a narrow range, again, of ten and fifteen fish per vessel, and so, of course, the council could pick one of each of these. The reduction that is needed for the recreational sector is quite high, and it's on the order of about 80 percent.

Let me walk you through what is in the decision document. again, we've got the recreational landings there on the left, the historical landings, and those, of course, do not include the FES revisions, or I'm sorry. They do include the FES, and they've been recalibrated to that FES methodology, and then you've got the proposed ACLs on the right panel of the table.

This is the distribution by wave, and, here, we use the average landings from 2015 through 2019, excluding the year 2018, and that year had a very high PSE that was over 75 percent, and so that was left out, and the predicted landings, you can see there, are shown in the red-dashed line. This figure is a little different from what we had to show you in December, and this is the distribution by trip, and it's split out by different modes, charter in the blue, private in the orange, and headboat in the gray. You can see there's a little bit over here of high numbers for the headboat sector per trip.

Similarly to the commercial, we have the percent reductions, percent change in landings, for each potential bag limit by mode and overall, and so, of course, the highest reductions will be under the one red porgy bag limit, and, overall, that would be about a 29 percent reduction.

Then there's this nice table, and it's color-coded, and it's kind of a heat map sort of thing, where you can see the combined effects of the bag limits and the vessel limits, again broken down by mode and weighted by the distribution of the catches, which you can see below in this bar graph. Then, finally, the table that shows you the predicted closures under the various bag limits, and that should say vessel limit, and, similarly, we have the decision tool.

For the recreational is a similar sort of thing, and you've got bag limit and vessel limit at the top here, and so you can reduce it. For example, there is two, and let's say we're going to set the vessel limit at fifteen fish, and then the graph changes to show you how the landings would change, and, course, you can see the confidence limits there are pretty wide, and then, on the left here, you can select open versus closed, and it's broken down by wave, and so, if you were to close, for example -- Let's say leave May through June open, and July through August open, and close the remainder of the year, you can see how that changes, but you are still showing that you would have an in-season closure, even if the recreational season extends over two waves.

If you, let's say, leave it just at one wave, and so this would be just July and August, with a two-fish bag limit and a fifteen-fish per vessel limit, you might be able to stay below that ACL. Again, it's very uncertain predictions there, and so let me pause there and see if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. I saw that Dewey had his hand up.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. Could you go back to the slide that had the PSE of 75 percent? My question would be -- I believe you said the landings for 2018 were excluded, due to a PSE greater than 75, indicating a very imprecise estimate, and is that like a policy, or is that -- I am trying to understand. If it was 51 percent, would it have been left out, or why -- Does it have to be greater than 75 percent to be excluded? I am trying to see what the rationale or determination of when something gets excluded and when it doesn't. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that, Dewey. I believe, and I'm going to invite Chip or Mike Errigo here to help me out, but I believe MRIP has a cutoff of 50 percent. PSEs that are higher than 50 percent are not recommended for use in management, and the council doesn't have a threshold PSE that they've selected that could exclude certain estimates from analyses, but, in this case, the PSE was so high that the IPT discussed excluding it, because, obviously, it was going to introduce a good bit of uncertainty to the predicted landings, and so there isn't a hard-and-fast rule for removing very uncertain estimates from the analyses at this point. Let me turn it over to Chip.

DR. COLLIER: Thank you, Myra. Dewey, you bring up a good point that there is not a hard-and-fast rule where it is not used in it, but this is a very imprecise number, and MRIP does list, on their webpage, that greater than a 50 PSE should be viewed with great caution, and even, as you increase from 30, it should be viewed with caution as well, depending on the species and the data that is associated with it. Given that it was so high, at 75 percent, we did recommend excluding that. Hopefully that helps, but, if you need more clarification, I will be glad to talk more about it.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: One follow-up question?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: That provides great clarification, but it's my experience, in looking at this over all the regions, for different councils and different entities under National Marine Fisheries, it seems like there's no -- Even though MRIP states, on many occasions, that over 50 percent shouldn't be used for management levels, I still tend to see it happening, where it's like there is different policies for different regions, and that's what kind of has me left scratching my head, is why isn't there one policy? If MRIP states that anything over 50 percent should not be used, why aren't we using that in all of our things, and why the standard of 75 percent here? I was just trying

to get one policy that MRIP -- Since we're using MRIP estimates, that should be followed basically through all the regions and institutions, or councils, and I'm just curious. Is the council going to look at doing that in the future, maybe? Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to directly respond to Dewey. So great points, Dewey, and the Marine Resource Information Program within NMFS has developed some standard policy with regard to how they're going to present and display data going forward on the MRIP website, and it takes into consideration the issue we're talking about, which is the uncertainty surrounding the catch estimates associated with either low sample sizes or other reasons, and so I think you're going to see that consistent across the agency going forward.

There still has to be, I think, some latitude with the analysts, as they look at individual fisheries and we assess management measures and what will or won't be effective, but certainly what's desirable, from a statistical standpoint, is to have estimates that we can use that are the most reliable and have the lowest PSEs possible, because we expect that those will be the most reflective in the fishery as a whole.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you for that, and I think that it would be great, as we go forward in the future, for more transparency in explaining this, because it's like it's almost in a dark hole, and it doesn't get explained of what's actually happening going forward, and so it would be great to shed light and transparency, and it might help the folks to understand better the different policies that are being put in place or up to somebody's choice on whether to change something. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. I agree with Dewey and Andy. On the one hand, we do want to allow some latitude, because there may be other factors at play, but, on the other hand, generally, when you're getting PSEs on the order of 75 percent, it's not really useful for in-season management, for sure, and what we need to move toward are multiyear running averages, and, right now, the NS 1 Guidelines allows three years running. I think the council has already had some fishery management plan options that look into that in other contexts, and I think we need to start thinking seriously, across-the-board, all the councils in the Southeast Region, start thinking about using multiyear averages to manage recreational fisheries. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I was curious as to what is the lag time, or maybe the average lag time, between after a wave has ended and the data is actually available, and is there -- I mean, does Wave 1 not come in until Wave 3 is already underway? The reason I say that is a lot of what Clay was just saying, and what will you do if, after a wave, say Wave 1, but the PSEs are so high that you can't even use that, and then you don't even know where you are recreationally, and these ACLs are so low that it's going to be a real problem.

I mean, I don't know how you do this, other than start at the beginning of a wave and then have to stop at the end of that wave so that you can look at that data and see whether you can keep fishing

again on some other wave, but I think that the whole thing about these PSEs and the lag time between actually getting the data are going to make this very difficult for recreational fisheries with these small quotas, and so I just think that's something we've got to think about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thanks, Jessica. I didn't know if anyone wanted to respond to Tim. I mean, I know, typically, I think it's forty-five days after the end of wave before those estimates are available, but I can let someone from the SERO or Science Center answer that, but I wanted to scroll back up to the alternatives, real quick.

The way I'm reading it is Alternative 4 would establish a vessel limit for all recreational vessels, including headboats, and, typically, we don't set vessel limits for headboats, and are there any fisheries that we have right now where headboats have a vessel limit, because I am just seeing this creating a lot of issues with the headboat community.

MS. BROUWER: That's a good question, Steve. Off the top of my head, I would have to say that I don't know. I don't believe we do, specifically for headboats, and I definitely see your point.

MR. POLAND: I mean, my concern is, if we don't include an alternative to exclude headboats from that vessel limit, that's going to create a lot of issues with them, but I also recognize that, if we do that, we might have to err a little bit more on the side of a lower bag limit, say one fish, to account for that harvest, and I just wanted to raise that for the council -- For us to consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's a good point. Do you want to go ahead and add an alternative to do something like that, because we would need to add it so that it could be analyzed.

MR. POLAND: Yes, certainly, and so I would direct staff to add an alternative to exclude headboats from the vessel limit, just for analysis and discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was going to suggest, maybe instead of excludes headboats from the vessel limits, that maybe you come up with different vessel limits for different options for them. I mean, applying a vessel limit to everybody but headboats -- I guess maybe we could justify that, but it seems like it creates certainly a potential discrepancy between how the different charter platforms are treated. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the idea of, instead of saying "exclude", that we add options for a headboat vessel limit. I like that better. Also, while we're having this discussion, I guess I want to make sure that the other vessel limit, the ten-fish and the fifteen-fish per vessel, that we have low enough numbers there that, if we're going to be choosing, or possibly choosing, a different amount of headboats, and so I'm going to throw that out there too, because I know that we want to keep fisheries open as much as possible, and those vessel limits seem a little high, and so I'm going to go to Anna and then Chester.

MS. BECKWITH: I think the council can treat the headboats a little bit differently, and I think we have to acknowledge that different business plans have different needs, and I know that's not

something we generally move towards, but I think it's valid in this case, and I think, for the headboats, it would make sense for them to just have a per-person limit and not have a vessel limit, and so I do agree with Steve on that, and so I would support the idea of just having the headboats fall under the per-person limit, rather than a vessel limit, and I think a vessel limit is just a poor choice for that business plan and is completely inappropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Once again, I still think that we should couch, in the alternatives, as options for headboats, a maximum of that, and then, depending on which of the per-person we select under each of these alternatives and sub-alternatives, we could indicate our desire. Let me go to Chester and then Mel.

MR. BREWER: First of all, I think you need to define what is a headboat, and we don't even call them headboats down here, and we call them drift boats, but it seems to me that there would be -- Maybe they've got different licenses for headboats, where they have different safety requirements and that sort of thing, that we could differentiate what is a headboat, but I tend to think that it's a good idea to have a vessel limit on a headboat, and everybody else is going to have a vessel limit, and I do think their vessel limits should be a good bit higher than what it would be for a six-pack or a private angler boat, and that's all I've got. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chester. Mel and then Tony.

MR. BELL: Chester kind of covered some of that, and I was going to say that remember we've had some issues before with what is a headboat, and it depends on whose definition you're using, and then headboats, of course, are different sizes, and so I would recommend the low, maybe the one-per-person bag limit approach that Anna said, but I would have some maximum, and so it would be one per person or X, whichever is more conservative, and so I would include that in there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what I was trying to say as well. Tony.

MR. DILERNIA: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Just a suggestion of the practice that we've adopted in the Mid-Atlantic is, rather than referring to headboats, or charter boats, we refer to them as inspected and uninspected vessels, and that's a federal term, and it's used by the United States Coast Guard. An uninspected vessel will be carrying six or less passengers for hire, whereas an inspected vessel carries seven or more passengers for-hire. The uninspected vessel, the operator needs what's called OUPV, operator of uninspected passenger vessel, whereas, for an inspected vessel, the captain, or the operator, must have a limited master's license.

Again, if you want to get into definitions, and to speak to Chester and the point that Mel just brought up, I would suggest that you use the terms "inspected and uninspected vessels", and, again, the uninspected vessel typically has that business practice. The inspected vessel has a business practice of opening up and charging by the head, whereas the uninspected vessel is usually a charter boat, but not necessarily so, and so the business model doesn't necessarily have to apply to the passenger levels, but the federal distinction between the two, the term and distinction that's used by the Coast Guard, is inspected and uninspected vessels, and perhaps the Coast Guard representative may want to volunteer some more information, but that's the practice that we have adopted in the Mid over the past few years, using inspected and uninspected vessels as the definition. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Tony said most of what I was going to say, and I really don't see the need to put a vessel limit on an inspected vessel, being that each angler usually is paying individually, and the limit is one fish, which probably is how I would be leaning, and I don't see why everybody on the boat couldn't be entitled to their one damn fish. I mean, come on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. I am fine with all of this discussion, and this is kind of where I was trying to go with this, and, if you're ready, I was going to go into a few more thoughts that I have on the alternatives, if Myra can scroll up.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Myra. Jessica, you had mentioned considering maybe even a lower vessel limit than ten fish, and I would propose five fish, especially if we select Sub-Alternative 2a of one per person, and, for most private vessels, that would probably be enough to cover all but one, unless it's a six-pack or something like that, and so I think adding five fish -- I don't really foresee that really changing the projected closure dates all that much, but I think it's an appropriate alternative to at least consider at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Steve. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to mention that "headboat" is currently defined in our regulations at 50 CFR 622.4, and it's defined -- "Headboat" means a vessel that holds a valid certificate of inspection issued by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry more than six passengers for-hire. Then there's a bunch of language that goes into when a dual-permitted headboat and commercial permitted vessel is operating as a headboat versus a commercial vessel, and that's it. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two comments. One relates to the analysis, and so, Myra, could you scroll down to the landings by wave? This is a little bit different than Dewey's comment, but you can see, with the kind of average trend line, that red-dashed line, that the 2016 data is largely driving the analysis, with regard to impacts to season length, how much reduction might be needed, how long the season could be, and I think there's probably some work that could be done with the IPT to look at kind of the sensitivity of the results, based on that data, and certainly 2016 doesn't look comparable to other years, but that's inherent, I guess, in the variability with MRIP, and so I just made that comment.

The other is I think it would be good for the council to discuss, for IPT purposes, kind of what our goal is for this fishery, and I think, in particular, with the timing of the season, it would be important to give IPT direction, if we would prefer a summer season versus a spring or fall season, as well as is our goal to try to keep a wave open and limit as much disruption as possible by having an in-

season measure, because that then can help us inform the bag limit and vessel limit choices that we might select down the road.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. I can't speak for the whole committee, but, in Florida, I think that we would prefer some type of summer season that also keeps us away from the spawning season, and so that's where I would be on the season. Let's go to Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I just was double-checking, and I believe there is a vessel limit for snowy grouper that also -- There is no distinction made for headboats, and so it's one per vessel, and it's the same thing for wreckfish, and so I just wanted to make sure that got mentioned, and then, also, to go back to Andy's comment on the 2016 estimate, that was a pretty high estimate, Andy. The PSE for that though was actually on the order of thirty-some-odd percent, and so that's why that one was chosen to be included in the analysis and the other one was not, but I get your point, and I'm taking notes, and so thank you for that. That's all I had.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think that there should be like a spring through fall type season for these fish that would encompass most of the recreational effort, as far as especially charter and headboats, for our area. Also, if we just put in a bag limit per angler, I don't see a reason why we would need to have a vessel limit. It just seems more restrictive and just a lot more red tape for law enforcement and for the recreational angler to have to comply with.

If you have a boat that is not inspected, like a six-pack charter boat, and you put say a five-fish limit, then one of the anglers isn't going to be able to catch whatever their bag limit is, and so we need to keep that in perspective, to especially the charter boats that aren't inspected, that are going out and taking customers for trip satisfaction, and, if we can get the fishery geared up, to where most of the effort is in prime season, where the weather is calmer and the customers are here, and then do away with a boat limit, then I think we're going in the right direction, and I don't support a vessel limit on this fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. It seems like we've had some discussion in the other direction, that we need to rebuild this fishery, and it's about to be in its third rebuilding plan, and so I think that the way to handle that would be, when we get to picking preferreds, you would be advocating for a preferred that was just a per-person limit and not for what we're talking about analyzing here, which would be a maximum vessel limit, and so I certainly would like to see the analysis on the vessel limit in addition to these other things, and I believe that that's already typed out in the document, and so I appreciate your comments. Steve.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. Real quick, just to follow-up on Chris, I mean, if he's more comfortable with six per vessel, instead of five per vessel, Sub-Alternative 4, I mean, I would be comfortable with that, but, going back to Andy's comment, and kind of speaking to at least North Carolina and what we would like to see for this fishery, most of our effort is in Waves 3 and 4 in the summer, and I would prefer that the goal of these actions is to allow for some access during that time.

I recognize that we might not be able to provide access across both of those waves, or maybe within even the entirety of one wave, depending on which other alternatives we go with, but, from

my perspective, just maintaining a little bit of access to turn those dead discards into a little bit of harvest, because these fish are going to be caught during that time of the year, regardless whether the season is open or not, and so I would advocate for strong conservation measures, but allow for some harvest to turn those dead fish into harvest, but, with that being said, we haven't heard a lot either from North Carolina stakeholders on this action.

I know there's still time, throughout the development of this amendment, and so I do hope that we can hear more of the perspective from the commercial and recreational sector up this way, and so I will just make my little plea. If you're out there listening, please comment. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Steve, before you leave, do you want to change the sub-alternative for the vessel limit for recreational from five to six?

MR. POLAND: I mean, I kind of get that's where Chris was kind of alluding to, and I wouldn't be opposed to it, and so, yes, if we were to modify a sub-alternative to six fish per vessel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mel and then back to Chris.

MR. BELL: Just listening to Chris, and your comments afterward, I would agree that we've had issues with this fishery for a while, and I think we're needing to look at sort of all available tools to affect a rebuild, and so I would argue for allowing the vessel limits to stay in there for analysis purposes, to just explore the feasibility of those tools.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's what I was suggesting as well. Chris and then back to Shep.

MR. CONKLIN: If you guys want to analyze the vessel limit, that will be all right with me, but, like I said, I feel like, if there was any type of vessel limit, it should be limited to the bag limit of each angler onboard, which would be just constrained at a recreational bag limit and not a vessel limit, and so I'm sure we'll hear some more about it, and I know this is so silly that we're fighting over peanuts, and in other regions they're accountable, and they're trading thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of pounds, and here we are in the South Atlantic. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thanks, Chair. Given the comments and the desire for the new alternative to be equated with the for-hire industry and six passengers per vessel, would you want the other alternatives to be divisible evenly by six as well? Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for the question. I would look to other folks on the committee to come back with an answer on that, but let's go to Myra first.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. Just for completeness, I wanted to bring your attention to something else that's in the CFRs regarding vessel limits. For charters and headboats that are on a trip that spans more than twenty-four hours, they may possess no more than two daily bag limits, other than red pogy, and so that's still restrictive there, and then there's some more language in there of a person aboard a headboat on a trip that spans more forty-eight hours, and who can document that fishing was conducted on at least three days, may possess no more than three bag

limits, other than red porgy, and so there's still some restrictions currently on red porgy on charter vessels and headboats, and I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Would anyone like to respond to the question that Shep brought up about the analysis? Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: It makes sense, to me, to make them twelve and eighteen. I doubt we'll end up with eighteen, and it will probably be six or twelve, but that makes a lot of sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I believe Myra is going to edit that. Any more comments here? Myra, do you think that you have what you need here on this action?

MS. BROUWER: I think so, Jessica. Thank you. If it's okay with you, then I will move along.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sounds good.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. The next action then would be for you to consider whether you want to change commercial accountability measures, and so, currently, we have what's in the books, and it's just an in-season closure, and so both alternatives that you see on your screen still have that, and both include the in-season closures. The differences in the payback, currently, if the ACL, the total ACL, is exceeded, and the species is overfished, there is a payback. Alternative 2 would remove the overfished criterion.

The IPT didn't have any direction, in terms of accountability measures, and that's something that we didn't get to discuss in December, and so we're just bringing this to you, in case you would like to make those modifications, and then, of course, the next action would deal with the recreational ones, and so I will pause here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any comments on the alternatives in this action? I don't see any hands raised. Hold on. Andy has his hand up.

MR. STRELCHECK: More from a mechanics standpoint, Myra, and so, if we did ultimately choose a preferred that reduces the ACL in the following year, we have split seasons, and so would that reduction then be equally applied to both seasons? How would we handle that? Is there anything explicit that we would need to put in the amendment with that?

MS. BROUWER: That's a good question. I'm not sure. I don't think we've had that situation in other species where we have split seasons, like vermilion and triggerfish, and so I would have to go back and look, and the IPT would have to figure that one out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Was that enough discussion about that concern, Myra, that the IPT can work on that?

MS. BROUWER: I believe so. I'm typing up notes to allow for that discussion to happen, and so yes. Is there a desire to retain then this action, is what I'm hearing, with the alternatives as they are currently presented?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's what I'm hearing, but we have some more hands up, and so let me go to those hands. Chris and then Mel.

MR. CONKLIN: Thank you. I think -- I just want to jog my memory, but did somebody, and I think it might have been Jessica, say that we should remove the sector allocations for this fish, or is that not accurate?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's one of the alternatives in one of the actions, and it's part of our range of alternatives.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, if that's in there, and I know that it says, if the commercial landings reach, or are projected to reach, or if the commercial goes over, but, if we remove the sector allocations, NMFS is still counting our fish as commercial, even though the allocation isn't there, but, if we hit ours, and then the recreational waves come back and they're way over, as a commercial fisherman, I wouldn't want to be riding on that, if that option was selected, and so I don't want to be grouped in with the recreational, and so I guess I'll see how it fleshes out, but, to that, I couldn't support any of this if that option was selected. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Great point, Chris. Mel and then Myra.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say that this is one of those that Andy brought up really good questions, and I would say ask the commercial folks, in terms of is one of the split seasons more important than the other, or do you do this proportionally, or do you do it based on the -- Well, it's for the whole year, but, yes, the IPT would, obviously, have to look at this, but I would lean on the commercial for input, in terms of what might be best.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Myra and then Tim.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I am trying to remember what I was going to say. Oh. I was going to reply to Chris's comment, and that's one of the reasons we wanted to make sure that the committee was interested in retaining the alternative to remove allocations, because it will complicate things significantly if we have to then flesh out alternatives for accountability measures for that particular alternative as well, which is fine, if that's the way the committee wants to go, but just with that understanding, that we'll have to have the corresponding AMs that would be put in place if that alternative were to be selected.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great point, Myra, but, back on that earlier action, other than that particular alternative, we only had one other, and Shep voiced some concerns about our range of alternatives, or lack of a large range of alternatives, and so, if we removed that one, then we really only have one alternative, and so I just want to put that out there as well.

MS. BROUWER: If I may, Jessica, yes, that is correct, and I just want to remind you that you have had other actions in the past where you've only had one alternative to the no action, and so it is something that the IPT would have to talk about it, and I believe it would have to be -- We would have to have some good rationale and a good record for there to only be that narrow of a range, but it's okay to do it, if needed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Tim and then Kerry.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I don't really understand why we even need this action to begin with. I mean, we already have a commercial accountability measure that works, and it's an in-season closure with a payback, and, if that does happen, I see the payback as proportionally done across the two seasons, and so I'm not even sure why exactly we even need this action, and maybe somebody can give me some clarification on why do we even need this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm going to let Myra answer that.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you for that, Tim. You know, the IPT wanted to have this discussion on the record, and it's not clear that it would be needed at all, but, for completeness sake, we needed to bring it to you guys, so that you could make that decision.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Maybe the IPT needs to discuss this, how the payback would work with the two seasons, and come back with more information, at least on that part. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm good. I had lowered my hand. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sorry. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm going to actually recommend that we remove this action, and I think, from a practical standpoint, it has no implications in the short term, because the stock is overfished, and so the accountability measure would require that payback in the short term, and, obviously, if the stock successfully rebuilds, then we could always go back and revisit the accountability measure down the road.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I love that. It decreases the amount of actions in here needed for analysis, and so there's been a suggestion to remove this particular action, which is the commercial accountability measure. Are there any concerns or comments about removing this action? Mel.

MR. BELL: I like that idea.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I think, based on the questions and the discussion, it sounds like direction to staff to remove this action. All right. Myra, do you want to go on to the recreational accountability measure?

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and, just to clarify, what I gathered was to remove the action, but you would still want the IPT to determine, if a payback was triggered, how that would be distributed between the two seasons, or is that clear that it would just be distributed evenly between the two?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, thoughts on that?

MR. STRELCHECK: I am thinking that it's going to be equally distributed, just simply because we specify the proportion of the catch limit that goes to the first or second season, but, if we want to consider alternative options, that's certainly on the table, but, from what I heard from Tim, it makes sense to him to just keep it proportional.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I am going to then remove this whole bit. The next action, and this is the last one, would be to modify the recreational accountability measures, and so this one is a little messy, because it's tied to whether the intent is to look at a recreational season. If so, then you would have the option of potentially getting NMFS to project how that season would -- How long that season would last, or you could also have a defined recreational season that lasts one or two waves, as we spoke earlier.

Right now, the no action includes an in-season closure and a payback and a reduction of the season the following year if the total ACL is exceeded and red porgy are overfished. As I said, Alternative 2 would allow the agency to determine the length of the season on a date that is selected by the council and based on when the recreational ACL would be met. The other thing you could consider is, for red snapper for example, the accountability measure is the season, and so the season length is determined based on how much ACL is available. Therefore, you don't need to specify any more accountability measures. Then I guess, since you chose to remove the recreational ACT, this would just go away. Back to you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Any discussion from the committee here? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Chair. It seems to me, if you removed Action 7, you would remove this action as well. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm good with that. Is the rest of the committee good with that?

MS. BECKWITH: I have a question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure.

MS. BECKWITH: But, if we remove this action, then wouldn't that retain the payback provision that's currently -- Don't we currently have a payback provision?

MS. BROUWER: Yes. There is an in-season closure, a payback, and a reduction the following year if the total ACL is exceeded and the species is overfished.

MS. BECKWITH: Yes, and so I'm not really down with paybacks on recreational, especially when the PSEs might be as high as they would be with red porgy, and so I would discourage us from taking out this action, and maybe that Alternative 2, where the season is the accountability measure, similar to what we've done with black sea bass, would make more sense to me than continuously digging ourselves into a hole with a potential payback.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. 10-4. Myra, do you need more direction on this particular action?

MS. BROUWER: No, and I think we're fine, Jessica. I think what we'll do is take this back to the IPT, and then we can flesh something out a little bit more to bring to you in June, and, again, as I said, if the council is interested in specifying a season, then we would work to develop the appropriate AMs to go with that approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: So I guess I would want some more discussion here, and I understand, obviously, the practicality of not wanting a payback. If NMFS gets into a situation where we're announcing the start and end dates of the season though, it's kind of practically the same thing as having a payback or making an adjustment to a season in the following year, and this gets back to my earlier comment, which is the council's goal here of -- I think what we're striving for is some level of stability with the recreational sector, and so where we don't exceed the catch limit and we're able to have that continuity from year to year with seasons and combinations of bag or size limits, and so I guess I would caution -- I still think that makes sense to remove this action, and I would caution against kind of taking a different accountability measure approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: I mean, the way I see it is, if we do a payback, then you're setting a season, a reduced season, based on a new reduced ACL, and I would like to see us set a season to maintain the ACL, but my concern is, when we have paybacks, then you reduce the ACL, and you set a shortened season, and it's sort of a continuously dug hole, and I think our intent, especially with the way MRIP works occasionally, is that our goal should really be to set seasons and to maintain our ACLs, but I just don't see paybacks as sort of practical for the recreational fishery, and so the payback language is what makes me uncomfortable. If we were setting seasons, or reducing the length of the season in the following year, to assure that the ACL is not gone over or whatever, then that's fine, but, when you add in that payback, then I think we get into a problematic cycle.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, folks. I don't know what to do here, and so is it in or is it out? Steve.

MR. POLAND: I would say, based on the discussion, let's leave it in for right now and let the IPT mull over our comments, and then we can maybe come back at the next meeting and make the decision to include or exclude, and I guess it's kind of a kicking-the-can-down-the-road approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I like the idea of the IPT having a discussion, and so that sound good, and it sounds like stay in and have a discussion. If we want to remove it, we'll do that on the next look at this document. Myra, what else do you need here? I'm sorry. Mel.

MR. BELL: It's just I'm fine with leaving this in for the IPT to think through, but I'm just wondering, based on something Clay said earlier, in reminding us about flexibility potentially within NS 1, we're looking at things a little different, and is this the time to consider something other than what we're doing? In other words, consider applying some of that flexibility to look at things based on three-year increments or something? Is this where we might think about that, because, if we're going to use that new flexibility provided, I'm just asking is this the place to maybe have the IPT think about that while they're thinking about this in general for recreational accountability?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think you're talking about the three-year running average, and I saw Shep's hand go up.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Chair. I was just going to say, if the council wants to consider that, you can certainly ask the IPT to develop the alternatives and add it, but it would be the flexibility -- Well, you would add it I guess under Action 8, if that stays in, and you could just add it there, and you could add the same flexibility to the commercial sector as well, if you were interested, I

believe, but I don't think you have the same issues with variability, and so you might have a harder time justifying it. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so --

MR. BELL: My rationale for here was because of the concerns brought up about the particular data that we're relying upon, and so I just didn't know if -- If they're going to be thinking -- I am not looking to create a huge amount of work for them, but it seems like this would be the time to think about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Steve.

MR. POLAND: I'm in support of asking the IPT to develop that alternative, to include looking at the three-year average of recreational landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sounds good. Clay.

DR. PORCH: I, of course, also support that, and I would just like to mention that the MRIP folks contractors looked at it, and they even recommended five-year averages for some species. The only problem is, and maybe Shep can advise, but I think NS 1, at this point, only allows three years, but certainly I would support three years, and maybe we would need NS 1 to be written to go as long as five, but I just thought you should know that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Clay. We have some direction to the IPT that Myra is typing up down there, and it has the three-year running average. I like Clay's suggestion of five years, but we don't know if that's possible, and so I think that the IPT can have that discussion and bring something back to us.

MS. BROUWER: Sounds good, Jessica. Thank you. I guess the plan would be then to prepare the analyses and bring this back to you in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I believe so. I saw two other hands go up. As soon as we get through these other folks, I suggest we're going to take a fifteen-minute break, but let's go to Steve and then Andy.

MR. POLAND: Thank you, Jessica. I know we've got a discussion coming up, and I think it's in dolphin wahoo, talking about geometric mean, and so would it be appropriate here to just provide direction to the IPT to include a consideration of a couple of different metrics for calculating mean, geometric, arithmetic, or should we just leave it open-ended to the IPT to bring us back options? I guess central tendency and --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Good questions. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to say that I'm supportive of the accountability measures looking at a three-year moving average, and I pulled up the National Standard 1 Guidelines, and it does refer to the three-year moving average, but it also says, if analyses support some other appropriate multiyear period, and so I think there's some flexibility there, and we've already had

some good discussion as to why basing AMs on a multiyear period might be appropriate, and so I think the IPT has plenty of discretion here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. That sounds good. Myra, I don't know if you want to add, in parentheses up there, three years or longer. Okay. I think we've had great discussion here and good ideas. It sounds like we're good here with Amendment 50, and let's go ahead and take a fifteen-minute break, and, when we come back, we're going to continue moving through our agenda for snapper grouper.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Jessica.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It looks like we have a number of folks back and ready to get going again. We're still in Snapper Grouper, and it looks like we're going to get an update on red snapper and greater amberjack research projects.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. Mine will be very, very brief, and I think Mike Errigo is going to tell you about the amberjack project, and so these are the two projects that are being funded through NMFS, and Sea Grant is administering those grants, and so, for red snapper, it's sort of a sister project to the Great Red Snapper Count that was conducted in the Gulf.

It is, obviously, a much smaller-scale project, and there were two proposals that were reviewed by the Steering Committee last month, and there is -- The Steering Committee had a lengthy discussion with reviewers, and those proposals have gone through that process, and Sea Grant is going to be contacting the PIs that are going to be offered the grant next week, and so the intent is for the work to begin this year, and it's going to be a project that is going to extend through August of 2023. That's pretty much the update that I have for you.

The other thing I will mention is there's been discussion about potentially additional money being available, and I don't know the details of how that would be handled, or when that would be available, but it's been discussed on numerous occasions that there will be additional funds for red snapper, and so, unless there's any questions, I will turn it over to Mike, so he can tell you about amberjack.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any hands right now, and I guess let's go to Mike on amberjack.

DR. ERRIGO: All right. The amberjack project is similar to the red snapper project, and they're trying to get at the same kind of thing, to get a count of amberjack, and this one actually spans for the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and so it's a very large-scale project, and it's got \$11.7 million in funding for it, and so it's a big project, and it is slated to -- Like the money is slated to be distributed for August 1, and so that's when the research is slated to start, of this year and go for two years, through the end of July 2023.

We have four letters of intent right now for big projects, research proposals, that we're looking to get, and the proposals aren't due until April 9, and so, as far as I know, we haven't gotten any of the actual proposals yet, and just the letters of intent, and so we're waiting on those, and then they

will be reviewed, and one will be chosen as the one to go forward, and they're big, collaborative projects, and lots of people are working on them, and that's about all I have for you on amberjack right now. If there are any questions, I will try and answer them as best I can. Otherwise, that's all I have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. I don't see any hands up. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. Did you say, just for the greater amberjack project, that it's \$11 million in funding?

DR. ERRIGO: Yes.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any more hands. All right, Myra, do we want to go into the next -- I'm sorry. Chris has his hand up.

MR. CONKLIN: I am just curious. Did that money for the amberjack project come from of the COVID relief bills? I saw something on the news about it a while back, that they had thrown in something in the bill to count amberjack fish in the Gulf of Mexico.

DR. ERRIGO: I am not aware of exactly where the money came from, and I know \$9 million of it is federal funds, and \$2.7 million are non-federal match funds from the states, but I don't know exactly where the federal funds came from. Maybe Clay knows.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: That was congressionally-appropriated money, the same as for the Great Red Snapper Count, or the \$9 million was anyway, and so some of it went directly to Sea Grant, I think around \$5 million, and then almost \$5 million went through the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and we moved it over there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Clay. Any more questions on these updates? I don't see any hands. I'm going to turn it back to Myra, and I'm not sure who is going to give us this red snapper season update.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Jessica. This is going to be given by Mike Larkin, and, Mike, I have just unmuted you.

DR. LARKIN: Thank you, Myra. I'm going to give you an update on the South Atlantic red snapper 2021 recreational season update. A quick background is SEDAR 24 and SEDAR 41 determined that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing. It's actually currently being reassessed now in SEDAR 73, I think it is, but that's not completed yet.

Amendment 28 in 2013 set the recreational season to only be open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and it begins on the second Friday in July. The recreational season prediction must be longer than three days, or there is no season. Amendment 43 in 2018 implemented a new annual

catch limit, and the recreational ACL is set at 29,626 fish. Then, in 2020, Regulatory Amendment 33 removed that the recreational season must be three days or longer.

Just some recreational data sources that go into seeing what are the landings for the South Atlantic red snapper stock, there are state surveys and carcass programs, and, I guess, just as a quick background, in recent years, there's been a limited season in July, and, so, during that time, there's been state surveys and carcass programs going on at that time, as well as MRIP is still going on at that time, when the season is open, and the headboat landings come from the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, which also operates during that short period of time when it's been open in recent years.

What recent landings are available to predict the 2021 July landings? The recreational season begins the second Friday in July each year, if a recreational season is allowed. The recreational sector was opened in July of 2019 and 2020. Before that, if you wanted to get some data when it was open in July, you would have to go back to 2014. In 2019, the recreational season was open for five days, and you see the dates there of July 12, 13, 14, 19, and 20. Then, in 2020, the recreational season was open for four days, and you see it was July 10, 11, 12, and 17.

For the July 2019 landings, for SEDAR 74, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center put together an ad hoc group, which met and reviewed the available landings for that July 2019 period, and they broke it up by mode, and so charter, private, and headboat. They looked at, first, was there available data during that July period, and then, if there was, like for example a state survey and MRIP available, for example for charter, they dived deeper into and looked at number of intercepts, looked at the variability of it, and so this came from that ad hoc group.

You see, for example, in North Carolina, the charter landings came from MRIP, and the private landings came from MRIP, but, in South Carolina, in 2019, the charter landings came from the South Carolina survey, and private came from MRIP. In all cases, headboat is the only data source there, from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

One more point that I want to make, before we move on, is you can see, in east Florida, both the charter and the private, that data comes from the Florida Fish and Wildlife recreational survey, where they cover all the ports on the east coast, and they do a real high-intensity for that short period of time in July, and you can see that their survey has been used in 2019. I also want to point out that Florida Fish and Wildlife survey accounts for over 95 percent of the landings, and so I'm not saying the other states are not important, but the bulk of those landings come from that Florida Fish and Wildlife survey, and those are combined, charter and private. That's the 2019. If you go to the next slide, I'll go to the 2020 landings.

This is what we have available now, and I'm not saying this is the best available data, but I'm just saying this is what we have right now, at this moment. Because of COVID-19, the MRIP landings from March to December of 2020 are not available at this time, and they will be available in May of 2021, and so you can see, in these cases here, the available data right now, for example in North Carolina and South Carolina and Georgia, during that July time period in 2020, those are coming from, actually, carcass programs. Now, the headboat did continue with the data in 2020, and also, in the State of Florida, they did operate this year, and so I have, in 2020, the Florida Fish and Wildlife red snapper survey for Florida.

This is the landings here, broken up by 2019 and then preliminary 2020 landings, and what we have available right now at this time, and then you can see the fourth column there is the average of the 2019 and 2020 landings. Again, I want to point out, if you look at that top-half of the slide, you can see that the big bulk of the landings come from that east Florida -- That's coming from that Florida Fish and Wildlife survey, and so you've got 44,000 fish in 2019 and 36,000 in 2020, and you can see that the total in 2019 is lower than in 2020, but you've got to keep in mind that, in 2019, they had a five-day season, and in 2020 they had a four-day season, and so, when you account for the number of days that it was open, if you move down to the bottom-half of the slide, you get very similar catch rates per day.

You can see, in 2019, you get about almost 10,000 fish per day. In 2020, it looks like we had 9,369 fish, and then you take the average of those two, and you get approximately 9,600 fish per day there, when you take the average.

What's next? We expect the full calendar of 2020 MRIP landings from the Southeast Region Fisheries Science Center in May of 2021, and then we can evaluate -- We can look at the MRIP landings and the available state survey landings for each mode and for each state, and we expect the announcement of the 2021 recreational red snapper season to be released at the end of May. Then my next slide is just a questions slide, and so I would be happy to take any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Mike E. has his hand up.

DR. ERRIGO: I just had a quick question. The slide where you're looking at the 2020 data sources, I noticed that, for South Carolina, you have the carcass collection for charter -- You have the South Carolina carcass program under charter, but was there an issue with the charter logbook program, where they didn't have data for 2020?

DR. LARKIN: I don't think so. I reached out to the South Carolina folks, and they gave me the survey, whatever they had for that July when the season is open, and so I'm sorry, Mike, and I don't know off the top of my head.

DR. ERRIGO: Okay.

DR. LARKIN: So you're saying there could be some logbook data there as well?

DR. ERRIGO: I was just wondering, because it has survey in 2019 and carcass in 2020, but I know they have an independent logbook program that they use for charters, and I thought that was one of the data sources, and I don't see why that wouldn't be in effect in 2020, but Mel has his hand up, and maybe he can answer that.

MR. BELL: We would have both. If we have carcasses, we have numbers, and so it's maybe just how that's expressed, and I would have to look and see how we explained that, but we do get carcasses off of the charter vessels as well, but certainly we have numbers.

DR. ERRIGO: Okay. I was just wondering, and that's all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that question. I guess I had a couple of questions here, and I guess they're for Andy. So I know that the assessment isn't finalized, but where it seems

like it's going is that the stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing, but it seems like the assessment is also indicating that there is significant progress on abundance and that the abundance is maybe even higher than it's been since the 1970s, and it looks like that might be driven by recruitment in the last six years of the assessment that's been really high.

I guess one thing is, in thinking about 2021, and then thinking about this moving forward, I'm wondering if -- Because it seems a little bit unprecedented here about this super high abundance, and it seems like the rebuilding plan is working, and I do know that there's some issues with discards in the recreational fishery that maybe we're going to make some progress on with the descending devices, and we're trying to get more large fish in the water, or not just large fish, but old fish in the water right now, but I'm wondering if we can start thinking about managing the stock a little bit differently, since the abundance is so high.

Maybe this also indicates that maybe we can have a few more fish this year, that maybe there's more fish on the table, and we would have a season possibly longer than the three days, and so I just wanted to kind of start this discussion, even though the assessment isn't completed yet.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica. You've raised some great points, and so I guess, first, I just want to be careful not to get too far out in front of the assessment, and, obviously, it has to get to the SSC and be reviewed, and you're correct that the stock abundance is increasing, and probably at the highest level in decades. We also know that overfishing -- Fishing mortality has declined, based on management measures that the South Atlantic Council has taken in recent years.

With our requirements under the Magnuson Act, depending on how the assessment comes out -- If it continues to be on the same course, it's still indicating that we have to address overfishing, but it does also indicate that rebuilding progress is made, and so I certainly am looking at, obviously, ways that we could proceed with kind of this tradeoff between landings and the discard mortality that's occurring in this fishery, and is there ways to manage this fishery differently, while also, obviously, meeting the mandates under the Magnuson Act.

In terms of this year, what I can say is we would proceed, obviously, with setting the July season, and the council will get an update on the assessment at the June meeting, and potentially could take some sort of emergency action, or potentially a framework action that leads up to that meeting, depending on the results, and, if we are able to influence, obviously, the catch levels and change them for this year, we could potentially have season changes implemented, based on higher catch levels, in the fall.

That is contingent though on whether or not we can proceed with a framework action that doesn't change the allocations, and I know General Counsel is looking into that matter, and Monica probably can provide more guidance. If we are required to change the allocations, then my expectation is we wouldn't be able to get any sort of changes in place for this fall, and we would probably have to focus on the 2022 season.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Let's go to Monica first, before we go to Chester.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I don't want to pre-judge any information that hasn't come before you, because, obviously, you've got an assessment that's not finished, and it's not reviewed yet by your SSC, but, along the lines of all the other fish that you're dealing with right now with new

assessments, I assume that the recreational catch and effort data being used in this SEDAR assessment has transitioned to I guess what we're calling the MRIP-FES currency, and your current allocations of 71.93 percent recreational and 28.07 percent commercial are based on the previous MRIP, and I guess it's the CHTS currency, for the recreational catch and effort data.

I believe you're going to have to look at allocations when you look at the new assessment information, and so allocations are not done according to the framework that you've all set up, and you cannot do them via a framework amendment, and you would have to look at allocations via a plan amendment, and so I'm throwing that out there for you to think about now. However, we haven't seen any of the information, and I don't know much about what the assessment says at this point, but I believe that you're going to have to do a plan amendment to make some of these changes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you. Andy answered actually the questions that I was getting ready to ask, and, you know, in Chester's perfect world, with the abundance that we've got and with the discard mortality problem that I'm sure we still have, I sure would like to see us move towards one fish per person per day and have a real, real season. When I say real season, I'm talking like six months or seven months or something like that, because, right now, we are probably still killing almost the quota with dead discards, I would guess, and I don't know that, but I would guess it, because we were over with the dead discards. I make that statement and talk about the perfect world, and I know this is not a perfect world.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chester. Can someone remind me? Is the assessment going to be done before the SSC meets in April? I can't remember.

DR. ERRIGO: Yes, and it's slated -- It's on the SSC's docket to review during the April meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, that's excellent. I'm hoping that the SSC can provide some short-term management advice, and I hope they will think about those last six years of high recruitment when they give us some projection scenarios. I guess this is a question for Monica, and I'm also wondering if we have the ability, even though we know that we need to bring in these FES numbers and look at allocation, but I'm wondering if we could do this concurrently in two different actions, like a framework or emergency action to get some increases in place, so we could have more fish in 2021, and then simultaneously starting a full plan amendment that would allow us to address the allocation. I think they're doing this for something in the Gulf.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think they're doing something like that in the Gulf, and I will certainly look into it and see what we could possibly do under the constraints of the Magnuson Act and all the other law that we have to abide by. I think that's going to be difficult, but I guess, at this point, all I can tell you is that I'll certainly look into that, and I will see what they are doing in the Gulf, and I'll talk with my colleagues about it, and, if there's any way we could do it here, I certainly would bring that back to you.

However, and I hate to be a pessimist, because I'm usually an optimist on these things, but I believe you're going to need to do a plan amendment. Again, I don't want to -- Not be able to do a framework, because the frameworks are set up that you are using previously-approved formulas

and those sorts of things that have been implemented in the FMPs, and I assume, with the new information, the new FES currency that's being put into the amendment, it's going to be a difficult lift, Jessica, but I will certainly look into it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Monica. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was going to ask something similar to the approach that you were, Jessica, and I get it, that we may be constrained, legally, to being required to do a full amendment to deal with the allocations and all, but, if that could perhaps be done separately, and, if you think of it, there are things that we would like to be able to achieve for this year, for this fishing year, and so to provide the best opportunity and most useful fishery for this year and what does it take and what are the things that we might be able to do.

Then, thinking a little bit more long-term, with the assessment in our hand, what are the things that we would really need to do for those, and initiate the appropriate plan amendment as soon as we can, or at least get the process started, and so it's kind of a two-phase thing, two separate needs. One is for this year for the fishery, and one is a little more for the long-term, based on the new assessment, and so I just would encourage us all to put on our thinking caps and exhaust every possibility to try to achieve the best result for both short-term and long-term.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I totally agree, Mel, and I'm hoping that the council can think about kind of our management strategy here and if there's a way we can manage more for abundance, and so, yes, I agree, and I think this is going to take some creative thinking here. Let's go back to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One of the disadvantages of not meeting in person is I can't just lean over to General Counsel and ask questions, and so apologies, Monica, but I'm going to put you on the spot. Based on my understanding of the assessment, and I will caveat this, that this is secondhand, but I do know that they are using Florida survey landings, which represent a bulk of the landed catch, and they will use MRIP, and obviously the FES, for other state landings, as well as for discards.

I guess the -- It's uncertain to me how much the allocation may or may not change, given that there's kind of a mixture of different surveys that are being included, and so my question to you, Monica, is, if there is the ability to increase the ACL, and we were able to show that the allocation wouldn't be dramatically changing, does that change the equation here, with regard to whether or not a framework action versus a plan amendment could be done, or is any change to the allocation kind of an immediate justification to move to a plan amendment?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Well, that's a good question, and I guess it depends on what the information is. I mean, we have to abide by National Standard 2 of the Magnuson Act as well, right, and we're using the best scientific information available, and so I guess my answer will be, to you, Andy, I'm not sure. I will certainly look into it. As Jessica mentioned, maybe they're doing something similar in the Gulf, and the factual circumstances of that could be quite a bit different than what we're talking about just here in our supposing and putting our supposing hats on, I guess, and so I will look into it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Monica.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Monica. Jessica, real quick, one other item that I just want to raise, and so, given timing, with the SSC meeting before our next meeting in June, I think it would be beneficial to talk about, if we could proceed with an ACL change in framework, how would we go about doing that, because timing is going to be critical, if any sort of rulemaking, even if we're waiving cooling-off periods, is typically three to four months, and so, if we didn't take action in June, we're potentially not going to be able to influence the late 2021 season without some sort of special council meeting, and so maybe John or Myra could talk a little bit more about that and steps we could take.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great, and that's a great point, and so, John or Myra, do you want to weigh-in here, before I go to the rest of the raised hands?

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. I guess I'm processing what was just suggested, and I think that would require quick assembly of some kind of an IPT, so that we could have enough information available for the council in June, which would definitely put a burden on staff, both in the region and in our office, and so we would have to sort of regroup and think about how we could accomplish that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Sounds good. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. Andy addressed some of the questions I have, but I guess I'm still trying to sort out this allocation component of this versus new information from the assessment. So, if we had no assessment in the queue, and let's just go back in time and this was last year, we are using -- If we have a season this year, we will be using the existing allocations to apply to any season this year, and I would assume that's correct, or am I hearing that we have to somehow modify the allocations to apply to a season this year, if we have one? I'm kind of a little confused on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy or Monica?

MR. STRELCHECK: So that's the question. With the use of the new MRIP-FES data, can we proceed without modifying the allocation and update -- Change the annual catch limits, presuming they can be increased, and that could be done through a framework action, or do we have to do a plan amendment, which would then require us to increase the catch limits and adjust the allocations, before implementing those new annual catch limits?

DR. ERRIGO: I also wanted to add onto that, if I could. If you don't change the ACL based on the new assessment, if you leave it where it is now, then you would use the old allocations and put in a season based on that, and everything would run just like it did last year. If you change the ACL, then you have to look at do we need to change the allocations, are they going to be significantly different and that kind of thing, and do we do it now, or can we do them separately from the ACL, and so that's where the conundrum is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Anyway, what Andy said is -- What I said previously, I will certainly look at whether we can update -- Increase the landings this year, based on the assessment, doing a framework action. I am very concerned about using the best scientific information available going

forward, and, if there's a way that we can split out and do the allocations, based on the assessment, in a plan amendment, while doing a framework this year, that would be great, and I will bring all that information back to you on your options and your legal risks and all that sort of thing.

I am hesitant to say, right now, that, yes, we can go ahead with a framework action, particularly since we haven't seen the information yet, and I don't want to get ahead of my skis, so to speak, and I just think that the best advice, going forward, is let's have your SSC look at the assessment, and we'll meet in June and decide what to do, going forward, with red snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. That sounds good, and it makes sense, Monica. Art.

MR. SAPP: I'm kind of off-topic on my thoughts, and I'm going to wait a little bit, until we get back.

MS. MCCAWLEY: If it's on red snapper, now is the time to bring it up.

MR. SAPP: I hear you. It's a similar concern I had with porgy, but talking about managing to age, and a twenty-year-old snapper will reproduce and produce more eggs than a ten-year-old snapper, and I believe that would be the case if a ten-year-old snapper wasn't growing as big as a twenty-year-old snapper as quickly, because they're so prolific right now. Everybody that spends any time in the ocean is talking about how big and how many there are, and I don't care if it's three years old and weighs twenty pounds. It's going to produce the same as a ten-year-old and twenty-pound snapper, eggs-wise, and it's got the gut cavity for it, right, and so I'm highly concerned about trying to manage to age, when it sounds like we've got the size that we need out there, and potentially open the fishery up a bit, due to that size that we have. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Art. Based on what Myra said, do we need to have -- Do we need to have some kind of IPT to work on this before we come back in June?

MS. BROUWER: Jessica, if I may, what I would suggest is that we think about it for the next day, or twenty-four hours, and maybe come back in Executive Committee, and, by then, maybe we will come up with some ideas that might help the discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds great. All right. Anything else here on red snapper? I don't see any more hands, and I'm going to turn it to Myra to talk about the topics for the upcoming AP meeting, and then we're going to go into our list of other business.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks, Jessica. I will try to be quick, and so what you have on your screen was included in your overview, and this is just a bulleted list of topics that have come up to potentially include in the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel's agenda, and they're scheduled to meet in April.

As I mentioned yesterday, there is a fishery performance report that needs to be put together for mutton snapper, and we talked about potentially tacking on snowy grouper as well, and the AP is scheduled to do overviews, the ones that you guys received on amberjack and snowy, and also talk about yellowtail snapper, since that's an amendment that is going to be coming your way soon.

The AP would go over the amendments that are under development currently, Amendment 50, Amendment 49, and potentially a brief update on the wreckfish ITQ modernization, since that one is a little bit more specific and will require input from the shareholders, and we talked yesterday about maybe scheduling that after the June meeting.

We typically also give the AP updates on where the stock assessments are, and then also the potential to update them on other initiatives that the council has going on, and Citizen Science has some new things coming up that they could demo to the AP. Also, the Snapper Grouper AP Chair wanted to have a discussion on possible approaches to reduce recreational discards, and evidently this is sparked by red snapper, and, also, there is a list of research recommendations that typically gets approved at the June meeting, and the SSC is going to be reviewing those at their meeting. If you want, we could also include that on the list for the Snapper Grouper AP. This is a half-day and full-day meeting, and it's going to be tough to include all of this, and so, if you have any suggestions, please -- Now is the time to talk about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think this is a good list. It's hard for me to tell if this is too ambitious or not, but I like the idea of the discussion on possible approaches to reduce recreational discards and feedback on council research recommendations, the mutton snapper fishery performance report, et cetera, as well as all the things that we have underway here. Is there anything else that other folks suggest that they want to add to this list for consideration by the Snapper Grouper AP for their spring meeting? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Not an additional item, but I like to add a bullet point under Amendment 48 to ensure that -- I would really like to hear the AP's input on what they think the real catch, the real recreational catch, of wreckfish is. I think that's the group where we're going to get a lot of information about that component.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great point, and then, also, when Myra works on the committee report, I assume it will have a timing and tasks about bringing the wreckfish shareholders together, like we talked about before, but, yes, I like the idea of getting some more information from the AP. Okay. Anything else on this topic? I don't see any more hands. Myra, do you have what you need on this topic?

MS. BROUWER: I do, Jessica. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. So far, I have two other items for Other Business, and one of the items that I wanted to bring up had to do with golden tilefish, and so one of the items is golden tilefish, and the other one is vermilion. For golden tilefish, I believe that the commercial longline component closed on February 10, and I believe that we haven't harvested all of the ACL, and I was just looking for some updates from the Fisheries Service on the 2021 landings.

It seems like we should be able to reopen, and I'm wondering if we have any information about the number of days, and, when I talked to some of the fishermen and the dealers, they were suggesting that they wanted to delay the reopening until around March 20, so that they're fishing right up to Easter, which is April 4, and so I'm just trying to figure out if thinking about that reopening time period is possible. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Jessica. You are correct that the catch limit has not been met, and I believe we're around 80 percent, a little bit less than 80 percent, right now. We have done some projections from our Science Center which indicate that we could reopen for approximately eleven days, and that is subject to change, if we get any sort of late-reported landings that continue to come in, and, obviously, that will narrow the gap between the catch limit and the quota that's been caught.

In terms of reopening, yes, certainly I think we can consider reopening in late March, and there's not any indications that I've gotten that catch rates would be markedly different than what we've seen prior to then, and so that, I think, is where we'll end up. In terms of actually how long we can reopen, it will be just contingent on some additional data, if we receive any before we announce the reopening.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so it sounds like maybe mid to late March when you would announce the reopening, and when you think you would have some more information?

MR. STRELCHECK: I am going to look to Rick or Jack here, if one of them could speak in terms of timing and when the announcement could be made.

MR. DEVICTOR: I can speak to this. If we're talking about March 20, and that's what we've heard from the public on this, and so we would move forward on this package sooner, and we would get it moving, and then hopefully get an announcement -- So we would give the public enough notice on this, and I think that that is important, and so we can begin working on this package this week, and get it moving, and they've been moving fairly quickly up in Headquarters, these type of in-season packages, and so maybe have an announcement in mid-March, at the latest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. I appreciate the discussion on this. Anything else on golden tile? All right. The other item we had under Other Business had to do with vermilion. Chris Conklin, do you want to talk about your vermilion item?

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to point out that the commercial vermilion quota is at I think 16 percent right now, and we've had a lot of challenges with weather, and also pandemic circumstances, and I know that the council and NMFS have previously implemented, I believe, a 180-day emergency rule to bump the trip limit up to 1,500 pounds, which I believe is set to expire sometime this month.

At the current catch rate right now, and where we have been in years past, and I talked to some of the NMFS fellows, and they said that we're not probably going to be able to catch our quota if we go back to the 1,000-pound limit. I was wondering if there's a possibility of extending the rule. Otherwise, I probably need to make a motion, of course, after discussion -- I would make a motion for discussion to begin some sort of a framework amendment or something to try and get that going, and so I will just wait and see what GC has to say. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you, Chris. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Thanks for that, Chris. No, we cannot extend the emergency rule. The Magnuson Act allows an emergency rule to be extended for another essentially six months if the public has an opportunity to comment on the emergency regs and the council is actively preparing

a fishery management plan or plan amendment or regulatory amendment, if you will, to address the emergency.

On both prongs, we don't meet either prong, and, one, the public comment wasn't taken on the emergency rule, because I remember discussing this with the council at the time, and they just wanted -- You all wanted it for a six-month period, but, in addition to that, the council is not working on any sort of measure in an amendment to address the emergency. I will note, too, that the vermilion trip limit changed effective -- I guess it was a little over a year ago, February 26 of 2020, in Regulatory Amendment 27, and that was your visioning amendment for the commercial sector.

At that point, you put in place, for Season 1 and Season 2, a 1,000-pound trip limit, with no step-downs, and so you've recently visited vermilion, but I know the pandemic has changed a lot of circumstances, and so my advice to you is, if you desire to change it again, we should start working on a framework amendment to do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Well, that kind of stinks, because we might not need to change the trip limit and set it stone and have to go back and do another damn amendment to undo it, and the flexibility with the emergency rule was very nice, and it seemed to accommodate some of the things that we needed to be able to catch the fish, but it still hasn't been happening. We haven't been exploiting the fish at a very high rate at all, and it looks like that's going to continue.

I mean, a 1,000-pound limit puts a crapload more wear and tear on our vessels, and you've got leave fish biting and turn around and come in and unload them, so you don't get a ticket, and then you go back out, and the weather is bad, and the fish aren't biting, and it's just not a way to do business. I'm not a fan of trip limits, and I don't like them, and I think they're pretty silly, to manage fishermen instead of fish, but, hey, whatever.

I don't really think that the council would support an amendment to up the trip limit on this fish. I mean, it doesn't seem like the right way to go, and I think the flexibility we had with one emergency rule was just fine, but, I mean, if I need to make a motion for discussion, I will make a motion to change the vermilion trip limit on commercial to 1,500 pounds gutted weight. If I can get a second, I would like to hear you all talk about it. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris has made a motion, and Myra is getting it on the screen there, to increase the vermilion snapper trip limit to 1,500 pounds. Do I have a second?

MS. MARHEFKA: I will second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It's seconded by Kerry. It's under discussion, and let's start with Myra first.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, Jessica. Chris, I just wanted to add another potential option that the council has, is to add an action to an existing amendment, and you have two that are under development, and I would caution to try to not put it in the red pogy amendment, but you could potentially add an action to the amberjack amendment. Of course, as you know, it would probably

take a year for that one to be in place, and so that's another option besides starting on another framework.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you, Myra. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I was just going to second it, but, while I've got the mic here, and I understand what Myra was saying, but I don't think that really helps us much either, because, I mean, both of those amendments are -- They're down the road as well. If you were to add something like that to one of those amendments, does that mean we would have to go back and revise the purpose and need? I mean, does it really start bogging the whole thing down? I guess my other question is so, without extending this emergency rule, we have no options, absolutely none, other than an amendment, and is that correct?

MS. BROUWER: I believe so, Tim. I think a framework amendment that would result in one of those regulatory amendments that we do, that would be the only option, I believe, in this case.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Myra. Back to Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Just to be certain, it seems like that the last administration had asked us what we can do for COVID relief in our fisheries, and the only damn thing was the vermilion, and then we upped the king mackerel bag limit on recreational, and, I mean, is that order still in place, I mean to where we could maybe ride off of that and not have to be bound to put this in an amendment? I mean, I'm just looking for a way forward.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I understand, and I don't think that that order still applies, since it was a previous administration, but either John or Myra, or even Monica, do you have any reaction to that?

MR. CARMICHAEL: I mean, that order didn't remove any of the timing restrictions or anything like that. It required us to put in things that we would consider and talk about how we would get them initiated, but we did the emergency order, the emergency rule, that was requested, and that was the fastest thing that we could do, and so I don't think that that emergency order gives us any way to do things any faster.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I will just jump in here. So that Executive Order didn't change the legal requirements of the Magnuson Act, and the emergency rule that was put in place at the council's request, both for king mackerel and vermilion, was done according to the law, the Magnuson Act, and so I don't see how we get around the legal requirements of the Magnuson Act in this case, Chris.

I think that your best bet is to start a framework amendment. I don't hear anything that says another emergency rule is appropriate, and there is no new developments, no unforeseen developments, and, I mean, it's really unfortunate that the folks are having a difficult time harvesting at this point. I can understand why you want to increase the trip limit, and I think the best way forward to do that is via a framework amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mel.

MR. BELL: Chris brought this up, and I suggested that he bring it to us under Other Business, and, now that we've kind of heard some of the complicating factors in all of this, my recommendation, at this point, would be to -- Let's kind of fall back and think about this, and maybe we come back -- If we can kind of flesh out, in concept, what a framework might look like, what the timing might be, and just kind of bring it up again at Full Council.

I'm just trying to look for a better use of our time right now, since we're about an hour-and-a-half behind, and we're not going to solve it right this second, and so my recommendation would be to maybe just take this discussion offline and bring some folks together to kind of think through what the possibilities are, again, having heard some of the limitations that we're dealing with right now, and then maybe kind of wrap it up at Full Council, just so we can kind of move it along, because I don't think we're going to solve this right this second, and I think we do understand that we've kind of exhausted the benefits of the emergency rule and that it leads us to a framework, and so then does that really get you where you need to be, and that's just my recommendation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mel. Great point, and so I will go to Anna and Kerry, that are the two remaining hands that are raised, and is there anything else that you need to say about this right now, before we come back at Full Council? Anna.

MS. BECKWITH: Nope. I'm good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: No, and I will take them offline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good. All right. Chris, did you still have something you wanted to say here?

MR. CONKLIN: Thank for all of that, and I just wanted to make sure there wasn't a way forward and get it on the record that it isn't going to help us anymore. I don't know if this is the right thing or not, but I can tell you that the majority of the people that pioneered the snapper grouper fishery in our region are either too old to go fishing or have sold out or died out, and the fishery is changing, and there's not any really new entrants coming along to supply the larger markets.

That's one reason why the harvest rate is not so high, is we don't have the real good fishermen going out and making a living off of these things anymore, and so there's fewer guys on the bigger boats that roll on out, and so this might be the right direction, but something has got to go a little bit higher. I mean, we're squeezed out on every other thing, and we're getting screwed on scamp, gag, snowy, red porgy, red snapper, golden tile. I mean, at this rate, we're vermilion is going to be our long-term fishery, if we can hang in there, and so I think it's pretty much necessary. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. Is there any other Other Business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee?

MS. BECKWITH: Did we vote on this motion, or is that still a live motion on the table?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We did not. It's still on the table, and I believe that Mel wants to come back to this when we get to Full Council, and why don't we just leave this motion hanging out there.

MS. BECKWITH: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other business for the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. Mel, I will turn it back to you. Thank you, Myra.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 3, 2021.)

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Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 2, 2021

SAFMC March Council Meeting

Attendee Report: (3/01/21 - 3/05/21)

Report Generated:

03/03/2021 07:45 AM EST

Webinar ID

663-361-235

Actual Start Date/Time

03/02/2021 07:59 AM EST

Last Name	First Name
Aukeman	Trip
BYRD	01JULIA
Bailey	Adam
Barbieri	Luiz
Batsavage	Chris
Beal	00Bob
Beckwith	00Anna
Belcher	00Carolyn
Bell	00Mel
Bianchi	Alan
Bonura	Vincent
Brouwer	01Myra
Bruce	James
Bubley	Walter
Carmichael	01John
Chaya	01Cindy
Cheshire	Rob
Christiansen	00kyle
Clarke	Lora
Clayborne	Joelle
Conklin	00Chris
Copeland	Robert
Corey	Morgan
Cox	Derek
Cox	Jack
Darrow	Jamie
DeLizza	Richard
DeVictor	Rick
Deaton	Anne
DiLernia	00Anthony
Dukes	Amy
Errigo	01Mike
Estes	00Jim
Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
Foor	Brandon

Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Gentry	Lauren
Glasgow	Dawn
Glenn	David
Godwin	Joelle
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Grimes	00Shepherd
Griner	Tim
Guyas	Martha
Hadley	01John
Harrison	BeBe
Hart	Hannah
Hawes	Rachel
Haymans	00-Doug
Helies	Frank
Hemilright	Dewey
Horton	Chris
Howington	Kathleen
Hudson	Russell
Hull	James
Iberle	01Allie
Iverson	Kim
Jepson	Michael
Karnauskas	Mandy
Keener	Paula
Kellison	Todd
Kolmos	Kevin
Krikstan	Catherine
LARKIN	Michael
LaVine	Britni
Laks	Ira
Laks	Ira
Laney	Reid Wilson
Lyons Gromen	Pam
Marhefka	00Kerry
McCawley	00-Jessica
McCoy	Sherylanne
McGovern	Jack
Meadors	Mandy
Meehan	Sean
Mehta	Nikhil
Mendez	Natasha
Merrifield	Mike
Merrifield	Jeanna
Minch	Robin

Murphey	Trish
Musolino	Anabelle
Neer	Julie
Nesslage	Genny
O'Donnell	Kelli
O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
PUGLIESE	MATT
Package-Ward	Christina
Paffrath	Madison
Perkinson	Matt
Porch	00Clay
Pugliese	01Roger
Pulver	Jeff
Ralston	Kellie
Records	David
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Jon
Rhodes	01Cameron
Rindone	Ryan
Sanchez	Joseph
Sanchez	John
Sapp	00Art
Sartwell	Tim
Schmidtke	01Michael
Scott	Tara
Seward	McLean
Siegfried	Katie
Sinkus	Wiley
Smart	Tracey
Smit-Brunello	00Monica
Smith	Duane
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Stam	Geoff
Stemle	Adam
Stephen	Jessica
Strelcheck	Andy
Sweetman	CJ
TARVER	TIM
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Travis	Michael
Vaughan	Douglas
Von Harten	Herman 'Bo'
Walia	Matthew
Walter	John
White	Geoff
Wiegand	01Christina

Williams
Willis
Woodward
Wyanski
berry
brewer
colby
collier
crosson
emery
gomez
moss
poland
sminkey
thomas
vara

Erik
Michelle
00Spud
David
james (Chip)
00chester
barrett
01chip
scott
jeff
richard
david
00steve
thomas
01suz
mary

SAFMC March Council Meeting

Attendee Report: (3/01/21 - 3/05/21)

Report Generated:

03/04/2021 07:42 AM EST

Webinar ID

663-361-235

Actual Start Date/Time

03/03/2021 07:54 AM EST

Last Name	First Name
Atkinson	Cameron
Aukeman	Trip
BYRD	01JULIA
Barbieri	Luiz
Bauer	Tracey
Beal	00Bob
Beckwith	00Anna
Belcher	00Carolyn
Bell	00Mel
Bellavance	Rick
Bianchi	Alan
Bonura	Vincent
Brame	Richen
Brouwer	01Myra
Bubley	Walter
Burgess	Erika
CURRAN	MARY
Carmichael	01John
Chaya	01Cindy
Cheshire	Rob
Christiansen	00kyle
Clarke	Lora
Conklin	00Chris
Copeland	Robert
Corey	Morgan
Cox	Derek
Cummings-Krueger	Anna
Dale	David
Darrow	Jamie
DeLizza	Richard
DeVictor	Rick
DiLernia	00Anthony
Dukes	Amy
Dunn	Russell
Emery	Jeff
English	Steve

Errigo	01Mike
Evans	Joseph
Finch	Margaret
Fitzpatrick	Eric
Foor	Brandon
Foss	Kristin
Franco	Dawn
Freeman	Jim
Freeman	Mike
Gentry	Lauren
Glasgow	Dawn
Godwin	Joelle
Gore	Karla
Gray	Alisha
Griffin	Mackenzie
Grimes	00Shepherd
Griner	Tim
Guyas	Martha
Hadley	01John
Hart	Hannah
Hawes	Rachel
Haymans	00-Doug
Heffernan	Katie
Helbling	Natalie
Helies	Frank
Hemilright	Dewey
Hester	Emma
Hoke	David
Horton	Chris
Howington	Kathleen
Hudson	Russell
Hull	James
Iberle	01Allie
Iverson	Kim
Jenkins	Wallace
Jepson	Michael
Karnauskas	Mandy
Kellison	Todd
Kolmos	Kevin
Krikstan	Catherine
LARKIN	Michael
Laks	Ira
Laney	Reid Wilson
Levy	Mara
Lind	Michael
Mackey	Shaneese
Malinowski	Richard

Marhefka	00Kerry
McCawley	00-Jessica
McCoy	Sherylanne
McGovern	Jack
McPherson	Matthew
Mehta	Nikhil
Merrifield	Jeanna
Merten	Wessley
Minch	Robin
Minotti	Robert
Musolino	Anabelle
Neer	Julie
Nesslage	Genny
O'Shaughnessy	Patrick
Paffrath	Madison
Parks	Eroc
Pearson	Rick
Pieper	Nicholas
Porch	00Clay
Prostko	Rachel
Pugliese	01Roger
Pulver	Jeff
Ralston	Kellie
Ransome	Taylor
Reichert	Marcel
Reynolds	Jon
Rhodes	01Cameron
Riley	Rick
Sanchez	John
Sanchez	Joseph
Sapp	00Art
Sartwell	Tim
Schmidtke	01Michael
Scott	Tara
Sedberry	George
Seward	McLean
Shertzer	Kyle
Sinkus	Wiley
Smart	Tracey
Smit-Brunello	00Monica
Smith	Duane
Snyder	Ashley
Spanik	Kevin
Spurgin	Kali
Spurlock	Zack
Stam	Geoff
Stemle	Adam

Stephen	Jessica
Stock	N. Carmela
Strelcheck	Andy
Surrency	Ron
Sweetman	CJ
TARVER	TIM
Takade-Heumacher	Helen
Travis	Michael
Vaughan	Douglas
Von Harten	Herman 'Bo'
Walia	Matthew
Walter	John
Wamer	David
Waters	James
Wells	Ben
Whitaker	David
White	Geoff
Wiegand	01Christina
Williams	Erik
Willis	Michelle
Woodward	00Spud
berry	james (Chip)
brewer	00chester
colby	barrett
collier	01chip
crosson	scott
emery	jeff
gloeckner	david
moss	david
poland	00steve
sminkey	thomas
thomas	01suz
vara	mary