

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SNAPPER GROUPER COMMITTEE

**Westin Hotel
Jekyll Island, Georgia**

March 8-10, 2022

TRANSCRIPT

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Dr. John Walter
Dr. Genny Nesslage
Dr. Clay Porch

Additional attendees and invited participants attached.

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council convened at the Westin Hotel, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Tuesday, March 8, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to dive into the Snapper Grouper Committee. The first order of business -- Well, first, let me say that we are a committee of the whole. The first order of business is Approval of the Agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Any objections to approval of the agenda? All right. The agenda stands approved. The next order of business is Approval of the December 2021 minutes. Any changes or modifications to the minutes? Any objection to approval of the minutes? All right. Seeing none, the minutes are approved. All right, Rick. I'm going to pass it to you for Status of EFP Requests.

MR. DEVICTOR: Okay. Thank you very much. Council staff requested that I go through the exempted fishing permits that we have out there out now, and we have something like eight or nine, and so this is purely just for informational purposes, just as a reminder of what exempted fishing permits that we have given out, and I'm not looking for any recommendations at this point.

As you know, the RA may authorize, for a limited time, the harvest of federally-managed species that would otherwise be prohibited for testing purposes, such as for an aquarium, is one common example, or sometimes fishermen will work with a scientist or researcher on a specific project, and so I just have a few slides to go over, and a couple of these have expired.

The first one I'm going to talk about is lionfish, and there were two exempted fishing permits for this, and, again, all of these we presented to the council, and you all have recommended to the RA that these go forward, and so the first one is FWC trap testing, and this allowed the FWC to examine the effectiveness of modified trap designs for capturing lionfish, and so this is where FWC used various trap designs, based on the wire spiny lobster traps, and, basically, their goal was to develop a trap and methods that could catch the most amount of lionfish and the least amount of bycatch, and so that expired in 2021.

At the last meeting, I went over the one from REEF, the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and this is what is referred to as a non-containment trap, and this allowed REEF to examine the effectiveness of non- containment trap designs for capturing lionfish, and so, if you recall, this is one where this non-containment trap would drop to the bottom, hit the bottom, and then open up. There's a FAD in the middle, where the lionfish would go to the FAD, and then it's pulled up and you capture your lionfish, and typically that was done in deeper-water testing, deeper than where divers go, and divers can't go to that depth, but they did want to test the deeper waters and see how it effective it is to capture lionfish there, and so that one -- You can see when that one expires, and so those are the two lionfish EFPs.

I mentioned aquariums, and we typically give EFPs for aquariums to collect species, and so the first one was North Carolina, and this allows the collection of the species on your screen there, for educational display of four locations in North Carolina, and then South Carolina, and this is one that is under review right now, and maybe you saw the Fishery Bulletin, and we sent it out last week, asking for comments, and so, of course, the process is for us to put a notice in the Federal Register and take in the comments, and also take it to the council, looking for a recommendation, and then we review that information before deciding whether to give out the EFP, and so the South Carolina Aquarium, and we allowed the collection of those species, and they're mostly going to

collect off of South Carolina, and some off of North Carolina, and this is an EFP that we've given out in the past.

Moving on to black sea bass pot retrieval, we talked a bit about this, and I know you've had presentations, but the first one was more like a pilot project to test this equipment out, and this Acoustic Sub-Sea Buoy Retrieval Systems, and, of course, this is that ropeless gears that essentially removes most, if not all, of the risk to North Atlantic right whales, and it's out there, and there is no line or buoy, and a vessel goes up to it, and it's activated via acoustic release when the fisherman is present, and so it's been very effective, and it's been in the news, and there's a lot of positive feedback from that.

The first one was a pilot project, and you can see that it was just off of Georgia and North Carolina during September and October, and so I think we presented it at the last council meeting, and the next stage here, Sustainable Seas Technology, they want to test this equipment, and they want to expand it in time and space, and so this is off all four South Atlantic states, and it's been November 15 and April 30, and so that project is underway right now.

This should just be speckled hind and not warsaw grouper, but a researcher at Texas A&M, and it allows the harvest of speckled hind, to determine age and growth parameters, and so they're working with a commercial fisherman to collect speckled hind, and we know speckled hind is data-poor, and we don't have a lot of information on it, and so they're basically taking the carcasses and sending it to the Science Center, to help with age and growth and taking a fin clip for genetic studies, and so that expires in 2022.

Shark depredation, we gave a presentation on this, and this was Florida Atlantic University, Harbor Branch, and it allows the collection of snapper grouper, dolphin wahoo, and CMP species, and, of course, that show signs of depredation, and so, basically, they want to take a swab of the species and do genetic testing and then send the carcass back to the lab, and then also test to see what species of shark it was, and I had a figure in there, and you can see the diagram, and it's really a two-pager, but it's really cool, and I could pass it around, but it's something that they sent us, that this is something that they created to help with the for-hire captains, to really teach them how to do this, to keep the deck clean, to use the swab and how to put it in the bag and how to send it back to the researchers, and so that's a pretty cool study, too. That expires in 2023.

The final slide, and so we have all of this information on our website, the SERO website, and you can go to it, and we have -- The process is outlined in the regulations, and the regulations outline what they need to send it, a future applicant, what information that we need, and we'll typically work with the person sending in the application and help them with it, if there's some more information that we need, and then, of course, we have FR notice, and we post that, the Fishery Bulletin, and then, if we do give them a permit, we'll post that to this website, and, if they give us any project reports, because we request that they send us project reports at the end of the project, or sometimes even during the project, and there's the website. We have eight exempted fishing permits out there right now, and, again, I'm not looking for any recommendations, and this was just sort of for informational purposes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Rick. Any questions for Rick on EFPs? All right. I don't see any hands. Thank you for that presentation.

MR. DEVICTOR: Sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Next up, we're going to move into the Release Mortality Reduction Framework Action, and I believe that we're going to go a little bit out of order here, and first up is maybe a presentation on releases and release mortality in the snapper grouper fishery, and John is going to talk to us about that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of our popular topics, important topics, is release mortality, and so I just wanted to hit a few things to continue to share what we learn about this fishery and the impacts of releases and the magnitude of releases, as we grapple with this issue, and so the first thing to stress is there's just a lot of variety in our snapper grouper fishery.

We've got fifty-five species, and they span twelve degrees of latitude and lots of different habitats, hundreds of feet of depth. The few figures that we're going to see here is based on just the last twenty-one years, and so we just looked at 2000 to 2020, to give you the recent trends, and there will be some on gag that we'll look a little bit longer term. This is just MRIP data, the private recreational and charter fisheries, and it's all modes, and it's all waves, and it's all areas, and so it's just a snapshot.

We know that, recreationally at least, MRIP is the bulk of it, and there is the headboat program, but, when it comes to this issue, this really captures the high-level trends in the fishery, which is what we're interested in here, and it's the South Atlantic, including Monroe County, which is another one of those little tweaks in dealing with our data, and, just for some of the nomenclature, A is harvested fish that are observed by samplers, the Type B1 are unobserved harvested fish, and so people reported them, but the samplers didn't see them. They could have been bait, and they could have been eaten while they were on the boat, and they could have just said that I'm not showing you that fish. It's really not prescriptive. Then the B2 fish are the ones that are unobserved, and fishermen reported that they were released alive.

Just looking at the snapper grouper overall, and so this is all fisheries, and, I mean, this is all species in the snapper grouper complex, the blue being the released fish, the yellow being the harvested fish, the A plus B1, and, in general, the live releases, the B2s, are about three-times the harvest, and this continues over this entire twenty-year period.

There's a little bit of an increase in the percentage of B2s over time, but it's not that great. As you can see, in the first five years, it was 70 percent, and, in the last five years, it was 77 percent, and so, when you look at live releases being three-times the harvest, if the release mortality, and so if the fish that died from this action, is 33 percent across species, all fisheries, all depths, which probably isn't unreasonable, and it's just a real simple, back-of-the-envelope calculation, then the removals of the populations, from dead releases, are going to equal the harvest, and so this is not an insignificant issue that we're dealing with here, when we're talking about releases in the snapper grouper fishery.

We have fifty-five species, but, as we know, there's a lot of variety, and so what I tried to do was look at some ways to highlight what are the real drivers in the fishery and in the releases, and these I just termed here, loosely, high-impact species, and so these fish have release rates over 50 percent, and so over 50 percent of what is encountered is released, and the releases themselves are over 500,000 fish, and this is cumulative over that twenty-year period, and the harvest is over 500,000 fish over that period, and so this is really the fish that are pretty significant in terms of harvest, pretty significant in terms of releases, and a lot of the fish are released.

For example, you could have something like goliath that 100 percent of the fish are released, but there's not that many releases, and there is not that much harvest, and so it's not really a high-impact species, as defined here, but what this gave us was eighteen species, and these species, over that time period, are 93 percent of the entire complex harvest, and they are 99 percent of the entire complex releases, and so, in terms of us dealing with releases and the issues about it, these are probably going to be focal species that we're going to have to concentrate on, and so the ones in bold are assessed, and it's nine of the eighteen, and the ones in yellow are now overfished, and so, as we know, red snapper, red grouper, and gag, that we're dealing with issues there.

A lot of these are assessed stocks, half, and that's a good thing, and some, to me, kind of struck me as surprising, that popped up, when you're looking at things like sailors choice and bar jack, and they're not species that we talk about very often. We do know that tomtate is a pretty significant fish, in terms of its landings and it's releases, and black sea bass, gray snapper, and yellowtail snapper kind of lead the charge on a lot of this, and I think gray snapper is the number-one released fish across-the-board. It's another one that we don't talk a lot about, but it's definitely an important fish.

The top five, in terms of their harvest and release, from 2000 to 2020, cumulative, are black sea bass, gray snapper, yellowtail snapper, red snapper, and tomtate, and so the blue is the harvest, and the graph didn't come out in the order that I wanted, but this is how it insisted on doing it with two axes, and the blue is the harvest, and so, for black sea bass, over that period, about twenty million fish harvested over the twenty years, or twenty-one years, technically, and 150 million fish discarded, and so, over that time, 90 percent of the black sea bass that were encountered in the recreational fishery were released, and that's a huge release rate.

You can see that gray snapper exceeds black sea bass a little bit, in terms of the total magnitude of releases, and it's the winner overall, with 180 million gray snapper released over a twenty-year period. It drops off, when you look at it, in terms of the releases, to yellowtail pretty quickly, and so these two guys right here are, in terms of the magnitude and numbers of fish released, they are really the clear leaders.

Yellowtail snapper and red snapper and tomtate are kind of filling it out, and you can see, with red snapper, not surprisingly, there is very little harvest over that period, and not a huge magnitude of releases, compared to these others, but 85 percent or so of the red snapper in this time have been released, and so these fish are really important players, when we start talking about how we manage the discards and the releases.

I want to look at a few species in a little more detail, to show their time series over time, for some different scenarios, and so we'll start with the jolthead pogy. It's not one of the top eighteen, and it's a low-release fish, and we just show that there are some fish in the complex that discarding and releasing is not really going to be a significant issue for us, and not something to deal with, and it's also a low catch, and it's averaged like 75,000 fish, and so they're not catching a whole lot of fish, and not a whole lot of releases, and, interestingly, you'll see here this one year where it seemed like there was a lot of releases, and bear in mind this is the MRIP data, and this is a rare-event species, in all likelihood, and so that's most likely just an artifact of the data, an artifact of a random sampling program, and not really representative of what's going on with that population, necessarily.

A couple other fish that are low releases, and probably not surprising, are tilefish, blueline tilefish, and those are pretty specialized fisheries, and you don't really encounter them with every random fishing activity, like you do with something like black sea bass. Snowy grouper is a little farther out, and a little more specialized, but, also, they've been under pretty strict regulations in recent years, and we know the population has been in trouble there.

Saucereye porgy, this is just interesting, and no one reported any saucereye porgy being released over a twenty-year period, which just sort of struck me as interesting, and I don't know what to make of that, and maybe people don't even know what a saucereye porgy looks like, and so it could have been reported as something else, because bear in mind that these are released fish. No sampler got to see these fish, and you're relying upon the fishermen's recall and their ability to identify these fish, and I'm not sure that I could identify a saucereye porgy, and so that doesn't surprise me. Hogfish is pretty low as well, which I think is another one that's maybe a little more specialized, in terms of how they're fished. I will take a question.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay, and I don't know if this will be for Andy or for Clay, and I'm not sure, and so, if you wanted to see that intercept, or maybe it's two intercepts or something, for that 2013 that was driving the spike right there, is that public information, if you want to go that deep? Is there some place that we, as council members, can find that MRIP information and see what the actual intercept was and the extrapolation from that intercept?

DR. PORCH: I don't think you could get that from the public query site. I mean, we could get access to it, but you're not going to get it right off the website.

MR. CARMICHAEL: That's right, and you can get it. It's publicly accessible, if you ask them for it and get a custom query, and they can give it. We're able to access it, and, in the past, the staff here has pretty regularly looked into these situations, particularly when we've had a fishery that maybe was going over its ACL, or having an accountability measure applied, and we would look into it and try to better understand it.

If you guys recall, we've looked at that for blueline in the past, and we've looked at that for greater amberjack in the past, where we're trying to just get a handle on where did it happen and why did it happen and how many fish were actually seen, and so that's another line of reasoning that we're kind of looking at in this, because there are expansion factors, and so one individual fish doesn't just add up to one fish in this database. Depending on when and where and how, it could be 20,000 or 30,000 or 40,000, the scaling factor, and so they can be quite high.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Just to emphasize that, even if we had a census of this, when you have species that are relatively rarely caught, you will have these kinds of spikes, and, even if you counted every one, because they're just not that common, and so all it takes is one event, where somebody caught a bunch and released them in one particular year, and you'll have a big spike, and so this doesn't surprise me at all.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, it's not a surprise at all, and you expect, over twenty years, you're going to see an occasional odd point, and so we can pull any random species out and look at twenty years of data, and there is probably an odd point or two. Even if we were doing a good 80 or 90

percent confidence, we would expect 10 to 20 percent of our points to be off the mark, and so, yes, it's not unusual, but it is good to keep in mind that that is the nature of this kind of data.

I will move on to another example, black sea bass, which is one of the top discarded species, and, for this one, there's an interesting pattern here, I thought, of having the rise and fall in the releases, and so the releases being the gray bars, and I think folks can remember when we were coming off of rebuilding this stock, and the population was doing really great, and there has been some concerns creeping in over the last few years, and I would say that these encounters are a pretty good indicator of that.

One of the things that I have always thought, and one of the values of this recreational data, because it covers so many fishermen and so much time, is that these encounters, and so, basically, the A, B1, B2, and the total, tends to be a pretty good indicator of the availability of fish out there. When there is a lot of encounters, it tends to mean there's a lot of fish. In most cases, when we've seen encounters spike up, we, in assessed stocks at least, are able to correlate that with things like increased recruitment. Red snapper was the best example.

We saw the increased encounters, and then we released there was a good year class, and so this kind of information can be useful for gross trends, and just don't focus too much on the year-to-year changes in the absolute numbers, but I think it does give you some value.

The other thing that I noticed in black sea bass is you do see, with the blue line, an increasing percentage of released fish. Now, we're in the 95 percent range in recent years, and one of the things about black sea bass is we have a different size limit between commercial and rec, and the commercial guys are eleven inches, and the rec is on thirteen inches, and so this is a desirable fish. If people can catch them and keep them, they're going to. It seems that, most likely, a lot of these discards are probably related to the size limit and the recreational guys trying to get to those thirteen-inch fish that they can keep.

That just sort of points out that these different regulations may have consequences within the fishery that we're not always thinking about, and the note here with this one is a couple other high-release species, and it's not going to be a surprise. Speckled hind is at 86 percent, Nassau grouper at 98 percent, and goliath grouper at 100 percent, and so those are all fish that can't be kept, and so it's not surprising. I am a little surprised at 14 percent of speckled hind being retained, and, again, it very well could be a species ID issue, or maybe a lack of understanding of the regulations, but, you know, I think that just sort of goes with the territory, and we can't read too much into that.

Our favorite fish of all time is red snapper, and red snapper we see high releases, and notice the trend in the releases over time, and so I mentioned that this can be a pretty good indicator of what's going on in the population, and recall our earlier discussions about the assessment, and we have seen increased recruitment and increased abundance, and this is reflected in the increased numbers of fish that are being encountered and released.

I will point out to not put a whole lot of faith in these red numbers, these red bars, for harvest, because these are the expanded MRIP estimates that we were talking about, and so it's not -- A program that samples on a wave, a two-month period, is not really effective at giving you an estimate of a fishery that may last for three days, or six days, a couple of weekends, and so that number is not really accurate, because it's going to be prone to being expanded by the overall effort during that period, and so that's not the information that's used in the assessment to indicate

the harvest and such, and so don't make too much of that, certainly, during the period of the mini-seasons.

What you see is that red snapper discards have somewhat increased over time, a lot of times approaching 100 percent of the fish that are out there, and what really I think is most interesting is you just see this marked increase in recent years, which is aligning with what the assessment is showing us, in terms of population abundance.

Gag is another fish that's getting a lot of air time recently, and notice the exact different pattern, and so, with red snapper, we're kind of on a what we in fisheries would call a one-way trip up, and gag has kind of gone through a one-way trip down, and so, if you look from about 2008 here to where we are in 2020, you see a big decline in the number of fish that were released, and fishermen are encountering fewer fish, and that kind of lines up with what we've seen in this assessment as well, and you can see that, in recent years, interestingly, the percentage of fish that are released has been down quite a bit.

Now, keep in mind that we've talked about the poor recruitment in gag, and so, if you're not getting the younger fish, then more of the fish that are in the population are probably of legal size, and so you can get a decline in the percentage that is released, simply because you're getting a decline in the abundance at the bottom end, and so it's good to understand why this kind of stuff is happening as well, and you might say, oh, things are great, and people aren't releasing -- The number of discards is down, and this is good for the fishery, and, well, knowing what we do about this population, based on a stock assessment, that is most likely the result of a declining abundance of younger fish, due to poor recruitment, and so it's good to keep that kind of stuff in mind when we look at say a fish that might have this pattern, but doesn't have a stock assessment, and so what could explain these kind of patterns.

That is sort of the question there, and is it the low recruitment, or is it the smaller fish, and probably it's something we can certainly look into, and I expect, when we get into like the MSE, we'll probably dig a little deeper into stuff like this, to really understand what's going on here with gag.

Looking a bit more at gag, and so here is the full time series, and MRIP started in -- This is the estimates they reported in 1981, and so this is the full time series, just looking at each year, with a few highlighted points of when regulation changes occurred. What I have shown here is the orange is the abundance of age-one and two fish, estimated by the recent stock assessment, and the blue line is the number of discarded fish, and so what you can see is that, in the early years, there was pretty good abundance of these age-one and two fish, and there were not a lot of discards.

Read into, between the red and the orange, what you want. Did discards go up a little bit? Maybe, and it's hard to make much of that, and that's not a lot of change, but then you went to the twenty-four-inch, in I think it was 1999, and we do see that coincides with a high level of discards. It's hard to assume cause-and-effect of anything like this, but, to me, the lesson there is, when you put in a size limit, you've really got to consider what that might do to discarding within the fishery. If you have a size limit, and you have a bag limit, and all you do is raise the size limit and leave the same bag limit, people may cycle through more fish to catch that bag limit and achieve what they consider a successful trip, which means they may actually handle more fish, by trying to achieve that same bag limit, than they did say when the size the limit was at twenty.

If that is something that was going on, and it corresponded on a time when, for whatever reasons, recruitment started to decline, you could have those two forces kind of working in concert to drive this decline very good, and I think you clearly see that, as the abundance of one and two fish goes down, certainly here after 2008 and 2010, you see that just big drop-off in the number of B2s, and so, as fishermen were just not encountering and discarding nearly as many fish, as those young fish disappeared, and so the one and two fish tend to be under the twenty-four inches.

We struggle with MRIP data a lot, and we don't always know what to make of it, and we know it's uncertain, but, when it comes to big trends in the fisheries and what's going on, a lot of times you can get to some pretty good information that can verify what we're seeing out there.

Gag is a really interesting story, and so I will let this play a little bit, because we looked at this a few other ways, because we're struggling with gag, and it's certainly a fishery of concern. Any time recruitment drops off like that, it's a big concern, and so the orange line is just the biomass of the population over time, and the green line is the landings of fish over time, and the blue line is the releases of fish over time, and so you can see that the landings and releases are about the same, and then, around 2000, you see those releases spike up, and then things crash.

The colors are related to different regulations, and so we went in with like the twenty-inch size limit in here, and then you go over here, and we've got a twenty-four-inch size limit, and we've got like a four-month closure, and we've got the four-month closure that applied to commercial and rec, as opposed to, in the yellow, it just applied to -- Like it was two months for the commercial fishery, and so you can see, with different regulatory things, different things were going on in the population, and, even though we were like increasing the regulations here, in the blue box, as you watch that biomass come down, with the orange line, you can just see really no tangible gains that we can see to the population from those increased regulations that were in place for ten years.

I think, if we look at the assessment, and the information in there about how recruitment has been a lot lower than anticipated, you sort of see the impact of that, as these figures play out, and I think we all should be concerned about what role did increasing releases do during that yellow period, and I don't know the answer to this, but it's just kind of a concern for me at this time, and I think we'll look into it more, is that did raising the size limit to twenty-four inches have some unintended consequences.

We're optimistic that -- I look ahead like to this MSE, and this is the kind of stuff that we can potentially look into there, and the goal there is to really look at management strategies and say, well, what could be the consequences of a change in the size limit on a fish, and we've also got to remember, in gag, this is a sex changer, and so, when save the big fish, you're saving the male fish, and you're not saving the female fish, and that was something that came up in the SSC, about a size limit affecting the big, old female spawners, and, well, the big, old fish, in this case, are actually the males. It's the same information as the previous chart, but I think seeing it over time just carries some impact, and you can see what's going on with the population.

Then the question, of course, what we always hope, is, well, once we rebuild the stock, won't that solve these issues, and, as we're learning, increasingly, is no, and so just bear with me as we kind of run through a few statements here, to understand why that's the case, and the goal of rebuilding is increasing population abundance. If you increase abundance, there is more fish in the ocean. If you increase the availability, you often increase the stock's range, and then you increase the encounters, and a big high effort, just randomly encountering fish a lot of times, in a fishery like

the recreational fishery, but keep in mind that even our commercial fishery is a hook-and-line fishery, to some extent, and so more abundance, more fish out there, more encounters.

More encounters means more people have successful effort, and so that means there is more catch, but that also means there is increased interest, and there is more directed effort. A great example of that was when the cobia population, that we no longer manage, but when that population was exploding and we were seeing those high catches, and the mentions of cobia in the fishing social media and in the fishing press, particularly the short-turn-around press, just skyrocketed, and tournaments started up, and people were selling gear, and cobia became the talk of certain areas.

That is what you see happening. In today's world, word of that kind of stuff spreads so much faster, and so you get these increased encounters, and people are catching them, and people want to get on that bandwagon, and they want to go catch those fish, and so what happens? There is more catch, and what happens when there is more catch? You have to put in stricter regulations to stay below the ACL, and what happens when you put in stricter regulations? You increase the discards.

In a sense, there is a negative feedback loop that you're grappling with here, and one of the things that I've heard, when we rebuild a fish, is people are like, well, you know, if you rebuild a population, the regulations should be lighter, and it's like, well, no, the regulations are probably going to be more restrictive, because there is more fish out there.

The regulations that you had before, on your baseline, are often the ones that got you into trouble, decades ago, and, often, in the most recent time, by the time you declare a fish overfished, we're not having any impact. If your bag limit is ten, and everybody is catching one, it doesn't matter that it's ten. You're going to have to somehow get below one to have any change, and so that's what happens in a rebuilding fishery, and you end up having to be even more restrictive, which is really hard for fishermen to understand, because you're telling them the population is getting better, but we're going to be more restrictive.

Part of this feedback too is remember that we're mandated to manage for optimum yield, and we already talked about that earlier this week, and optimum yield is achieved by fishing at FOY, the fishing mortality that gives you OY, and that's less than FMSY, by law. OY is reduced from MSY to account for social and economic benefits, and FOY is less than FMSY, and the SSB then, because, at any exploitation level, F, there is some equilibrium level of population out there in the world, anywhere, and it doesn't matter, and so, at FMSY, your population is SSB MSY. At a lower F, your population is bigger. You're at SSB OY.

When you're at OY, there is even more fish out there, which means there is even more encounters, and, as just these few examples show, the more fish out there, the more encounters. The more encounters, the more discards, the more catch, the stricter the regulations. It's kind of a vicious system, and so it's no surprise that we're struggling with this in so many cases.

Then, just to try to close out on this MSY issue and the differences between MSY and OY, here's just relative examples for the red snapper fishery, showing the conditions of the population for fishing mortality, the yield, the spawning stock biomass, and the SPR, and so the spawning potential ratio, all the different metrics that we look at to judge a population, and so, if you assume FOY is 75 percent of FMSY, which we often use, and we're rebuilding red grouper at 75 percent of FMSY, and that's kind of a rule-of-thumb we've used.

If you just assume that, and so the F is going to be 25 percent of the F_{MSY} , and we put 30 percent there, and I think I must have had a brain fart, but it's 25 percent lower. 25 percent less effort is needed to catch those fish, right? I mean, if you just assume that F equals, and effort are one and one, and, if you have a lower F , then you need less effort, but, in a recreational fishery, like we're talking about, effort is really what fishermen often want, because effort equals access. Effort equals trips. What we increasingly hear is they're more interested in the effort and the trips than they are in the actual harvest of an individual fish, but, fishing at that 25 percent rate, you get 98 percent of the yield at MSY , and that's why it's so attractive, from a fisheries management standpoint.

I can fish a lot less, and I can have a lower fishing mortality, but still get darned near the same yield, and so it's very good, economically, and, if my fishery can do that clean, that's very good, and I'm also going to get more fish, and so look at the SSB . MSY is one, but the SSB is about 25 percent higher, and so that means, when I'm fishing at that lower F , I'm getting about the same yield, and why is that? Because there's more fish, and so I'm taking them out at a lower rate, but I'm taking it out from a bigger population, and so I'm getting about the same number of fish.

Well, that more fish out there is what I'm talking about with more encounters, and that's why, when we rebuild a population, that's where we get, and, if you also think in mind that -- When we target fishing at FOY , this is really the biomass we're trying to be at, 1.2 times, 1.25 times, SSB_{MSY} , and our $MSST$ is down here, and so the real buffer between what you're targeting and where you would declare a stock overfished is actually greater than the buffer between MSY biomass and $MSST$.

It's really, if you're managing for FOY , as we should, you've actually got more poundage, because you've got this extra 20 percent poundage here that is actually what you're targeting at, and so there's more to that buffer than just the difference between MSY and $MSST$, because you want to be at a higher level, and you can even see the same thing in SPR , and the SPR level goes up by about 33 percent, and so there's a lot more spawning potential out there in that bigger population. I am fishing it less, which is good, and I am getting the same yield, which is good, and I've got this bigger population. In an encounter-driven fishery, that's where the problem comes in.

OY is very precautionary, and it optimizes harvest efficiency. If a fishery could go in and harvest a species clean and get that higher yield easier, with less effort, then that's really good, but, if you've got a fishery that really is trying to optimize that effort, this is going to pose a challenge, and it's going to pose a challenge for most all of our fish, I think, because we're going to be trying to go for these higher levels of abundance, and trying to go for lower F s, and it's exponentially harder to do that.

I thought that was the last one, and so that's sort of a nutshell of what we're facing, and I think some of the longer-term challenges that we're going to face, as we start to grapple with this discard thing, and why, when we talk about these different regulations that are coming up, that kind of get at decreasing efficiency and reducing encounters, and this is what they're trying to get at. If we can make that lower F a little bit less efficient, then maybe we can support having more trips, people fishing a little more, a little longer, to go out there and catch the same harvest. Are there further questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. John has done a good job of laying it out there, and it feels like he's laid out what the potential problem is, and so I will ask him, and how do you fix that problem? You've done a great job of laying it out, and I've got an idea, and it isn't so much particular to your slide here of 30 percent less effort needed, and there ain't but so many ways to get there, and I can probably count them on two or three fingers.

It would be interesting to hear, from your aspect, and this would be just your opinion and experience, how you're going to get there. Folks might not like to hear it, and it's been kicked down the road a whole bunch of times, but I am interested in hearing how to fix it. That's the conundrum, and it might elicit a lot of public comment, tons of it, thousands of it, but the fact of the matter is, how are you going to fix it, because it ain't been done yet. Thank you.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think you're right, and it hasn't been done yet, and I think it's going to take, in a word, complexity, and we're not going to get away with just some really simple regulations, and I will give a plug, and we are going to have a seminar on the rock fish fishery management program on the west coast, and, to me, that's a good example of a pretty complex fishery.

They have a lot of the things that we're talking about, and they've had descending devices and such required for years, and they have seasons, depth-based and area-based, that shift up and down the coast, the entire Pacific, and they have a very complex management system to manage this problem, and their depth is even more extreme. You're a couple of miles off the beach, and it's hundreds, thousands, of feet deep, and so they've had to deal with this, and their approach has been to deal with it with a very complex suite of regulations, and that's sort of one of the reasons that I started out with the complexity and variety of our fishery.

There are some fish, in our complex, that these releases are not really a problem, and we'll have a different approach to them than we do to say those top eighteen species, and I think we'll have to have a different approach, maybe, to seasons, to areas, and to different species components, and so one of the things we're starting to look at now is what species are caught together, and can we better define sub-components of our fishery and understand the release issues within the sub-components, so the council can be more precise in the management that it comes up with, and like the tilefish seem to be often caught together, and it's pretty specialized, and so, if we have specialized fisheries like that, that gives us something to work on in a different way than we do like a black sea bass or a gray snapper, that are just ubiquitous.

Then we also have to probably look at all of the things that we're talking about now, and there's not going to be any like one single silver bullet, and it's going to take changes in gear, and it's going to take things that increase survival of released fish, and it may take seasons, which have been talked about, and it may take some other areas, and we have a few area closures, but they tend to be pretty small.

It may take a page out of some other areas, where they really manage for like lowest-common-denominator species, where they potentially close areas where those fish congregate, and so, when they're particular susceptible and aggregated, you're going to have closures.

In some of the fisheries, they do that by kind of doing it in real-time, where they get information of an aggregation forming, and they share that with the fishery, and they're like avoid that area,

and I also think it's going to take time and fishermen changing behaviors, because that's usually the only thing that really changes this, and one of the examples that has come up has been like the change in like billfish management and sailfish and stuff, where people don't bring that stuff in anymore, and they have release flags and stuff, and now that's the mark of success and not bringing the fish in, but that's a change that takes over time, and so I think maybe stuff like that.

We know that fishing behavior can change, and so we're going to have to work on fostering that change and making fishermen see that it's in their best interest to avoid, maybe, areas where there is a lot of fish, to stop fishing when you've caught like your red snapper and you're out there, or, if you're in an area with a lot of fish that you can't keep at the time, to leave. It may take addressing some of the areas where the discards are going to be -- The losses, the barotrauma, is the worst in the deepest water, and it may take some more strict regulations there, but the goal of the whole thing really needs to be to try and optimize the access to the places where it's feasible and it's not harming different populations, particularly the ones that are at risk, that are overfished.

It's going to take the council really rolling up its sleeves and being willing to have some of these hard conversations around the table and not just dismiss some of these ideas, because you talk about a season, and people are going to say, no, that I don't want to give up my ability to go out and fish on the day when I can go out and fish, and so how do we come together to use the portfolio, to use kind of a commercial term, and how do you come up with more of a recreational portfolio, that says, well, you're not going to maybe -- You maybe don't have to totally give up fishing, but maybe you can't fish in the farthest, deepest waters as much, and maybe there is times when you need to fish in the shallower waters, where we know that our descending devices work really, really well.

I think it's going to take all of that stuff, which means a lot of conversations, but I think, if we realize, at the start, that we're not just going to -- We're not going to put in descending devices and solve this problem, because the problems are much bigger than that, and that's one piece, and there is a lot of little things we can do, as we'll see in the next presentation, that maybe, on their own, individually, don't add up to much, but, if you start adding up a lot of little things, then you can start to make some real change, and so I think it's going to take that too. I thank you for that, Dewey, and I think that question is spot-on, which I can always count on you for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: First, John, thanks for an exceptional presentation, as always, and I think you were at the Southern Division AFS meeting when I gave a similar presentation, with a little bit different take, but similar themes, and it's obvious that the baseline is changing, and continues to change, and it continues to get harder, obviously, to manage all of our fisheries, and many of us have sat around this table for twenty years or more, and most of the work we've done is to make fishermen less efficient, right, which is not helping our commercial industry, in terms of their economic viability, and it's not, obviously, helping recreational anglers with their desire to have more access.

I do appreciate Dewey's question, and, I mean, that's about as loaded of a question as I could have had someone ask, but that's a good question, right, and, if we had the answer here, I think we would have all figured this out a long time ago.

I'm going to be a little pie-in-the-sky, but I'm an optimist, and the reality is that, yes, everything that John just talked about, we're going to have to put that on the table, and we've talked about this before, that we have to not kick things off the table so quickly, and we're going to have to look at some of those really unfavorable and undesirable options that maybe aren't going to be popular, and let's really look under the hood and serious consideration of those, and it's going to take a lot of courage by this council, and it's certainly not just John in his Executive Director role, and it's all of us around this table that are going to have to, obviously, work toward making some substantial changes in how we manage these fisheries.

The goal, obviously, is how do we then reshape what fisheries management looks like, because it's a really different model than where we're at today, but I look forward to it, and I think there's a lot of great ideas already emerging, and we don't have to go this alone, as John has mentioned, and there's other regions, other areas, that have come up with some innovative ideas, and let's take a look at some of the things that have been done elsewhere that have worked as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any other questions? All right.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Then we'll get on to some of those solutions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. All right. Next up, Mike, I think you're going to start the overview and kind of go into the scoping, and then we're going to go back to the Law Enforcement AP input, and is that right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and I'm just going to do a brief intro, to kind of set the stage for Captain Pearce to come up and speak about the Law Enforcement AP's comments. We're coming back to this release reduction framework amendment for the snapper grouper fishery, and this is something that's been worked on over the last few meetings, and I'm just going to be scrolling down here, and so we started -- Coming out of last meeting, we put together some scoping material, and there's a link in the decision document in your briefing book to the scoping document that was used, along with Amendments 51 through 53, which we're going to through scoping at a similar time.

We kind of changed up the way that those documents appear, trying to make them a bit broader, a bit catchier, and kind of posing questions, so we could get a bit more discussion about specific topics from the scoping comments that were there.

We only received four comments within the time period ahead of this meeting, but we'll continue to -- As we go through this process, there will be more opportunities for the public to participate, through scoping and future public comment periods, and so this was really a preliminary scoping type of thing, and you can look at the comments, and they are linked right there in the decision document.

They were pretty wide-ranging, and I would say, even within the four, there wasn't really a consistent theme, as far as what was put forward to kind of address Dewey's question, of how the public would say to fix the problem. There were several different things put forward there that I will let you all take a look at, and then we also had that list of potential management measures that came out of the last meeting, and we put that in front of the Law Enforcement AP, and kind of asked about their input of how enforcement of those types of measures would potentially play out, and so I will pass, right now, to Captain Pearce, and I have a summary of the AP's comments

shown here on the screen, and he can kind of talk through the comments that they gave at their meeting.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Good afternoon. It's good to be back. To go over again, like I did earlier, and I'm going to kind of go over the summary of the things that we talked about and the notes we had, and then I've got a few things that I will kind of throw out there, to kind of clarify where we were with it, but so the AP was asked for input on any enforceability issues that may present themselves as the council explores ways to reduce discards and discard mortality in this amendment.

For the measures that the council has discussed as potential measures to explore, the AP had the following comments, and so enforceability of regulations pertaining to hook size would be very difficult, and the reason being is it depends on how you identify the hook size. Are you talking about the traditional industry format of saying, okay, a 1/0, 2/0, 3/0, things like that? Officers are not going to be skilled enough to look at a hook and tell you what that is, if you're using that format. Unless you have packaging onboard that shows what these hooks are, that is not going to work for law enforcement.

One method that we use in Florida for hook size would be, instead of using the number of the hook or like the 2./0 size, we classify hook size by using a standard method of measuring a hook at the widest inside distance, for consistency. When you're going to do something like hook size, you need to do it keeping in mind what the law enforcement officer has as a tool to measure that hook and verify what the size is.

That same method would be used in a courtroom, to show a judge or a jury how we did it and how we determined the hook size, and so, when you're dealing with gear like that, you've got to consider those alternatives for hook size.

A per-person weight limit was one of the things we heard that came up, and weight limits on the water will not work for law enforcement. We cannot use certified scales on the water, and they won't stay calibrated, and we don't have those tools. If we can move weight to something else, we would still have to bring those fish ashore and go to a certified scale, to determine an accurate weight, before it would be allowed a courtroom, especially if it's a federal case, and the standard would not work, and so weight limits on the water are just unenforceable for us when we're out there. In commercial, in the commercial world, when we're at the dock and doing an offload, no problem, and we have scales there, but, on the water, we can't use that type of technology to establish weights.

Gear regulations tend to be hard to enforce, and they, consequently, need to be kept simple, and so ideas would be, when you're talking about terminal gear -- Leader size doesn't always equate to the strength of the leader, and so you have different sized leaders, different materials, but an officer is really not going to be able to look at a leader and tell you exactly what the strength is, tensile strength and things like that are, and the breaking strength, of that leader, and you're going back to looking at packaging and things like that, but the amount of different types of materials you see now are much more than they used to be, and so you want to keep it simple, and you don't want to get too complex, if you're looking at that type of stuff.

A reel configuration, if you're talking about limiting certain types of reels or things like that, and reel configurations can also be difficult for officers to enforce, due to how they are engineered and

designed. There are so many different styles, and so many different gear ratios, and so, again, an officer is not going to be able to be an expert enough to tell you that this reel cannot be used in this fishery or whatnot, or however you want to do that.

Lines per person, if we roll up on a vessel, and there is lines out, and we can count those lines and determine the people, that works, but, the majority of the time, those lines get brought in before we even get close enough to clearly see how many lines a person has out, per person, and we don't have the ability to see that far away, with even good, stabilized binoculars, to count those lines and make that case, and so, again, that's not a bad idea, but it would be difficult to enforce, unless we really get close and see what they've got.

Considering area closures may require on-site enforcement, and so, every time you create an area closure, depending on where it is, it's really not working unless we're out there on that site, and that's not always feasible, and so the area closures -- Again, they work, but they require us to be out there, to really enforce that, and now, again, NOAA brought up the alternative to help with that, and that would be to incorporate VMS with area closures, and, again, that's not always as easy as it sounds, but, if you have VMS tracking that applies to these area closures, then we can see if they're out there without having to actually be on-site.

Then, of course, when you establish an area closure, if you're going to use VMS, is it closed to everything, or is it just closed to one thing, and that is another thing that's hard to enforce, because, if you're allowing them to be in an area for other activities, and you're only limiting to one activity, then that makes it more difficult for us to enforce somebody who is in a closed area.

Depth-based closures, the statement from the AP was that depth-based closures are unenforceable. Really, when you look into that, and a good example of this would be, basically, when you're looking at depths, we're looking at like contour lines, and so, like in the Gulf, you have a twenty-fathom depth regulation that applies to shallow-water grouper, and I think it's like, in February through March, you cannot go beyond twenty fathoms to harvest shallow-water grouper. There's a twenty-fathom contour line, and I think most people think that's what they go by, but, essentially, even with that reference to twenty fathoms, the Gulf Council still established coordinates that set up a line across the Gulf that you can plug into your GPS, and that's the actual line that establishes what that twenty-fathom mark is, and so it's not really just going based on the contour line, but it's actually establishing coordinates that you would follow.

If you were going to do something on the east coast that would limit people going to certain areas to fish, then you would want to set up coordinates along the east coast that people could plug into a machine, and they would know if they're on one side or the other. For enforcement, that's really what we need, because we have to basically pinpoint a person's position, and then, in court, we have to articulate their location in reference to that line, and that they were clearly on one side or the other of that line. Again, when you're talking about depth, you still have to establish that line. On the east coast, if you're using contours, obviously, depending on which ones you pick -- The further offshore you go, the closer those contours get together, and so it's hard to show that on a chart as well.

The argument in this is consider requiring VMS for area closures to be considered, and the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel requests that they have frequent input on this amendment, as it is being developed, to assist the council in identifying potential enforceability issues of specific measures under consideration, and so, again, going back to that, if you all have key elements of

this that you're pushing, we would love to take a closer look at them, so we can maybe dissect each one of those individually and see which ones could work and which ones we have issues with. The AP also received an update -- Okay. That's something else. All right. Anyway, any questions on that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: Thanks, Scott, for explaining that, and I know you guys did what we asked you to do as you looked at some of those, and you give us honest answers. The depth one has always bothered me a little bit, because I think, and most people may think of this, is that you kind of tend to oversimplify that, and it's like, okay, I've got a depth recorder, and you've got a depth recorder, and we go out there, and my depth recorder says this, and your depth recorder says this, and we verify it, and boom.

I mean, I guess you kind of explained why that may not work in court, and we've had this discussion before, I remember, and had some legal input on that, of why they didn't like that, and I think it was based on how this would play out in court, and being able to establish exactly where you were, which I then recall, during the black sea bass amendment that we did, where we were defining a line that you couldn't go beyond, and then that line became a very complex connection of a lot of waypoints, and so we could perhaps developed a simplified line, maybe trying to minimize waypoints, but then, if you're going to use something like that, it becomes a matter of what is it that you're trying to achieve, and are you trying to approximate a certain depth, and is depth important to you, because it's an issue of survivability of post-release animals, and then you're dealing with atmospheres of pressure and all.

I suppose we could come up with a simplified line, if we wanted to try to make it straighter, and then realize that it's not going to be perfect. Like you said, we're not going to be able to follow that contour without drawing a whole bunch of waypoints, and that's pretty complex, but I guess what you have just reinforced, to me, is that, if I've got a depth recorder, and you've got a depth recorder, and we verify it, that just won't work, and I think that's good to have on the record of why it won't work.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: If I can just comment, you're exactly right. When you go into a courtroom, if you try to prosecute this case, if you go strictly by depth, and we're doing the same thing, and we're saying my depth recorder versus your depth recorder, there are so many elements in that that would be brought to question, the accuracy of your depth recorder, and where was the -- How did you have it -- Did you set it under the hull, and was it set to measure from the bottom of the vessel or from the water line, and all those things come into play, and it gets very complex.

If you want to establish -- Like we were saying, like they did in the Gulf, if you establish that twenty-fathom line, it's like a reference, and it's, okay, here's how we want to draw our line, but we still have to establish waypoints that clearly mark that line, so people can load it on their GPSs, and law enforcement can have it as a tool, and we can show it on a chart in court. We can say here's the line, here's where they were in reference to the line, and the depth is only there to kind of establish that corridor, but we're not saying -- But the depth is not really the violation. The violation is your proximity to where that line is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Scott. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: If my memory serves me correct, this council, in 2011, did 17B, which was the 240-foot closure, and that used the contour line of forty fathoms, and so it appears now that, thirteen years later, or eleven or twelve years later, I'm hearing from law enforcement that there is no way to do that, and so we've come a long way, but it was done in 17B, for nine months, until there was an analysis done to find out that these two species, which you all were under this guise of protecting, wasn't even really located there, but it has been done, and this council did it in 2011.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? All right. Thank you, Scott. I think we're going to go back to Mike to move us through the document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. The next portion of the document, as the AP, the Law Enforcement AP, got, staff was also tasked with looking at that list of potential management measures and doing some preliminary evaluation of what the benefits of these types of measures would be, what we would need, as far as information, that would be able to support these types of measures, and some of the motivation for this was to have it more red-snapper oriented, in the sense that there would be consideration, potentially, by the SSC of any changes in the fishery management regime, and that could be incorporated into projections of the ABC for that species.

We went through, looking at these different actions, and there's an incredibly long table, Table 1, included in the document that goes through each of those and some of the preliminary thoughts on the pros and what types of information would be needed, and then the last column is kind of looking at it from an angle of whether we're receiving qualitative or quantitative information from that.

One of the biggest hurdles, for several of these management actions, from a data-type standpoint, is, for example, something like a single-hook regulation, single-hook rigs, and how do you translate single-hook rigs into a numerical change in the catch, and that's a place where there would need to be some assumptions drawn, and there would need to be some information on current practices, a baseline gathered, but then there would also need to be some assumptions drawn on how that translates into a change in the catch, or the encounters of those fish, and how that proportions out to the many different species that it would potentially impact.

That's kind of where we're going with the qualitative/quantitative type of thing. By contrast, as we're looking through the table, something that is a bit more quantitative would be the time to opening seasons, and there is a numerical basis to establish a catch rate that goes throughout the year and to be able to make some form of numerical estimate of what the decline in the catch, or the decline in the encounters, would be as a result of closing portions of the year, or even portions of the year in specific areas, if we have that type of data resolution for that area.

I am not going to read through this entire table, and I'm more pointing it out and kind of letting you all know, for your purposes of reading through it and looking at it and your discussion. One thing I do want to, I guess, note, just because it's a little bit out of the norm for the South Atlantic fishery, there was actually a report, and this is something that we can hopefully get a bit more information on, when there's that presentation from the Pacific Council, about their rockfish fishery, but they have a gear within the Pacific rockfish fishery that has a long leader.

There is a requirement of distance between the weight at the bottom of the line and where you can have the first hook, and there was a report done by Oregon, by their state agency, that looked at the change in catch rates, and they wanted to decrease the harvest of the fish that were closer to

the bottom, but they wanted to still be able to catch the fish that were a bit higher in the water column, and so they did a study that compared the catch rates, using this type of gear versus other types of gears, and so there is an actual catch rate translation there for that type of fishery.

Now, the hurdle, if we were to think about it for the South Atlantic, would be how does that translate to the composition of the fish here, but that type of fishing gear, or behavior change, has at least some numerical support, some baseline numerical support, that could be referenced.

Then, just scrolling down, as you get down more towards the bottom end of the table, that is -- That's the place where a lot more of the quantitative type of data start to pop up, with those timed openings, or timed seasons, and the area closures, the depth closures, but there also is the consideration within all of these things of the enforceability that Captain Pearce brought up, and then the next table that is in the document is kind of another step that goes along with what John Carmichael presented earlier.

He presented on the releases that are going on in the fishery, and this is a table that compiles the discard mortalities that we have for assessed species for the different sectors, going all the way through, and so you can see there is quite a bit of variety within these, and your deeper-water species are going to have a higher release mortality, blueline tilefish, for example, being one of those, and it's close to 100 percent there, whereas some of your nearer-shore species are going to have greater release survival, reduced release mortality, coming off of those, and so this is another thing that can be referenced in your discussion, as you think about are there species, or groups of species, that you want to kind of gear and focus the actions within this framework amendment towards, to have a greater impact for those specific stocks.

Then, finally, I'm just showing here on the screen, as a reminder, before we move off of it today, that it would be very helpful, from a staff standpoint, just to make sure that we're moving through this in a process manner, if you all would formally initiate this regulatory amendment, because we've kind of been working through it, with the understanding that it would be coming, and release reduction mortality framework is a really long name, and so, if you all wouldn't mind initiating that and making it Regulatory Amendment 35, then that would be great, but that is all that I have in this document, and I will kind of pass it back to you, Madam Chair, for any guidance that the committee can give to the IPT, as we start trying to move through this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I get a little confused, and my head starts spinning a little bit, and I think we need to be crystal clear, because, if I'm confused, the public is going to be really confused about it as well. It is my understanding that, and based on sort of what we've looked at so far, based on what John just presented, based on a lot of what I'm reading in the background, is that the issue that we're trying to address right here are recreational discards, and we're looking at actions to take for that, and, in fact, the motion says that, but there are places in this document that -- Whether it's the Law Enforcement AP, and now, granted, I get that they were probably having broader discussions, but talking about possible VMS, if there's closures to be considered, for the commercial sector.

If we're going to do that, if that's a discussion we're going to have, fine, and so be it, but I want to be really clear about what we're looking at here, because not all of these actions, the single-hook, the prohibit electric reels -- You know, I was never under the impression that we were talking

about that for the commercial sector. I just think we really need to be very clear about what we're trying to accomplish and for who.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I didn't -- When we started this, I didn't necessarily think that it only applied to recreational, and we have some percentages here indicating that, for some of these species, that the commercial release mortality is greater than the recreational release mortality, and so I feel like we should at least have that conversation, but I also agree with what you're saying, that not all the items in the document you would want to pick for both commercial and recreational.

Like, if you're going to eliminate electric reels, maybe you're really only eliminating that for the recreational sector and not for commercial, and so do you see what I'm saying? I think that, if you go back to the presentation that John gave us, it's about reducing efficiency, and so, ultimately, thinking about ways to do that, and I think that you would do that differently for each sector. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I would be more cautious then about how we approach this, because I just think that they're going to be managed very differently, and keeping in mind, again, that, in the commercial fishery, we still have a reducing fishery, right, and we're not adding effort to that fishery, and it is reducing as we speak, and, if you even look at the first paragraph of the background information, it's pretty clear that it says that the issue is the dead discards in the recreational sector, and so we haven't even been in the background to speak about the issue of dead discards in the commercial sector. If that is something that needs to be addressed, in my mind, that would maybe come in a separate amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess I would ask why. Why would it come in a separate amendment?

MS. MARHEFKA: They're just -- To me, they're such different issues, and, again, you have one sector that is shrinking, where effort is already being reduced, and you're already taking encounters. Encounters are already being reduced, right, and we just discussed how encounters are the primary issue. In the other sector, you could argue that there is ever-increasing, with no bounds, encounters.

That would be my number-one argument, and I also think that it's clear what we're trying to -- This whole thing that got us here was thinking about reducing dead discards for red snapper, which is a recreational issue, for the most part, and I haven't seen -- There hasn't been a lot of data on the increase in commercial dead discards, and I'm not saying that it's not happening, but it's just that what we've been looking at are the numbers for the very high recreational dead discards.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mel.

MR. BELL: I follow what you're saying, but I think the area you were describing is -- It's talking about discards particularly from the recreational sector, but that doesn't mean they're -- Obviously they're -- Yes, but I think the thing to approach this with is that they're both -- They're very distinctly different, and, as long as you sort that out, moving through this, and clearly deal with them both as they exist, and just make sure you're being fair, and, like you said, the commercial side is decreasing, perhaps, and the recreational side has, obviously, grown a lot in recent years, but, as long as you deal with those facts, and work through this, you can keep it all in one amendment, I think, but I'm certainly sensitive to what you're saying, and I think we just need to be careful how we -- As we develop the document and move forward, we clearly say that, you

know, these particular things are recreational, and these are commercial, and, in some cases, they may overlap, but I think you can do it in one document, one plan amendment, but certainly they are very different, in some respects, with some similarities.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester and then Dewey.

MR. BREWER: I have a question, and I'm not even sure who to direct it to. On the commercial side, do their dead discards count against their quota? I don't think they do, but somebody with more knowledge than I can tell me one way or the other.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: They don't count against their quota. The quotas are set based on landings, typically.

MR. BREWER: Well, with that clarification, I think we're seeing here that some of the commercial discard percentages, dead discard percentages, are up there pretty good, and, in some cases, they are in excess of the recreational, and so, if the idea that we want to have here is that we need more fish in the water, it seems to me that any steps, whether they be commercial or recreational, be directed towards more abundance and less waste, and so it makes sense, to me, that we consider them.

Granted, things like electric reels, that's not going to apply -- You're not going to do that with regard to the commercial folks, and I've got mixed emotions whether they even ought to be allowed in recreational fishing, because, to me, that's not recreational fishing, but that's a whole different topic, and I'm sorry for wandering off there, but it does seem, to me, that you need to look at both -- I won't say sides of the equation, but I think you need to have the one goal of increasing abundance and having less waste, and you need to look at that across-the-board.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: So just a clarification, just to make sure that everybody is understanding the information in this table correctly, this is discard mortality, and so, for example, it's a rate, and it's not the amount of discards that are occurring, and so, for example, for blueline tilefish, the highlighted line, if a blueline tilefish is caught by the recreational fishery and then released, the probability that it would die as a result of that process is estimated at 82 percent. By comparison, if it were caught by the commercial hook-and-line and released, the probability that that fish would die would be 95 percent, but it's not a depiction of the magnitude of releases in those respective fisheries.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. All right, and so I have a list of folks. Dewey, you're next.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that Mike and others have pointed out blueline tilefish, and looking at these release rates, which I agree with, but you also have to look, which I think we're getting the cart before the horse here, and we need to go back and look at John's analysis of where are these fish caught at, which area, and what's the ramifications in each area, because clearly, here with blueline tilefish, there's -- Once the season is closed, you have no minimum size, unlike the other species. Once the season is closed, folks don't go there to catch other species, particularly where the abundance of blueline are caught at, when you look at it on paper, where it's caught.

We should be looking at -- I say "we", but the council should be looking at where are all these fish caught at, in different areas, and then, from there, plug in what happens in those areas, which fish are there, and it's like we're going and doing this stuff in a toolbox here that potentially you need a crowbar, and you don't have that in the toolbox, and so, regrettably, I don't -- I think there's going to have to be some pain before you're going to see relief, and folks don't like pain, but that's the only way, because some of these things here, looking at blueline or other species, and some of them are more affected in other areas, and some of them are co-caught with others, and we have ways to look at that, whether it be the for-hire logbooks or commercial surveys and different things like that, and we want to throw these smaller than band-aids, and this ain't going to fix it.

I mean, it's not going to -- The reality is, if you like having a mechanic come down and work on your engine, and he brings two tools, and you've got a valve dropped, and you can tell him to go back in the toolbox and get something else, and that's just the way it is, but I would just point out here that we need to put this in perspective.

When we look at these release rates, what's the magnitude of the release rates that we're going to apply this to, and in what areas, because it's clearly -- The versatility of our coast, from Key West to the Virginia line here, is a lot of different diversity, and we haven't sampled these areas, looking at it and sectioning it out. Until then -- Then you start going down the road of these extra things that we're looking at here, but, I mean, I just think we haven't talked about that much, and it's kind of been put in the same toolbox all together.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Are we only just going to be talking about the things that are in this document, or can we add stuff in? Like I would like to see the consideration for tags, recreational tags, to try to limit the effort that's on some of these fish. If you only have so many tags that are sold, and you don't have one, you shouldn't be out there trying to catch a blueline tilefish, if you don't have a tag.

Also, the ACLs, and exceeding the ACLs, does stuff -- It seems like it very rarely gets shut down when the recreational industry has overharvested their ACLs, and so maybe we need a better way to get the data in sooner, so that harvesting can be shut down when -- I mean, when the commercial -- We know when the commercial industry overharvests, or exceeds their ACL, and we know that pretty quickly, but it doesn't -- It seems like our system for the recreational tracking is not as good as what it is for the commercial, and so we need a better way to close down a fishery quicker when the ACL is going to be met or exceeded.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, and I think Mike clarified a lot of what I was going to talk about, that this table is just release mortality, and it's not the rate of commercial discards. In the commercial fishery, the discards are very, very low, and we have good data, and we have a portion of the whole fleet that is selected for discard data, and that has to be reported, and so I think we have very good data on commercial discards, and they are very, very minor, as far as I know, and certainly on my boat they're extremely minor, in the overall scheme of things, but I think Laurilee hit the nail on the head there. We're already pretty accountable, and discards or not discards, and so, really, to

me, I thought the whole purpose of this document, this decision document, was to get at recreational discards and how to somehow get our arms around that. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry and then Mel and then Clay.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want to make sure that I understand. John, you may be able to help clarify this. Is it not correct that the total discards are taken off the top of the TAC?

MR. CARMICHAEL: When the SSC gets an assessment, and they give you the ABC, the discards are already removed from that, and so they do the projections, and most of our projections tables will show you this is the amount of fish that's coming out for harvest, and this is the amount of fish that's coming out for discards, and the two together are the total yield, but they focus the ABC on the amount that's available for harvest, and so the discards -- Imagine that that's a beast that already had to be fed, and then whatever is left is what the yield is, and there's a table, and our projections are tables, and they show you the column, that this is the landed harvest, and then that's the part that you allocate into your commercial and recreational ACLs.

Your ACL is based on the amount of fish that's available to be harvested after subtracting out the discards, and so you feed that first, and that's why this is important to all of these, and, Jessica, if I could, just like Dewey mentioned, looking at the finer stuff, that's the intent of what we want to do with the next action, which is built on the MSE and looking at it in more detail, and so, in a way, Dewey is right and this framework is intended to really be a bit of a band-aid. Are there some things you can do right away that are going to help fix this problem, because then that's translating into potentially more harvested yield for red snapper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mel.

MR. BELL: I thought that I had kind of said this before, but, basically, I think, if we're approaching this, the problem, with discards, whether it's a discarded commercial fish or a recreational fish, depending on the depth of the water and the species, but a dead fish is a dead fish.

I mean, again, the idea here is I think to try to make improvements, and, yes, indeed we did -- Kind of the big fire in front of us was red snapper, and a big part of that, obviously, is the recreational piece, but then we kind of decided that we were going to approach this for the whole snapper grouper fishery, and, well, that brings us all in together, but I think as long as -- We still need to keep commercial and recreational in there, but, as long as we're very clear about dealing with what we need to deal with for each separate part of the fishery, we're fine.

If there is still kind of thought about yanking commercial out of there, I wouldn't do that, and I would keep us in there together. As Dewey said, the solutions we end up with are going to be a bit painful for folks, but it's an appropriate level of shared pain, and it's not disproportionate, and so it's -- I just wouldn't separate them, and I would keep this thing as all about trying to deal with the problem, deal with it together, appropriately recognizing the differences in the fisheries, in the gears, in the way we fish and all, but I wouldn't pull it out of there, if that's kind of what folks are still thinking we ought to do.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay and then Andy and then Mike and then Kerry.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, and so two points. One is to this table, and I would mention that there are actually some quantitative studies that show the impact of changing hook size on the catch of red snapper, and some other species, and it's actually quite substantial, although, to see big effects, you would have to go to a 12/0 or a 15/0 hook, but it does make a big difference, in terms of reducing catch rates and catching bigger fish.

Then a second point that I wanted to make is that our -- We don't actually have an observer program in the South Atlantic, and so it's all self-reported discards from the logbook program, and it's very common for fishermen just to put zero down, no discards of any kind, and so I wouldn't characterize it as well known. When we look, side-by-side, in places where we do have observer programs, we tend to find that the observers report a lot more discards than what we see in the logbooks. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: This is a good discussion around this, and I want to try to narrow the scope a little bit and remind the council of a few things. This is really important, and, obviously, we're talking snapper grouper here, but we were led down this path because of red snapper and the most recent assessment.

We have to end overfishing immediately, and we're already, I think, eight months into the clock of when we delivered the overfishing letter to the council, and so we need to be proceeding with short-term measures that can have an impact, obviously, on reducing discards and mortality for red snapper, and I believe, at the last council meeting, we talked about, as part of this action, adding an ABC and ACL to the document, specific to red snapper, and I've heard a lot of ideas around the table of include commercial, don't include commercial, tags, and I think we need to be very careful not to broaden this in scope too much, right?

There is a longer-term effort, with the management strategy evaluation, that I think will be a more opportune time for some of these more, I will say complex, or management measures are going to take longer to, obviously, develop, and so, with that said, from a staff perspective, you're looking for us, obviously, to kind of agree to move forward with a framework action, and I guess the other question is kind of the scope of this, and Laurilee brought up, obviously, some other ideas, and I think we're at that time where we can offer other ideas, but I feel like staff needs some more specific direction as well, and so can you speak, from a staff perspective, what you need from the council today, so we can make sure that we deliver that?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's actually kind of what my comment was going to be geared towards, Andy, and so thanks for setting me up. Just kind of recalling the discussion from December, and the overall direction that this was moving towards, we kind of looked into this initial list of actions, and the plan was that, at this meeting, that this list would be narrowed down, or picked from, to have one, or maybe two, but a very small number of actions that would be looked into with a bit more depth, look into, I guess, more of the impacts and try to come up with some of those numeric bases for the SSC's consideration of whether they would want to look again at the ABC projections for red snapper.

That's really what we're looking for here, is are there one to two of these actions that you all would like us to move forward and look at with a bit more depth, and the plan is to have the SSC look at something related to this at the April meeting, at their April meeting, and then we would be able

to continue moving forward, and we are aware of kind of the overfishing status and the need to react to that, and so part of the draft motion, down at the bottom, is that there would be a red snapper ABC based on SEDAR 73, whether at the current or revised projections, whatever that is, but that it would be based on that assessment information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike, can you remind us of the timing of this? The SSC would review whatever we pick out of here at the April meeting, and then this comes back to the council in June, and when is the projected final action on this?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: A very expeditious final action was being thought about by the end of the year, and I don't know how realistic that is, and it depends on how quickly this moves forward, but the thought was that the SSC will kind of see that this is the action that the council is considering, and I don't know that we would have numbers, like flat out, for them to consider, but it would be a question of, okay, if you all chose seasons, for example, asking the SSC if they would be able to reconsider your ABC recommendation if there were a change in the seasons that were in place for the fishery, because that would be a deviation from the management regime that the current projections were based on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: As you look at these things that are on the table, and considering the discussion about commercial and recreational, one thing you may want to do is withhold that until you decide what on this list actually goes forward, because you may end up with some of these things that you don't feel are really the right thing to use in the commercial fishery, and that could be that it just drops out.

If you do something like seasons, or area closures, especially like area or depth, in the way that they're mentioned, about areas of high aggregations, then that may make sense, but, if you decide not to do that in this framework, because of the complexity and the time, et cetera, then perhaps you set the commercial aside, and you could consider commercial effort things on the -- We have the two-for-one issue that's out there that we've kind of pushed back a little bit on, but that could take a way to look at commercial effort and how do you refine it directed at that fishery, when we do that action.

It really depends on what you keep in, and so, if you keep a few of these simple things that are really recreational focused, then we could focus this on that. If we get into the commercial there is -- As Andy said, there is some concern about data, and, if we get too many things, particularly complex things, getting all the information in time to get this ABC in under the statutory deadline could be an issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Next up, I have Kerry and then Chris and then Chester.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I mean, I personally -- The way I understood it, when we went into this in December, looking at our medium and long-term plan, or short-term, to try to get this ABC in place and avoid a short season this year, was the short-term band-aid fix, where some of these issues that were going to be high-value numbers we could get, in relation to the recreational fishery, and the medium-term and longer-term stuff was going to be dealing with the entire thing as a whole, and that was my understanding, and that's why I supported it.

I think, you know, I would have been incredibly uncomfortable, had I really understood what was happening, floating the idea of seasonal closures in a reg amendment, or a framework, whatever we're calling it, for the commercial fishery. I mean, that is business devastation, and I would have never, never -- I would have never been -- Not that I could have stopped it, but I personally would not have been in support of doing that through a framework. I mean, the economic consequences of that are dire. I thought we were just going to do some things we could get really quick bang-for-our-buck, where we knew we needed it the most, and then look at that whole MSE holistic approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I appreciate that. I guess I didn't think that commercial was off the table when we had the discussion, because I guess, depending on how you do this, what you pick, and there was a discussion -- I don't know that it will make it through this process, but a discussion, even in the short-term, of like, okay, maybe this is the area where recreational can fish, and then maybe commercial can fish the area beyond where recreational fishermen can fish, and, to me, that was on the table, even in the short-term, and not just in the MSE, and so trying to partition out where each sector could fish I think was one of the items that we had talked about, and so that's why I considered it as still a possibility, but I still agree, just like John said, that I don't think that every single one of these are going to make it through, and there are some of these that you wouldn't want to do for commercial, and so maybe it's more about picking which one of these things we want to proceed with and then figure out where it applies to. I am going to go back to my list. Chris and then Chester and then Trish.

MR. CONKLIN: I was going to say let's look at this and see what gets us the biggest benefit in the shortest amount of time, and, I mean, has there been any analysis on a -- I mean, I would think it would be a season, and does everyone not agree, sort of? Okay, and so has there been any analysis done on how long a season would last, and a season -- I am speaking only to the recreational sector, because there's a lot to be said about being accountable and doing what the government wants you to do and makes you do, and, in a lot of other regions, there is plenty of case studies that show that the commercial fishing and reporting is effective, and the same with the charter fishermen.

We've got those guys reporting now, and I'm not sure about the compliance, but, if you make a living on the ocean, you should be able to fish it year-round, and I can't support a season unless it's only for the recreational sector and for anyone who doesn't hold a federal permit, period, charter and commercial.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks for that. I need to think about that one a little bit more. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you. Going down the list here, and we had a presentation on the things that would be difficult to enforce, and lines per person, no, and, even with the best binoculars, we really are not able to determine how many lines somebody has got in the water. Prohibiting electric reels, there are some people that are recreationally fishing with electric reels, and I don't know the exact number, and it shouldn't be allowed, but I don't think you're going to get much bang for your buck there.

Area closures and depth closures, we've had a presentation that those are problematic as well, and so we have kind of come down to timed openings and seasons, and, I mean, we can get down and holler at each other, whether we're recreational or commercial, but it just seems, to me, that we're

probably going to be headed in that direction, and I hate to say this, anyway, eventually. To me, that is the area where you're going to get some bang for your buck, but I don't know, and I don't want to even get into a discussion about whether it applies only to recreational and not to commercial, but it just seems to me that you're almost -- You have come down, unless somebody has got some other ideas, given what we've been told by law enforcement, you're down to, by process of elimination, timed openings and seasons.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I think there's still a couple more things on the table, and I saw the seasons coming in the MSE, but clearly we all have different ideas of what could be done in the short-term versus what in the long-term, and so, Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to propose, since you're looking for input on these actions, trying to think how I think an SSC member would think, and that is who needs to figure out the new ABCs, and I was going to propose that why don't we look at the three quantitative -- The three actions that can be quantified, which is the timed openings, seasons, area closures, and depth closures.

I mean, I know law enforcement had some feelings on depth closures and area closures, but they also had -- You know, you can come up with coordinates for depth, and there is area closures now, with MPAs, and so, I mean, that's nothing new, but I was just going to propose those three actions, since at least they're quantitative, and I'm guessing the SSC likes quantitative better than qualitative.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I am going to still keep going down my list here, and, eventually, we're going to need some motions. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Well, actually, I'm a little bit late, because I was going to combine both what Chester and Trish said. Having been on the SSC, and been asked about quantitative, every time it comes back of, well, what are we going to get from this? Qualitative is not going to get us there, and so, similar to Trish, I think we look at those quantitative, and then you can either parse it down later, as you need to, for commercial or rec, if it applies or doesn't apply, but I think, at least for that starting point, the quantitative makes the most sense, if you want the SSC to weigh-in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The only other thing I could -- That immediately jumps out to me is how efficient electric trolling motors have made snapper grouper fishing. I mean, we may want to consider designating that as a commercial gear, or a charter gear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Laurilee and then Andy.

MS. THOMPSON: In our area, there has been a huge increase in deep-drops and recreational fishermen using the big Electramate reels, and so, to me, the low-hanging fruit would be to prohibit the Electramate reels being used by the recreational fishermen, and that should be pretty easy for the law enforcement officers. I mean, if they have Electramate reels on the boat -- They shouldn't even have them on the boat, and I think that would be a pretty easy thing to do, and it would -- You know, they've got the big, fast boats, with the four engines on the back of them, and they can get out to deep water really super-fast, and then they're using fishing gear where you push a button and jerk the fish off the bottom, and there is really no sport in it, and I think, based on what we're

seeing at Port Canaveral, and I don't know how it is down towards you, Chester, but, in our area, the use of the Electramate reels is expanding rapidly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am going to support some of the comments by others. You know, we can either keep people off the fish or we can figure out ways where the fish don't bite the hook, right, and, to me, I think the likelihood of actually reducing effort, or keeping them off the fish, is going to be better, in terms of achieving our goals, and quantitatively much easier to determine.

I think, with the gear changes, there is some good ideas here, but I think we need more quantitative studies, and that would be, I think, a good area of focus and research that we can coordinate with the Science Center and other entities to try to build upon for the longer-term MSE effort. I think it's worth exploring area closures, but my concern is that it's going to be very complicated, and very data driven, and so I'm leaning toward season, depth, and area, with season and depth kind of being the primary focus, and I think it's important to think about depth from the standpoint of could we allow for longer seasons in shallower depths, where release mortality is lower, and, even though there might be discards, the release mortality rate is going to be less, less barotrauma, and so I think a combination of those could be successful.

The other, I think, things that we need to think about are kind of the data requests here, and we have red snapper, and we have gag, that we need to end overfishing and rebuild, and there is reductions in discards in both of those stocks, and so, at the last council meeting, we talked about reducing discards sufficiently to maintain the ABC, and so getting some information from the Science Center with regard to what's the level of reduction needed to either retain the ABC, as currently specified, or something between what's been recommended versus that current ABC.

Then Monica and I were talking, and, years ago, there was work done on species that were caught together, and we did cluster analyses, and Dewey and others have brought it up, and like blueline is caught differently than a lot of these other snapper grouper fisheries, and so thinking about seasonal areas and depth closures, and we don't want to just lump everything together and everything gets closed or opened at the same time, and looking at that more carefully I think will be really important in the long-term. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am going to keep moving through the list here, and then I'm going to be asking for people to make some motions, and so, Spud, you're up next.

MR. WOODWARD: Thanks, Madam Chair. First, I guess I would advise caution with looking at certain types of fishing technologies. I mean, people use those technologies for multiple purposes, and people use electric reels for deep-dropping for swordfish, and it's that -- I don't think that you're going to get a lot of benefit, other than frustrating people, and we need to focus on how do you separate the fish from the people, if that's what we're really trying to accomplish here.

The other thing is that, I mean, we've got a clock ticking pretty loud now, and what can we do in the short-term that is really even possible, I mean that can make a measurable change in discards, the magnitude of them, the mortality of them, to the satisfaction of the SSC, because that's what this really comes down to, and we've got to affect the whole aggregate fishery to do that.

I mean, we've got all sorts of little glitches, like sheepshead, and so, if somebody goes out and goes fishing for sheepshead, they're not even subject to federal regulations anymore, because we deleted that species from the complex, and so there is a lot of moving parts to this that are going to have unintended consequences that I don't know that we can get to fully understanding those consequences in the short amount of time we've got. I mean, I don't want to be a Debbie-downer, but there is -- I mean, there is certain realities that we're up against here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Something else that I have experienced, particular to the pelagic longline industry, is, with closures and things, seasons, or mainly closures, is what happens with the displaced effort of shutting an area down where you're going to go, and, for us, when 17B happened, we went north into the Mid-Atlantic area, from North Carolina, and went blue-line tile fishing, and that caused a real conundrum, a few boats doing that, but I'm just saying what happens with the displaced effort?

Maybe some answers I'm looking for will be in the next presentation, but when are we going to see how many people is catching fish in the ocean? I mean, whether it's deep-dropping or the recreational industry that is unlimited and open access, and MRIP -- There's a lot of us that don't believe MRIP estimates or whatever, but, I mean, until you know who is actually using this stuff, these rare-event species, why not do an app or something where you've got to sign-in, similar to what the Mid-Atlantic did, and make somebody start, and, that way, you get an idea of just how many players there is and whether they're reporting or not.

Then you start working your way from there to figure out a magnitude, and you take and look at some of your surveys of where fish are caught at, and then you also take your data from MRIP and see where they are doing their sampling at, to show here's an area, and you start whacking up the ocean, but here's where the fish are caught at, and then you can decide on what area-based management or something that takes place, but I would be very cautious in wondering what the outcome of some of this displacement and where people are going to go fishing, and is that going to increase discards of some type, which I know I get asked that a lot or something, when we're talking about closing an area or something for pelagic longlining.

Well, something else to think about is, if the area that you're displaced that you might go -- The reason why I'm where I'm at is because I'm catching fish there, and so it ain't because I am displaced somewhere else, but it's because where you're at is where you're catching fish, but that is one thing that I asked about, the displaced effort and what the magnitude of that is, and is that opening a can of worms past what you're looking to do. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mel.

MR. BELL: I think I'm at a point where the only three that look reasonable to me, in terms of being able to keep us moving in the right direction, are the quantitative ones that Trish mentioned, and I would keep some discussion of area in there, because, when you talk about area, that's not necessarily fully defined in there, but depth closures are kind of all about an area, and you can turn a depth closure into an area, but I think I would move forward with the timed and open seasons and area closures and depth controls, and, the gear things and all, yes, we may have data on hook size and all, but you've heard law enforcement say that's probably just not going to be very practical.

I think the best bang for our buck, in moving forward with meaningful potential reductions to achieve what we need to, are those three, and I'm also very sensitive to -- I think Andy's right, and, I mean, it's sort of cold water in the face that, hey, we lit a two-year fuse, and the fuse has burned down for eight months already, and we've got to move on this, as Spud also mentioned, and so I think that's the best bang for our buck, is working in those areas.

Then also being very sensitive to -- I realize that an area closure, or a time or a season, can mean a whole different thing to a commercial fishery, in terms of accessibility to product, because we're talking the snapper grouper fishery here, because, as we said before, our snapper grouper fishery has a red snapper problem, and it's not just about red snapper and people targeting red snapper, but that's where I would see the best chance for success of providing something quantitative, again, for the SSC to help us out with.

The other things are -- Yes, they could work, and they could work over time, but I don't see us being able to pull enough data together, or even work things out, and I agree with Laurilee that the tag concept -- Yes, that's great, but that would take a long time to implement something like this, and so it just seems to me that, off of the list we've got, if we move forward with further consideration of those three areas, that's probably the best we would achieve, from what we've got so far.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Is that a motion, Mel?

MR. BELL: I could certainly make that a motion. **Yes, and I would move that we -- That we basically focus our effort on those three areas that I just mentioned of timed open seasons, area closures, and depth closures, and we flesh those out, again being -- Well, I'm talking too much for a motion here.** We could leave it that and discuss it some more.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. **The motion is on the board, and it's seconded by Trish to develop the framework amendment based on time, area, and depth restrictions.** Okay. We have a motion, and it's seconded, and it's under discussion. Tom and then Mel and then Clay and then Kerry.

MR. ROLLER: I just wanted to chime-in, because I haven't spoken on this, and I just support this, simply for the fact that these are the quantitative measures that we can do in the short-term. I really appreciate all the discussion points brought up, particularly regarding technology and whatnot, but those should be bigger-picture and long-term discussions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Mel.

MR. BELL: Again, obviously, there's not a lot of detail here, and we would flesh these out as we move forward, and fully realizing that a particular action, or use of something, can mean something entirely different to the commercial sector versus the recreational sector, and, again, we're trying to do this where we're working together, but to achieve the goal, but being very sensitive to there are differences, and, when you apply one of these, it might have a severe impact on commercial markets or something and your ability to harvest, and so we'll flesh all that out, but I think -- I just would think this is the quickest way to move forward, again realizing that we're kind of running out of time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. I just wanted to point out that we do have quite a bit of information that we can use to look at this, not only our fishery-independent surveys, the SEFIS program, and, of course, now we've got SADL and other things, and then the fishery data, but we also actually have a project that's going to be underway soon, and Scott Crosson and a whole team of people just got funding to look at these very issues, and so we should have some information for you, and it will take a little while to work on, but it's in progress.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm trying to take a deep breath, because I'm going to get emotional. I mean, this -- I am upset to my stomach, to be fair, to be honest with you, because I am not comfortable leaving it vague and broad and worrying about later how we -- These three things on their own, I understand why we're choosing them, because they're qualitative, but I am incredibly uncomfortable, given the fact that I still think we all came in here with a different understanding of maybe what we were doing, although I do concede your point, and I do very much remember that area thing, and I 100 percent remember that.

We started this, if I recall -- Like, if we don't do this, what happens is we get a really low red snapper ABC for the next fishing season, correct, for this year, and, to be blunt, that has almost zero impact on my business. This could have drastic impacts on my business, and so I just can't even -- I mean, I am just so uncomfortable, and I would rather go back to doing it the way we were doing it before and just come up with a really low ABC and manage that.

I don't really want to do that, but that is the safest thing for me to support, and I had another point, but, again, I mean, I hate to say it, but I have watched -- I have been around this table for twenty-something years now, and I have watched how things like this can blow out of control, and we have worked very, very hard in putting management measures in place for the commercial fishery, such that we have these long seasons, but we keep markets open, that we have worked really hard to -- I mean, this -- We can't rush something like that through, if it's at the impact it's going to have.

Let me just say this. What I would be supportive of, so that I can not just be a complainer, but also possibly a problem solver, is, understanding that we need quantitative -- The ability to quantitatively account for what we're going to achieve, and I am comfortable with the idea of looking -- Going back to sort of the principle behind the maybe commercial fishermen staying more offshore for part of the year and the recreational fishermen staying more inshore.

I would like to see clarification that the seasons are intended to be used to manage the recreational fishery at this point only, and that would calm my stomach considerably. Again, my justification is that, one, I haven't quite seen what we've been trying to manage has -- What we've all been talking about has not been the issue -- People have not been coming to the table going the commercial guys are just discarding fish left and right, and we have a problem, and we need to deal with it quickly. We have not heard that.

Again, the commercial fishery is reducing, and we know how many of us there are, and I believe we're down to 588 of us, and that's not counting -- That's how many permits there are, and that's not counting how many boats are actually fishing, and I think, for the matter, we want to do

something quickly, and I understand that. If we're going to do it quickly, I would be -- The only way I could be in support of this is if we are very clear about what industry we're going to use these measures for right now. If not, I support going back to doing it the old way we were doing it and just having a really low red snapper ABC.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Chris and then Tim.

MR. CONKLIN: The only way -- I wanted to say again that the only way that I'm comfortable with this is if it allows charter and commercial fishermen, federally permitted, to maintain their way of life and keep running their business. It's their friggin' livelihoods, you know, and it's their job, and we can't just close it up in a couple of months and say, hey, figure out how to make the payments, you know, and, I mean, this is -- I am trying to be civil about this, but my blood pressure is rising, and I am going to turn my microphone off.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim and then Andy.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the commercial industry, we have gone to great lengths to have seasons, and we already have seasons, and we have split seasons. We did a lot of work on species-by-species, to make sure that we could have commercially-viable fisheries for as many months of the year as we can, and we already have a four-month closure for our shallow-water grouper, and I don't think that any of this really is going to apply, overall, and fit into the way that the commercial fishery is prosecuted, and so I can't support this, unless it's just dealing with the recreational component and leaves the charter and the commercial guys out of it. I would be willing to make a substitute motion to that effect.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I guess, first, are you making a substitute motion?

MR. GRINER: No. Go ahead.

MR. STRELCHECK: Our emotions are already running high, right, and we talked about this earlier, that this is going to be difficult, and I clearly hear where the commercial industry is coming from, and certainly comments have been made about the charter industry and people making a living from this, and we're very early in the process right now, very early, and we haven't even voted up to even move forward with the regulatory action, and so I guess I would ask that let's get this off the ground, right, and then let's have the deliberations around what this looks like as we get more information before us, right, and I know there's concerns, because we're moving forward, and we have proposed time, depth, and area closures, and people can interpret that any different way, but my next question, which I think we need to get the action off of the screen here, is what are we expecting to bring back in June, and what's the direction to staff?

I think we really need to be very clear about that, and I think I have some ideas that maybe would help, in terms of some of the concerns that are being raised, and so I think I ask for that, to let's be open-minded about this, and try to move, at least initially, forward and knowing that there's a lot more discussion coming.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Let's take a break. We've been going for two hours now. Let's take a break. We're going to leave this motion on the table, and we'll come back, and we'll

continue discussion. Ultimately, we need to vote on it, and, ultimately, we need to give direction to staff, but let's take a break, and we'll come back to this. Thank you, everybody. We'll take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. As folks are coming back to the table, we have a motion on the table here. What I would suggest is that we add some direction, and so, before voting on this motion, is we add some direction to staff about what we would like to see analyzed that would come back with this framework amendment to the June meeting, and so that's my suggestion, is that we start putting these bullet points under here about what we want analyzed, and then we'll go back and vote on this motion. That way, people can see what would be done and what would come back in June. All right. I saw Chris's hand, and I saw Tim's hand.

MR. CONKLIN: I would want to see analysis on how long a recreational, private recreational, snapper grouper season would be, one wave, two waves, three waves, and I would imagine that we would do it in a wave, wouldn't you think?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's probably the easiest, yes.

MR. CONKLIN: I guess we would want to look at when we would want to put that into place.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tim and then Spud.

MR. GRINER: Well, I was going to make a substitute motion, and so, I mean, if you want to --

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's up to you if you want to make a substitute.

MR. GRINER: I would. **I would like to make a substitute motion to develop the framework amendment based on time, area, and depth restrictions for the recreational fishery only, excluding commercial and charter/for-hire.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Stand by while we're getting that on the board. Tim, can you look at that and see -- Does that reflect your motion?

MR. GRINER: Yes. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, once again, we have a substitute motion, and let me read it for you. **Develop the framework amendment based on time, area, and depth restrictions for only the private recreational component, excluding commercial and recreational for-hire.** Is there a second for this motion? It's seconded by Kerry. It's under discussion. I'm going to -- Spud was already in the queue, and do you want to be in the queue to speak to this, or should I go to other people, Spud? All right. Chester, Chris, Mel, Kerry.

MR. BREWER: I have got a real problem here, particularly with the part about excluding recreational for-hire, because I see the potential that you would have say a closed area, and a guy in a private boat can't fish there, but, if you pay somebody get on a charter/for-hire boat, he or she can fish there, in that area, and that is -- I have said it before, and one of my tenets is that all recreational fishermen are treated the same, and that's not doing that, because, even if somebody

is -- Yes, they are charter/for-hire, and they are selling access to a recreational fisherman, but it's still the recreational fisherman that is doing the fishermen, and essentially fishing on that recreational quota, and so I've got a real problem with this, and I really can't support it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The charter -- To that point, I hear what you're saying, but we just put this reporting program in place, and we spent a million bucks on it, to enable the charter fishermen to be able to tell these folks over here what's going on, so we can better manage our fishery, and it's called accountability.

Also, this -- I just wanted to keep in mind that this is on the table because this is something that we can do immediately, and it doesn't have to -- I mean, it can sunset, and we can look at it year-to-year, whatever, but it's not like -- It's not my intent to have this forever, and I was talking to Chester a minute ago, and we have a license, a federal license, amendment coming through, and I think that -- I think that would fix everything, and we probably wouldn't have to have a season, and so, I mean, I think that's the biggest -- I mean, I've been saying it for twenty years, that the biggest thing is to get a handle on how many people are going out after snapper grouper, and we don't know, and everybody else is -- We have their numbers and their data, and I think it's a good thing, and we're moving in the right direction, and I think, if we can get a handle on it, I think the numbers are all going to change.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, I guess it's too late now, but my preference would have been to continue what we were doing there, which was -- What we were trying to do, under direction to staff, was put some additional information in here that might better explain the direction we were heading in, but also provide some comfort, I think, to folks, and, again, this was just intended to be a first step to get us moving, and it may be that the commercial sorts out as we get into this, and we actually have some things to look at, but we've got no details, other than they're just three general concepts.

If you pull commercial out completely, immediately then it just -- There is just some things that you can't look at, in terms of sorting by area or whatever, and I do fully understand that, for the commercial side of this, it's a maximum amount of risk, with very little gain, potentially, and so there's no -- What is the benefit, commercially speaking, and so, I mean, I understand that sensitivity, but, anyway, that's the direction we were kind of trying to head in there, but that's it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I appreciate that, and I do understand where you were heading, and we may still head, before the substitute motion was made, but, you know, we're an ever-changing body, and things evolve, and so the comfort level of approaching it in this way gives me a -- It gives me a lot more comfort to approach it this way, and I would say that my intent would be, going back to the short-term and medium-term situation, and my intent would be that we do look at some of these other things that do include the commercial fishery in that more medium-term plan.

This, in my mind, is not absolving every sector from having to take the pain, but it's the recreational sector wants a season coming up, and not a low ABC, and so, in the short-term, let's make that happen, and, in my mind, it's just fair that that's what we look at, and, in the medium-

term, we look at all of us, and we all take a cold, hard look, but I don't know how we do something like that on the fly, and it could have the potential to leave the door open to hurt a lot of people for the benefit of just one group.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I don't see it for the benefit of just one group. I mean, we're talking about the benefit of a whole bunch of different species, and we've got a lot of issues here, and so this really isn't about one group over another group, and we've got a whole suite of species that we're trying to rebuild, and, I mean, I'm trying to think about why we started this, why we went down this path, and I go back to something that Andy said, that it just seems a little strange to be pulling groups out of this before we can even see any analysis, and we don't know what it looks like, and we don't exactly know what we're even talking about here, and we're just going to limit it to private recreational anglers, and I'm just not sure that this gets us to where we need to be.

I do understand the short-term, medium-term, and long-term, but at least to see one round of analysis to come back to the June council meeting that would look at -- Because I was hoping, in the direction to staff, under the original motion, that we were going to look at pros and cons to private recreational anglers, for-hire fishermen, and commercial fishermen of the various options. This would prevent us from even seeing that and looking at that, and so I do understand your concerns, but this is taking that look at all those pieces off the table before we even get started. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I mean, I agree that we should look at all those things, but I don't know that we should look at all these things in a -- If we are going to look at all those things, let's take the time, and let's do it right, and let's give it the due that it deserves. My understanding was we were doing in this framework to get it done quick, so that we didn't have to have a low ABC. We're trying to accomplish -- I agree that this is going to benefit a lot of snapper grouper species, in which case let's just make it a plan amendment and take the time and throw all of our holistic options out there and do it that way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris and then Tim, and we've got a lot of the same people speaking on this motion.

MR. CONKLIN: Sorry, but it's a good one. I mean, couldn't we just give our snapper to the recreational guys and keep on working?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, and my biggest -- One of the big issues is that we're trying to look at this as a multispecies thing here, and I don't think that's what we need to do on the commercial side. I mean, we already know what species we are overfishing and where we're having trouble, with the gags and the porgies, and the rest of our fisheries, commercially, is very, very healthy, and we already have amendments that we're working on to address the gag issue and to address the porgies, and so I really think that we do kind of need to look at this just as a recreational effort right now, because we are working on the problems we have with these other species within the complex, and so I don't see where we're really -- You can still give some direction to staff to look at this any way you want to look at it, but I don't know what problem we're solving with including the commercial industry in this, when we're already working on amendments by species that we have problems with.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We also talked about, in those amendments, that we were going to look at this approach across all species, and, also, I don't know, since we can't even talk about what will be analyzed, I don't even know what species, in what area, at what time, at what depth, because we haven't seen anything, and we're just trying to figure out how to even do that and what to bring back. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Is the part where we're back against the wall is the red snapper? The clock is ticking for red snapper? All right, and so I was under the impression that this was for red snapper and how to address that, and then maybe you look at -- You do the red snapper, and I guess with the other things, but look at the red snapper, since the clock is ticking, and you only have twelve months left, and is that correct, or fourteen months left, to do something? The other species, do you have that same amount of time left or longer?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to go to Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: The Magnuson clock is ticking on gag grouper, because you need to have a rebuilding plan in place, and I think that clock started last June, something like that, and so the clock is ticking, the two-year clock. Red snapper, your clock is ticking, but your timeframe is fuzzy. Remember that you have red snapper in the last assessment -- What you got out of it was that it was rebuilding, and so your rebuilding plan is in place, and it's okay. What you also got was that overfishing was occurring, but overfishing was occurring primarily because of discards.

If you simply lower the ACL, that doesn't get you to your overfishing problem with red snapper, because you have to do something about the discard issue, and so the Act says that you're supposed to end overfishing immediately, and so immediately, in this instance, is not yesterday, but you're trying to figure out how to deal with the discard issue, and so it's a little fuzzy there, but your Magnuson clock is ticking.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can I follow-up? Obviously, we need -- You've got to have the data to look at something before you just describe whatever route you're going to take, and so how about analysis be done on everything that you're looking at here, and, at your next meeting, you come back and say here's all this analysis, and here's the cards on the table, and you hash that argument out of which route you're going to do, for which sector or anything, because, right now, it seems like we're kind of like at a stalemate of we don't go down this direction, because we're worried about something, and we're not seeing what the data says.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's exactly where I was before this substitute motion was made, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I apologize if I missed it, but I was just -- Then we agree.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I think the heartburn is with the words "develop a framework amendment", and the commercial fishing industry, for twenty years now, has done -- They have bent over backwards and done everything they have been asked to do, and we've watched multigenerational family operations just evaporate, and the infrastructure to support our fishing industry has disappeared, and we are hanging on by a thread, yet we've done everything that we've been asked to do, and we were also promised, many years ago, that, if we cooperated and went along with all the accountability that was being asked of us, that we would reap benefits, because the ones that

survived would be able to make more money than they could during the time when we were overfishing everything.

It's been decades now, in some cases, and we're still looking to reap the benefits, and we're still watching our infrastructure disappear, dock by dock, and so I understand their fear of being wrapped in with something as onerous sounding as "develop a framework amendment", and I'm okay with doing an analysis, and there's no harm in analysis, but we don't want to be dragged in, once again, into something that punishes our industry, and we've been newly joined by the for-hire industry, who now have to be accountable also, but I view them -- In my mind, they're like commercial fishermen, to me, because they make their living on the water.

To me, the for-hire industry is more like a commercial thing than a recreational thing. I mean, you've got a guy from Ohio that doesn't own a boat, and has no ability to go out on the ocean to catch a fish when he comes to Florida, and he goes out on a for-hire boat, and that's a commercial business, in my mind, and so those are my thoughts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy and then Carolyn.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think we're -- We have pretty much exhausted this conversation, and I don't think we're really covering any new ground, and people are repeating themselves, and so I think it's in the best interest if we vote this up or down, and I would call the question.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We had one more person in the queue, Carolyn, and I don't think she's spoken yet.

DR. BELCHER: I am going to actually hold off. I mean, my comment was -- Again, it's looking back to the targeting of this, and are we talking specifically to red snapper, and I know the background starts out with that, but we do reference back to the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, and I think it gives us an opportunity to look at it as a whole, and see if there's a potential. I mean, I know the concerns, and I am not downplaying any of the concerns about what the impacts are, based on what you're currently doing, but what if there's a better solution out there, and this gives us that opportunity to look at the potential interactions of area and time closures that we're currently not doing, and we're not just looking at it on a species-by-species, where everything gets more confined and more constricted. If we think of everything holistically, maybe we have a better option with that, but, back to Andy's point too, I agree with working on the motion right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. The question has been called. All right. Are we ready to vote here? All right. **All those in favor of this substitute motion, raise your hand; all those opposed, eight opposed. Any abstentions, one abstention. The motion fails.**

All right. We're back to the main motion, which is to develop the framework amendment based on time, area, and depth restrictions. I do think people are bringing up good points about their fear and their concerns and about the fact that it's being called a framework amendment, which makes you think that we're going to do an action. However, if you see there was a motion -- Later in the document, we've got to somehow deal with the ABC for red snapper that is out there, and we had agreed to do it in a framework amendment, and so it was going to be part of this.

My suggestion would be to indicate what things we would like staff to analyze, and so direction to staff here, and get those things listed, and, that way, we can figure out, at the next meeting, who

this applies to, where it applies, and is it different off of different states, just all the things, and so I would encourage people, right now, to get here, on the board, the direction that they would like to see, and then we'll come back at the end, after all the direction is on there, to vote on the motion. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was going to maybe suggest that we're -- Do we have a goal for discard reductions, because --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Like a percent?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, because, I mean, we're sort of throwing those open-ended thing out to staff that, okay, just start looking for things that reduce it, and, well, if we set a goal -- Say we want a 50 percent reduction, or whatever it might be, then they can look at the things that, together or in aggregate, can produce that desired reduction, because, in the end, that's what the SSC is going to use to consider making an adjustment in the ABC, is if you reduce discards by this amount, and we can possibly convert some portion of those discards over to harvestable fish, and so are we at a point where we can do that, to just give them a range of reductions we would like to see and have them come up with options that produce that reduction?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know that we have a particular number. We're trying to get anything to get the number down, because anything that we can reduce could ultimately translate into fish that can be brought home to the dock at a later date, but I'm going to go to John here.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think part of that is the fact that we are sort of in the band-aid situation with this framework, to do something quick, because we're under a statutory deadline. I mean, one thing that has come up, and has been talked about in the past, and has come up plenty of times, is the idea that you're talking about managing discard mortalities, dead fish from releases, and it's strongly tied to depth, and so it may be possible to allow say no seasonal closure within a certain shallow depth zone, and so you could start there. Do you agree with the concept that, within a shallow zone, the fishery is open year-round, and people use descending devices and circle hooks and all these best practices to optimize the survival of fish that are released?

I don't know what that means, as far as an actual depth, but I think, you know, the IPT and others can look at it and look at discard mortality rates and availability of fish and try to say, okay, in the data, is there some zone that sort of makes sense where we would draw that line, seventy-five feet or a hundred feet? From barotrauma, the action sort of cranks up in barotrauma, in my recollection of studies for different species, between like 100 and 150 feet, is where the curve really spikes up and the survival starts to really go down.

I think you have that sort of shallow area, and would you consider something like a far offshore area, where you just say that's where the commercial fishing operates? Then would you consider like some sort of mid-zone, where you have say a six-month season, three waves, and I think any season should be tied to waves, because that's how MRIP tallies the data, and so it will be one less assumption about how fishers spread out over the wave, if you tie it to waves, but then do you just say six months, because you're really trying to have a lot of changes on a lot of fish and trying to affect red snapper and trying to see how, to some extent, there is an experimental aspect to this, to see how a season will play out, what will be the impact of this on trips, and ultimately catch, if you do some sort of season.

You could look at three waves versus four waves of opening or something, and then the other part of that would be do you consider some regional variability and when say a region can decide to allow its three waves to be open, and do you think that it has to be the same in Key West as it is off of Hatteras? Then I think, if we looked at some of that stuff, just as general concepts, that might give the IPT a way to try and come up with some package that has the goals of maintaining the access, as much as possible, while trying to impact the discards.

Then the for-hire and commercial is the tougher part, right, because if you -- I mean, I think Chris is right that it's pretty tough to come out here, out of the blue, and tell like the for-hire industry that there's six months when you're not going to operate your business, but I think that's something that you have to think, and does this mid-zone -- Who does that apply to? That's just a question to solve, really, and figure out where that goes.

Again, what we do here doesn't have to be what we do long-term, but I would be concerned, considering that for-hire is open access. If you leave the for-hire open, and then you might incentivize a lot of people to just go down and buy a for-hire permit, and what does that cost, twenty-five dollars? I mean, that's twenty-five dollars and no limit, and so what's that going to be, two gallons of gas next week, or two gallons of diesel fuel at the dock, versus your for-hire permit? You can also get your permit and get the eTRIPS and report, and so I think that is another thing that's circling out there that we have to consider.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. Those were some of the things that I was hoping to look at, that we typed on the board, and there were other hands up here. Chester.

MR. BREWER: John covered everything that I was going to say, and a lot of better than I would have been able to say it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Are there other things that we want analyzed here when this comes back in June? Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I won't be seeing it in June, but I was just listening to the conversation that you had around the table, and will you actually bring back numbers of fish that -- Because you had a lot of percentages, and that was a lot of the conversation around this table, is that, yes, but you don't understand, and there may be this discard mortality of 100 percent, but we're discarding ten fish, rather than a thousand fish, or something like that, and so are you going to actually come back with some hard numbers of fish that will be reduced, that this many less fish will be discarded in the recreational sector, and this many less fish will be discarded in the commercial sector, and then I think you could probably look at it and say, okay, well, what do we need to do, and this seems like a gnat, and that seems like an elephant, and where is the best bang for our buck.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, we can do that, and you can look, just based on the data that we have, when the trips were occurring recreationally and commercially and what was reported discarded. I just looked at the assessment, to get a reminder myself of the magnitude, and the commercial discards in the last year, the last two years, were about the same, and it was like 5,000 dead discards reported, and the recreational was 500,000, and so we do have a major magnitude difference that we do have to grapple with.

I just wanted to make sure that we didn't lose track of that, because that's how we got here. We looked at those numbers six months ago and realized why it is that we got here, and so I think

everybody is going to have to give up something, but it's just a matter of how we manage it, and, actually, I think the for-hire is really the more challenging issue for us here, and I'm not sure what to do with that, and I really am not, but that's not the real challenge, is how do you preserve that and that access.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: We have touched upon, I think, a lot of these, but just so that they're captured, and one of the things that I think would be helpful from staff, given the comments about charter and commercial, is kind of a pros and cons kind of evaluation of the management alternatives that are being presented back to us, and so things that we should be considering as we move forward with options.

Clay had mentioned the MARMAP and SEFIS and SADL data, and I don't know if this is really realistic for June, and I know we have a longer-term effort ongoing, but starting to dig into the spatial area management and, in particular, identification of hotspots, and so it might be more requesting an analysis that might have to come back to us at a later date, with nothing in June, and then we've also talked about what species does this apply to, right, and so carefully kind of thinking through the species groupings and the seasonal closure and applicability of, obviously, the broader suite of species and species that might be excluded from that or not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just to make sure that expectations are kind of realistic for June, in terms of the species that would be analyzed and that this would be applied to, we would likely prioritize red snapper, and then, at a later time in the process, then start to bring in any additional species, but red snapper would be that initial focus.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Thinking more about the for-hire, we really do need to get some feedback from them, and can they exist if there is year-round fishing within some shallower zone, but six-months of fishing would be in the deeper zone, a mid-water zone, and I don't know. I don't know enough about that fishery to know how that would work out, and I don't know if we have people around the table that are -- Well, Captain Judy, obviously, down there may have a good sense of how this could work out.

MS. HELMEY: Well, it could work out, but we would want to ask for something else in return, of course. Of course we would. I think it could work out okay, but we would probably hope that the blackfish didn't get closed, or maybe they changed the size limit of the blackfish for the recreational fishermen to whatever the commercial is. What's the commercial black sea bass? Is it eleven? That way, we could -- You could lower the bag limit, and then we could at least catch something, because, once we don't go into the deeper water, the only thing that we can catch is black sea bass and white grunt, the fish of the future, and tomtates and spadefish and stuff like that, and so it could be done, but we would have to have something in return, I think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got a lot of hands up. I've got Kerry, Chris, Andy, Dewey.

MS. MARHEFKA: Judy, I like the way you think. We'll talk later and figure out that little quid-pro-quo. No, I'm just kidding, but I would just like to point out, as we move forward with this committee, I think we're going to find ourselves in a little bit of a quagmire, because everything we're talking about here is going to have an effect on Amendment 49, Amendment 50, Amendment 53, Amendment 51, and Amendment 52, and I don't know how we move forward with talking about the impacts of those, when they're about to be dealt with here in another manner, which is, again, going back to why I thought we were tackling this as related to red snapper.

Then the last thing I will just say is, not to be too on-the-nose about what's happening in the world right now, but it gives me particular heartburn to think about being way offshore when fuel is about to cost us a crap ton of money, and so, not only are we getting the lowest -- Our risk is now even higher, and our economic burden is even higher, with, at this point, from what we're looking at, a lower contribution to the problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good points. Okay. Back to the list. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Can you bring back discard data for each sector on all the snapper grouper species, when you bring this back to us in June?

MR. CARMICHAEL: We can bring it for all of the assessed species pretty easily. Getting it for the unassessed species would be more difficult, because, as Clay mentioned, they have the discard logbook, but they don't calculate estimates out fishery-wide from that for every species every year, and it's done for assessments, but the assessed species are the bulk of the action. I mean, we looked at it before, and our assessed species cover 75 to 80 percent of the landings, in most years, and so I think that would cover the bulk of it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes.

MR. CONKLIN: So I want to make sure that the assessed species, the discards between recreational and commercial, and, if the charter/for-hire -- If there's any data available for that as well, please make sure it's in there for us in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike is getting that up there.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Another thought, as I mentioned earlier in response to Dewey's question, is you start parsing out this fishery, through the trading to make this work, and would you exempt the black sea bass fishery and say the golden tilefish longline fishery from all of this? The black sea bass pots?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you suggesting that that be captured, or are there pieces of fisheries that are excluded, or parts of fisheries that are excluded from this?

MR. CARMICHAEL: Yes, and, if there are, it reduces some of the analysis, at least.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Andy and then Dewey. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think you would find some of your seasonality by some of your landings, when you talked about the for-hire from the logbooks, and also from MRIP, and you would tell, up and down the coast, the time of the year where the for-hire are landing fish, because it's not

conducive, sometimes, for the season, and so that's another way to figure out who is landing where, because I think that's one of the crucial things, to segment it out of the different states and regional management, or regional landings.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sorry, and we were typing something else up here, Dewey, and is there a specific thing? It seemed like you were talking about something about regionality, and so help here, Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think if you look at -- When you're talking about for-hire, and John was asking, and, when you look at MRIP data, you will see where landings occur, and the electronic logbook from for-hire, and you will see when they reported, even though it might not be up-to-date yet, with full compliance, and so there is plenty of things that will show landings of the seasonality and when it occurs, in what region, and you can get an idea from the fish houses, and some people travel over different areas, but you can get a good sense and idea of what's going on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We were having a side conversation over here about do we want to see spawning seasons, just so that we know what they are when trying to make some of these decisions, and I don't know. For whatever species we're going to be looking at. All right. Anything else that we want to see? Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. I am just still thinking about that June date, and I can appreciate that you dedicate time to it, but there is a lot of nuances in these analyses, and I would be reticent to try and produce something that quickly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so good question. Are there some things on here that we would like to prioritize, or do we just let staff try to get as much done as they can and bring back what they have? We were having a conversation over here, and maybe staff has a couple of days to think about it, and we talk about priorities later in the week and see what all could possibly be obtained before June. Does that work, Clay? Okay. Anything else?

Any other analyses that we want to see? All right. **I am going to go back to the motion, which was to develop the framework amendment, based on time, area, and depth restrictions.** Remember there is still another possible motion out there that would be what to do about the ABC for red snapper that we had talked about, because this is a framework action, and so, even after this motion, there would likely be one more motion that we would need to discuss. All right. We've had a lot of discussion on this particular motion. Are we ready to vote on this motion? All right. **All those in favor of this motion, raise your hand; those opposed, same sign; abstentions, two. The motion passes eight to three to two.**

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The draft motion here is really just to kind of formally initiate this regulatory amendment, and we would use the guidance that you just provided as we develop it. We could tweak this, given the conversation, of just reduce releases in the snapper grouper fishery, or however else you all would want to amend it before someone makes it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I think that what we're suggesting is that first part of that was already incorporated into the other motion, and so we just need to talk about the second part of this draft motion, which would be to incorporate catch levels for red snapper, based on SEDAR 73. This was something that Monica keeps reminding us about. We haven't made this motion yet, but

this would be a discussion, if someone would like to make the motion, to initiate a regulatory amendment to incorporate catch levels for red snapper, based on SEDAR 73. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, somebody has got to do it. **I move to initiate a regulatory amendment to incorporate catch levels for red snapper, based on SEDAR 73.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Spud, and seconded by Chester. It's under discussion. What is the -- How will these two actions, these two motions that we made, work together? Are they both going to come back in June? Can you help us understand the speed at which this would move, or are they going to move simultaneously?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: We'll be working on -- The motion that you already passed and this motion would be the same regulatory amendment, and they would be one amendment that we would be working on different aspects of, and this part would be kind of hand-in-hand with the first part, and the first part would be looking more towards addressing whether the ABC projections would be reconsidered within the SSC, and then, based on whatever the projections are that come out of that entire process, whatever the recommended catch levels are from the SSC, then we would be developing the regulatory amendment based on those.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike. Any additional discussion here? **Any objection?** All right. **Seeing none, the motion is approved.** All right, and so we've done two items from the agenda. We're on Number 3, the Recreational Reporting/Permitting Amendment, Snapper Grouper Amendment 46. All right. John is going to give us a short overview, and then we're going to go to Spud to give the workgroup report.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you, and, just to kind of orient everyone, this is really a reboot of what was, or what is, Amendment 46 to the Snapper Grouper FMP, and this amendment has been on freeze for a little bit. The last time that the council and the committee discussed this was in June of 2018, and so there's been a lot of work that's been going on in the background, such as development of MyFishCount, and then, also, the recreational reporting workgroup, private recreational reporting workgroup, which we'll hear the overview of those findings in just a minute.

Just to orient everyone, the idea is to look at those recommendations, and then we'll come back to Amendment 46 and have some discussion on the ideal content of this amendment, moving forward, and so, without further ado, Spud, I will turn it over to you, and I will pull up the report right now.

MR. WOODWARD: All right. Thank you, John. Yes, the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup has met four times over the past year, most recently in February, where we deliberated on the results of discussions we had from our previous meetings, which you can see listed in the report here, and we talked about a variety of subjects, and there were a lot of interesting perspectives and reviews of things that are already going on out there that could inform our decision-making, and I would certainly like to acknowledge the contribution of the workgroup. They put in a lot of effort and a lot of thought, and I certainly appreciate it.

The gist of it is, after all these deliberations and discussions, we have come up with recommendations, and Number 1 is to develop a federal permit for the snapper grouper recreational -- This would be private recreational fishery, and just a couple of highlights out of the information below that is important is that permits alone will not resolve the data issues that led the council to create this workgroup. However, permits have the potential to create data collection opportunities

that exceed the capabilities of current monitoring efforts and can lead to improved catch and effort estimates.

The purpose of a recreational permit for snapper grouper fishing is to resolve the issues with lack of ability to identify who is fishing and to create an accurate universe or sampling frame for the snapper grouper fishery participants. After the discussions we had, a federal permit is considered an appropriate solution for this federal fishery. In addition, the council likely does not have authority to require states to create any sort of permit, and so the council will need to evaluate both vessel and individual permitting options.

Then very importantly is the permit, in and of itself, is not going to accomplish much, other than to identify sampling frames, and so we have got to develop a data collection program that uses the universe of anglers identified through the recreational permit to support improvements in recreational data collection that are necessary for developing improved catch and effort estimates, and just a couple of highlights of the information underneath there is a permit-based sampling frame can support changes in data collection efforts, ranging from improvements in efficiency within the existing MRIP surveys to completely new surveys designed specifically for snapper grouper fishing by private recreational anglers.

Resources will be a factor in any efforts to create new or significantly modify existing surveys. Because one size will not fit all in the diverse snapper grouper fishery, the council should consider multiple data collection approaches to meet management and assessment data needs across the many species of the complex, and this may include changes to current surveys, recommendations for new surveys, and both census and survey approaches. The council should evaluate the ability of existing survey programs to provide reliable catch estimates when developing data collection recommendations. The council should also consider establishing performance targets, i.e., target PSE values, for data collection, to evaluate current programs and alternatives.

Number 3 is create a snapper grouper permit and reporting technical advisory panel, as this will be an ongoing and evolving process, and the workgroup felt that it was very important to create this advisory panel, and you see listed here the things that they will do. Notably, they will provide recommendations and advice on technical aspects of permitting and data collection alternatives. The membership should include state and federal agency personnel with survey and fisheries experience, as well as researchers experienced in survey theory and design. This group would not replace the Snapper Grouper AP, nor infringe upon the AP's role of providing advice for the fishery.

Some of the other recommendations and considerations are it's very important to manage the expectation for both the fishing community and the managers, in order for this to be successful. We have got to set realistic expectations and clearly defined goals and objectives and consider flexibility, timeliness, and adaptability to future situations and strive for compatibility across survey methods and have cooperation and compatibility with existing surveys, as much as possible.

Once a permit is in place that provides an accurate sampling frame, the primary impediment to improving catch and effort estimates is the financial cost of new and improved surveys. The council should explore the cost of other programs, such as HMS permits, the large pelagic survey, FWC's reef fish survey, and the Mid's tilefish survey. Considerable cost savings are expected from integrating new efforts with existing surveys, and then you see listed down here several research recommendations.

Continue building on the rare event estimation working group's efforts, to better understanding how to develop surveys that are going to capture and produce better data on rare-event species. Require side-by-side and overlapping survey efforts to support calibration of survey changes of new surveys, and monitor the impact of increased APAIS sampling that began in 2021, and so those are the highlights, and I appreciate, again, the efforts of the workgroup and the supporting council staff, and so I will bring this recommendation forward on their behalf.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. I want to thank you for your service as chair of this working group, and I know that they've had a number of meetings and worked diligently to get to these recommendations. Are there questions for Spud about these recommendations? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think we're worn out from the prior discussion, because we talked about this plenty at the last meeting. Not so much questions for you, Spud, and I think the group has laid this out nicely, right, which is -- One of my concerns was framing this in the context of what we're trying to accomplish and how we go about doing it, right, and so bringing in a technical workgroup, and working with state partners and MRIP and others, obviously, to ensure that we maximize the utility of this is key.

I think the question, or real issue, that I still struggle with is administratively kind of how do we go about doing this, right, and, I mean, we're not maybe at that point where we figure that out, but this -- I don't have a federal license, and I go and apply for my license through the State of Florida, and I get my reef fish permit, right, and so there's already an existing infrastructure set up in some states, right, and the states can benefit directly from that money, whereas federal programs -- That money would come in, and it would go directly to the Treasury, right, and so we're not able to at least direct that funding to support our programs specifically, at least under MSA, and so just maybe that's my question, is kind of any discussion or thought around that, in terms of execution of this, because I think that's really critical to deciding kind of is this in the council purview, or is this something we would try to work with the states more directly on to coordinate.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I will first say that the NMFS participants in this workgroup were quiet about that, because, obviously, they were sensitive to not wanting to obligate the agency, but I believe the consensus of the other membership of the workgroup is that this would be best handled by the service, in some manner, such as the large pelagic survey and the Mid's tilefish and that sort of thing, and that -- I think there was a realization that funding is always going to be an issue, but that is something that, if we agree as a council to move forward with this, in whatever manner it is, then it will be our responsibility to work with the service to see that this can become a reality.

We talked about the states doing this, but the reality is, with four states, with their varied and different political environments, it just -- It's a non-starter, and we're not going to get there, and even Florida's reef fish survey is free, and they have that subsidized, and we've talked about that before, and it covers a subset. It doesn't cover the entire snapper grouper complex, which is something we're going to have to talk about too, and what do we want this permit to cover, if we go down this road, and so I know you will do your best to make it be a success.

MR. STRELCHECK: I appreciate the confidence in me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel and then Chester.

MR. BELL: I actually have two questions, but maybe I will ask the first one. Spud, the technical advisory panel, and I am trying to think back, and I listened into most of these, most of the time, but membership -- Was there discussion about -- So we've got state and federal agency personnel with survey experience and researchers, and is there some way to sort of do a sanity check with some of this with the recreational folks that we would be -- We can come up with this great system, but how do we kind of run that by somebody that this would actually impact? Is there room for another group in there, or is that something that, after we come up with something, we kind of run it by somebody? Was there talk about that?

MR. WOODWARD: Not specifically, but I have been thinking, and just sort of getting ahead of ourselves, that, once we go down the road of Amendment 46, of possibly -- When we discuss the composition of this group, talk about how do we make sure that the customer is included, and it may be that we use some of our Snapper Grouper AP members to be sort of ex-officio, so to speak, and do a reality check, when you start talking about survey methodology and that kind of thing, and what might be required, in terms of reporting, and all that kind of thing, and kind of maybe use them in that role, but, yes, I think that's very important. I mean, it's easy to come up with something and say it's going to work and then find out, later on, as we often do, that it doesn't work quite the way we thought it was, from the customer standpoint.

MR. BELL: We call them the permittee.

MR. WOODWARD: I like to use "customer". It sounds better.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Jessica. Andy, I looked at this, as we worked our way through it, as something very, very similar to what's done in Florida and what you're used to. In Florida, you're required to have a saltwater license to go fishing in saltwater. You pay that money to the state, and the -- We'll call it a permit for deepwater grouper or snapper, and it may be on grouper and snapper, and, in fact, it's not -- Tell me what it is then.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's thirteen species.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Certain species?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thirteen species.

MR. BREWER: Okay. Anyway, we don't have to set it up exactly that way, but the permit that you get, as you know, is really simple. I mean, you get on the computer, and you push about three buttons, and it prints out a number for you, or it gives you a number, and that is your permit. There have been a number of people who have been preaching for years that we need to, quote, identify the universe, and this is a method of doing that.

Hopefully, if the system gets put into place and works correctly, we're going to get a lot better information, from the standpoint of what's going on out there with snapper grouper and whatever the thirteen species are, or whatever we choose, but there really is a need to do this, because, right now, we extrapolate, and Chris and I were talking about this. Right now, we extrapolate intercepts and that sort of thing, and, at times, we get crazy numbers, and so it would be somewhat of a hedge

against that, and it's not going to do away with it completely, I don't think, but it will help. It will help a lot, and so I would urge the council to go forward with this sort of plan that we have here, and I'm not sure -- I will look to Jessica and Spud as to what's the best vehicle to go forward with it, but I do think we need to go forward with it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The last meeting, I think I had requested some presentations for this meeting from like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and some other agencies that have administered different types of permits, and I see that you guys met last year, and you had some presentations. If you think we need some, I want to make sure that maybe we can get some in June, because we want to make sure we do this right, but I think I even asked FWC to come do a presentation at this meeting, and I can't remember, but it seems like we all just want to get onboard with what you've already done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to John.

MR. HADLEY: I remember that conversation, and the way it was captured in the committee report was that that information would be provided ahead of time, and I know there was some discussion of whether to have it at the council meeting or ahead of time, and I will bring that up, very quickly.

MR. CONKLIN: No, I do remember, and I think I had requested maybe a special seminar one day or something, and like not in the meeting, but like on a webinar.

MR. HADLEY: Yes, and what we have is just a very brief -- It's a synopsis of the presentations, and I believe this is the right attachment, that were given to the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup. This is, obviously, a very summary form of that, and all of those presentations are actually on the -- They are on the website, and so that's what we were able to capture, at least before this meeting, and I think, moving forward, if there's a specific -- If the idea is to have it in a specific seminar, or we need to carve out a chunk of time at a council meeting, we can do that, but this is what we have so far that addresses that request in December.

MR. CONKLIN: This is good, and, I mean, I saw those presentations in the workgroup, a year ago or whatever, but that's good, and I really -- I feel like we had the migratory bird presentation here, maybe like ten years ago or something, but we have new faces in here, but, if these states think they have enough to do it, and, I mean, they're kind of pros at this stuff, and maybe we don't need to do it, but --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, and so I will look to Spud, before we go really far down this path, and, I mean, this is kind of why this workgroup was established, because we felt like there was all this very specific information, like you're bringing up, like the migratory bird permit and others, and task that workgroup with looking at all that very specific information, including the Florida State Reef Fish Survey, the HMS permits, other things, and so the workgroup did all that, and they debated it, and they are bringing back this recommendation.

That's not to say that we couldn't also look at some of these things, but they kind of went down that path and looked at the pros and cons of all these different avenues and talked about the hurdles in putting a system similar to the Florida State Reef Fish Survey in place for the other states, what

it would take to do that, pros and cons of charging versus not charging, all the things, and so I guess I would look to Spud.

I mean, I feel like the workgroup considered all of that, in multiple meetings, and had all the background information that you're talking about, and then come to the recommendation that you heard discussed today, which I think is really that this amendment, and I think it's 46, be brought back to the council, resurrected, and restarted, which we're going to get into kind of after we wrap up this discussion about the workgroup. Spud, do you want to add anything?

MR. WOODWARD: I mean, that's a good summary of what we've done, and we've looked at lots of different ways, but we're at the point where the workgroup's decision was we need to have something in place to identify that universe of fishermen, and it will be up to the council, through Amendment 46, to debate and deliberate the various approaches to that, cost or no cost or vessel or individual and so forth and so on, and figure out what is the best way to accomplish that, while also making sure that the surveys necessary to produce the result we want happen, because that's the key part of this. I can give you a set of car keys, but, if you don't have a car, it don't do you much good, and vice versa. Car keys and a car work together, and so we've got to have all of that together to make it work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and I see thumbs-up. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Through this working group, they said there needs to be some reporting of some type to identify the universe, and you spoke about the Florida reef fish survey, which I know nothing about, and I look at the Mid-Atlantic, and I have experience with the recreational tilefish reporting, electronic reporting, that's in place, and you can go to the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and look under electronic reporting, and up comes the recreational tilefish reporting app and electronic reporting.

It's done by a federal agency, GARFO. To my understanding, it's relatively cheap, and we went through a lot of hurdles and devil's advocates and some bumps and stuff like that to do this, and so I think it would be really interesting that you take a couple of the different surveys and you -- The method of reporting here, whether it's Florida or this one here, and say why this wouldn't work, and look at that part of it there, because one thing this one does is it does give you a universe of fishers, even though we haven't got the compliance part of reporting, but it does give you a number, and I think we're up to 900 or something, where we have 900 permits, and it's all done online by an app.

Instead of reinventing the wheel, look at something like this, or the Florida one, and say why doesn't it work, and then check it off and get rid of it and go on down, but, I mean, it's obvious that there's a need for this, and I think that looking at either one and saying why it wouldn't work would be a great start.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I felt like the workgroup did that, and they looked at all of those, but I think that, when we dive into the amendment that John is going to take us into, we can do that as part of the amendment, is kind of rehash that and answer those questions all over again, if that helps. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: All right, and so my understanding is the workgroup wasn't tasked with finding which one to do, and they were tasked with, hey, we need this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: No, the workgroup, and, Spud, maybe these are questions for you, since you're the chair of the workgroup, but, to me, the workgroup kind of honed-in on a federal permit, specifically, as opposed to a state-based permit, and so, Spud, do you want to add onto that?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, that's correct, and what we need to decide is vessel, individual, cost, no cost, those kinds of things, because you deal with undersubscription, or, like you talk about, lack of compliance, and there's also oversubscription issues, and there's lots of things, from a survey methodology, that you can prevent, or at least mitigate, by the way you go forth and do it, and so those are the things that we need to decide, obviously with the input of the service, during the deliberations for this amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I'm going to ask John to dive into the amendment and start talking about that, and I think that some of these pieces are in there, but, if we have more questions, or we need more information, we can do that. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think this will be good, in terms of going through the amendment, and so another thought I've had is, when we've made survey design changes, we don't come to the councils and say, hey, what's your input, and how are we going to make those, and we've just gone forward, as the service, and implemented them.

I am not thinking that's the best to do here, right, but you could go to our agency and ask -- Say we want to implement a permit program, and here are some of the constructs that we would like you to consider, and the reason that I suggest potentially that as an option, or avenue, is this is much bigger than the South Atlantic, right, and I've got to deal with the Gulf of Mexico, and I've got to deal with the South Atlantic, and Dewey has huge recreational fisheries in the Mid-Atlantic and New England, and so, to me, it begs for a more universal approach, but tailoring it, where we need to, to the design and needs of the region. That's food for thought, in terms of kind of how we approach this and tackle this, and I will talk to our Science and Technology team about that very idea, of maybe how they could assist and provide input on this as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I think the workgroup wants this to be outcome driven, or what do we want the outcome to be, and then let's design it back to how best to accomplish that outcome, and I think the outcome is, obviously, more precise and accurate and timely estimates of catch and effort in the private recreational snapper grouper fishery, and so what does it take us to get to that, and how do we use existing surveys, like MRIP, to accomplish that, and where do we need to design specific things to address specific components of the fishery? I mean, it's not going to be an overnight thing, and, I mean, it's going to take a while to get to the place I think we all want to be.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and so I think we're on the same page, and I just don't want it to be outcome driven with this specialized approach in the South Atlantic that may or may not be applicable to the Gulf or may not be applicable to the Mid-Atlantic. The challenge, or issue, is still the same in all those areas, but you're just dealing with different species and different fisheries, but it's how do we quantify effort and get that really more precise, accurate estimates of fishing effort.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to turn it over to John.

MR. HADLEY: All right. Thank you. Just to kind of orient everyone, you do have the recommendations from the workgroup, but, just to kind of bring everybody up to speed on why this amendment has a number and where we left off, this is something that has been -- It was developed in the first half of 2018 by the council, and so there's a little bit of a skeleton document framework there for you, but, overall, we're really trying -- This is really the first reboot, if you will, that's coming back to the council for discussion.

The idea is really to kind of discuss some of those overarching topics that Spud alluded to, whether or not -- Do you want to pursue a private recreational permit, yes or no? Do you want to look at options on the individual vessel basis, that sort of thing, and so that's where we're coming from right now, sort of the high-level discussion and sort of which way to focus efforts on this amendment, with the idea that, as it's developed, more detailed information will come back to you during discussion of the amendment, but, overall, as a reminder, this amendment -- Just to bring everyone up to speed, it was actually approved for scoping in June of 2018, but then, later on, due to the council's workplan and need to obtain additional information, this amendment was not scoped, and so that was kind of the -- It was put on pause until then, and then, obviously, background information was gathered, and additional effort, such as the MyFishCount mobile app were developed. There's been a lot going on in the background since then, and so that's kind of where we left off.

Looking at some of the items that the workgroup looked at, the summary table that I brought up just briefly, which it's in your late materials, and it's Attachment 3b, and that goes over some of the different examples that are actually in place that were reviewed, and we can certainly come back to those in greater detail at a later time, but that's sort of the information that the Private Recreational Workgroup has been working on.

Really, the objectives for this meeting is to look at the timing, have a brief discussion on what you like the outcome of this amendment to be, and the idea there is, there again, just kind of help frame which actions you may take, and that's also beneficial for the IPT, in developing a purpose and need statement, and then look at the range of options to potentially develop and provide guidance on whether or not the ad hoc advisory panel that Spud mentioned should be developed, and then, depending on how that discussion goes, the amendment could be scoped, or there is certainly no rush on that. That decision could be pushed back to a different meeting.

Overall, looking at the timing of this amendment, the timing is really flexible at this point, and it depends on what is going to be in the amendment, and, how it's stated in the council's workplan now, the idea is to have a final amendment ready for the council's approval in June of 2023, and so likely working through each meeting between then and now.

With that, I am going to take a pause, and there is an approved purpose and need statement in the amendment, from where it was left off in 2018. Since this is a reboot, the idea is to come back to the committee and get additional input and really get a little bit of discussion on what you would like the intended outcomes of this amendment to be, and some of the ideas for the purpose would be to potentially look at improving effort and catch estimates for the private recreational component, do you want to look at all species initially, or do you want to focus on rare-event species, that sort of information, and what you hope to get out of that, and then implement the recommendations from the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup.

Ideas for the need, presumably the idea is that recreational data is not meeting the council's need for management at this point, and so the need is to improve the quality of the data, and you're looking to improve precision, quantity, timeliness, other factors, and so, with that, I will turn it over for a discussion on that, briefly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, John. Any discussion on the purpose and need here? John.

MR. HADLEY: I guess, if I could, just for discussion purposes, the idea here is just a little bit of discussion on what do you hope the outcomes of this amendment will be, and presumably it sounds like improving recreational data estimates would be the intended outcome of that, and we can come back to this as well, if it's better to jump into the options at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am giving people a moment, but we might need to jump into some options and then come back to this. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I guess my thought is we -- In the ideas for the purpose, we would need to incorporate those recommendations from the working group, the develop a federal permit, develop a data collection program, and create a technical advisory panel. I mean, that group did a lot of work, and it just seems like that should be incorporated here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John is taking some notes. We're going to move on to options.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and so, right now, this amendment is really split into two major actions, and the first action is looking at whether -- It's essentially establishing a private recreational permit for the snapper grouper FMP, and so, overall, and I won't go into too many details of some of the background information here, but, really, some of the major decisions are whether or not to -- How you would like to develop this action, specifically looking at do you want a permit or not, and presumably, if you do, how you would like to examine that, and so, as Spud alluded to, some of the major decision points there are whether or not -- If you do want the permit, if you want it to be on a vessel level or potentially on an individual level.

There is a list of pros and cons in the document, looking at permitting, and, just briefly, some of the pros is that it could improve -- It would have the potential to improve recreational effort estimates in the snapper grouper fishery, and this is including catches as well as discards, or released fish, and look at providing a defined group of recreational anglers to conduct outreach, catch and effort surveys, socioeconomic surveys, that sort of information, and so, really, identifying the universe is the idea there. Some of the cons would be really additional regulatory burden on fishermen, and potentially NMFS or state agencies, as well as funding.

Looking at the permit type, whether it's a vessel or individual, a vessel would cover -- In theory, it would be a single permit that would cover all anglers onboard a vessel, and fewer permits would need to be issued, since you're only looking at vessels and not at individuals, and this really tracks well with other federal efforts in the South Atlantic. Typically, the permits are issued to vessels, rather than individuals, and so that would pair somewhat better with the current system.

Looking at some of the cons, there again, there would be the increased regulatory burden, and you wouldn't have, really, the resolution of data, or the resolution as far as exactly how many fishermen would be permitted to fish in federal waters for snapper grouper species.

On the individual level, you look at improved resolution compared to a vessel permit, and so a single permit would be required for each individual, and this could potentially lead to a more targeted survey effort. Some of the cons is that it's difficult to determine if anglers are fishing offshore if there is a reporting requirement that goes along with this, and, obviously, increased regulatory burden on anglers and increased administrative burden on the agency.

Really, we're looking for a little discussion here, providing guidance on the range of options to develop. For example, does the committee want to consider a recreational permit for vessels only, anglers only, or maybe anglers and vessels, and what species this permit potentially covers, at least initially, and do you want to look at the whole snapper grouper complex, or do you want to potentially narrow it down, to look at say deepwater species, shallow-water groupers, or maybe make it match up with the Florida reef fish survey species, or which are listed there, and so we're looking essentially for a little bit of guidance on how the committee would like to see this, the options further developed, when you see this again in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, John. Mel, did you have a question?

MR. BELL: A general question. Just so I'm clear, and I might have misunderstood, and Andy is not here. Well, sorry. It was something Andy said. Well, I can ask the question anyway, but so Option 1 is establish a private recreational snapper grouper permit to fish for or harvest or possess snapper grouper species in the South Atlantic region, and so the focus, our focus, and we're the South Atlantic Council, and the focus is the South Atlantic region, and this is all about the South Atlantic region.

I thought -- I know SERO has responsibility for the Gulf and the Caribbean, and I am going -- I am flashing back to the for-hire amendment, the for-hire reporting amendment, where we started out, and our focus was all about the South Atlantic, and that expanded into other areas, and so I thought that Andy said something about needing to figure out how this would play in other regions as well, and maybe I didn't hear that correctly, but that's kind of how the whole for-hire reporting amendment ended up in implementation, and so am I missing something, or can we simply focus on the South Atlantic?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I am missing it too, and Andy isn't here, and so I can't answer your question, because that definitely caught my ear as well, and I think we should ask him exactly what he means when he comes back, and perhaps he's thinking that this would -- The other councils might want to do this as well, and I'm not entirely sure, but your purview is just the South Atlantic region, and I can answer that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I was just going to say, and I was taking notes, and he said that it begs for a universal approach, and so I took that as I guess, when you're designing this, to think about it universally, and that's how I took what he said.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think that's one of the things that the workgroup kind of struggled with, is you have sort of these very specific species-based, or activity-based, permits, and you've got the large pelagic survey, and you've got the HMS survey, and now you've got the Mid-Atlantic tilefish, and I think maybe what he is speaking to is how can we have more uniformity and maybe harmonize these things, so that we don't have this more piecemeal approach to doing it, and I think, in a perfect world, we would all like to see that.

We would like to see uniformity across the way -- I mean, when the National Saltwater Angler Registry was created, it was applied universally, and then states were allowed for their anglers to be exempted if they met the exemption criteria. I think maybe that's what he's getting at, is that, if at all possible, when we develop survey methodologies, the more universal they are in their application, the better off we are, but that's my interpretation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Spud, when you talk about survey, are you using that interchangeably sometimes with permits?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and, I mean, the permit is a means to an end, and, basically, it's a means to a survey, and then it's a matter of how you use that permit as a basis for a survey, and that's where it becomes very important about vessel versus individual, and, again, what is your outcome, and what are you trying to get, and then the architecture always needs to be -- It needs to be reverse-designed back to what you want that outcome to be, and is there a way to use a permit to improve MRIP, or are we simply not going to be able to use the MRIP methodology adequately, even with a permit, and so you have to develop something specialized as an adjunct to MRIP, possibly.

Of course, every time you do that, that's more cost and more labor and all, but, again, is that necessary, and that's where having a group of people who continues to work on this and evolve it is necessary, and, I mean, it never really stops, and you continue to evolve the survey methodologies.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip and then Chester.

DR. COLLIER: I just wanted to point out that concentrate on the South Atlantic. There is a group that's working on more of a national-scale, and MAFAC has an electronic reporting taskforce that is going to be having a report come out in May, and so maybe that can be provided to you guys for your June meeting, and I think that's going to provide some insight on how they recommend more of a national-scale and how to implement something like this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Jessica. I am kind of torn, because I'm used to the system in Florida, but I can see how we're going to implement this from North Carolina to Florida, and that may not be the best, and I don't want us to be in conflict with Florida, because, as an example, I take a look, right now, at the, quote, difference between the deepwater species and the shallow-water groupers, et cetera, but then I look at the fish that Florida survey species covers, and those are the ones that we're really, really, really concerned with, and so it would be, John, my preference that we -- This will be contrary to Florida, but, if we're going to be using this, and then, in conjunction, have some sort of self-reporting system put in place, I think you do better to go with a per-vessel.

Then, from the standpoint of what species will it cover, I think, once you are in federal waters, and you are fishing off the bottom, or on the bottom, you need to have this permit, and, again, that's going to be a little different than Florida, and I hate to have to go through, or Florida have to go through, and try to harmonize with what we do, but it just seems to me that that would be the best way to go.

From the standpoint of whether this should be free or not, it should be. You should have your saltwater license from the state, and then this is just an -- "Endorsement" might even be a better word to us, because that's essentially what Florida does, and, I mean, you don't have to pay anything, and you go on a computer and hit three buttons, and boom. You get your number and you're done, and it's very easy. I think there's a pretty high compliance rate too, I think. Anyway, that's my two-cents, and I will be quiet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will just point out that the working group, or technical assistance group, that the workgroup was suggesting be formed is because, that way, you could figure out how to mesh this new system with the Florida system, how those two would work together. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: In looking at how they divided the fish up, deepwater species only, and then it has the Florida reef survey, and I think that the permit should cover all of those, and you could divide it up in the permit description, the same way they have it here, but I don't think we should choose between deepwater or shallow-water groupers, and I think the permit should cover everything that is listed here, and I think we need to add scamp, and there might be one or two others that got missed, but I think everything that's listed here should be covered by the permit and reported on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I agree with Chester that it should cover -- If you possess snapper grouper, then you need to possess this endorsement, or permit, or whatever, and the -- As far as the vessel versus the anglers, I always envision anglers, but the commercial fishing boats have multiple anglers, and the permits on the vessel, but we're talking a different animal here, and I would probably keep it to the individual angler level.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So it sounds like at least wanting an analysis of both the vessel and individual here. Okay. We've captured that. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Then, as far as worrying about what to put in a survey or something, you would have all that information for all the species, and, if there was a data need, we would query -- Go back and use that data, or query the anglers a year later, or whatever, and give them a survey. Like I went duck hunting in Saskatchewan in October, and it was the first time that I ever went, and I bought a license, and so I got an email in December, at the end of the year, to call them up and give them a report, and so I did, and now I can get my license again next year and do it again. It's very easy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're making sure that we get some of these questions answered. All right. That answered those couple of questions, and I am going to turn it back to John to go into some of the other questions that we need to answer.

MR. HADLEY: All right. I appreciate that, and I think that, essentially, that sets your bookends, and so that's what we're looking to do here, and what the IPT should take and move forward with, and so that covers that pretty well, and so the next step would essentially be what is Action 2, currently, in the amendment, but it would be whether or not to look at implementing a reporting requirement for private recreational vessels, and so it sounds like the committee is interested in pursuing developing a private recreational permit, and do you want a reporting requirement to go with that, which, obviously, there are benefits to reporting requirements.

However, through the recreational workgroup discussion, a permit itself can be used to help calibrate some of the existing surveys, and so the idea here is whether or not to -- There again, it's kind of setting the bookends of the options that you initially want to examine, and do you want to look into potentially examining a reporting requirement?

It is noted that there are electronic reporting requirements for headboats and charter vessels operating in the snapper grouper fishery, and this reporting requirement could help, essentially, with having high-resolution data, and, depending on how much it's used, it could certainly supplement the information that is currently being gathered.

One example, just putting this out there, is an example from the private recreational tilefish permit that requires an electronic vessel trip report within twenty-four hours of returning to port for all trips that either target or retain golden or blueline tilefish, and so that's sort of a tangible example there, but I will turn it back over to the committee, and, there again, do you want to examine a reporting requirement to go along with this private recreational permit?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I think the thing with the reporting requirement is that, if you were dealing with -- Let's say it was only just a couple of deepwater species, or deepwater species or something, you would have a much smaller group of folks, but, if we're talking about a mandatory reporting requirement for over a million people, or something like that, that gets rather cumbersome, and so perhaps it's more -- That you go to more of the survey. Now, you could -- Like, with some programs, you could be selected to report or something, but I can't see a reporting requirement for the full spectrum of snapper grouper fishermen, and that would just be enormous, and a data nightmare, I would think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The only way a recreational fisherman gets out to catch these species is by a vessel, and so I would tie to a vessel. Therefore, you have less people reporting, versus the million anglers, and I don't think there's a million boats that would be doing it, and that's just my assumption, and so you tie it to the vessel, and then you put the twenty-four-hour reporting process or something, forty-eight hours, and people won't tend to forget, and it will take time to get compliance up, and different things like that, but, I mean, you start off with -- It took the Mid-Atlantic, particularly, with what was done, it took a year-and-a-half from the council's decision and sending it to GARFO before it was achieved, because it took time to work stuff out and go through the things, but I think you would tie it to the vessel, because that's the only access that you're going to have to go catch these fish, and, therefore, I just think it makes sense to do that, and I would also do the reporting timeline of whatever, twenty-four or forty-eight hours, or something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me first say that we have the analyzing by vessel and by individual as something that will be analyzed in the document. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Dewey, I would point out to you that they're catching red snapper in -- What's the river in Jacksonville? The St. Johns River. They're catching them there, and you don't have to have a vessel, and they're so thick. I am just teasing you. I think there's a -- Phasing this thing in I think would be a pretty good idea, because you're going to be taking a pretty big chunk of new responsibilities, and we might want to phase it in and let people get used to getting their permits, whether it's by vessel or individually, and then phase-in -- You're still going to be -- With that, you're going to be reducing, or you're going to be at least defining your universe, and the people that are being called up on the phone are the people who have pulled this permit, as opposed to calling somebody in Omaha or wherever.

There is a lot of benefit to just the permit, but, ideally, we need to get -- I think we should get to the point where the -- You have some people who are selected to report, and I'm sensitive to the fact that there's a lot of recreational fishermen out there that are bottom fishing, but you select people, and, again, you've got a universe to select from, to enter into, or to be the ones that have the obligation to report, and then, when you extrapolate that out, you're not extrapolating across the entire recreational fishery, and you're extrapolating across the, quote, known universe, and so, anyway, I think that you should phase, but I think that the ultimate goal needs to be to go to some sort of self-reporting by selection type of system.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that brings me to a question for John. That first bullet, that says don't consider a reporting requirement, does that mean that, even if they are called upon to fill out a survey, that they don't have to report, and I guess I'm just confused. Can you still ask them questions, or do you have to say we do have a reporting requirement, if selected to report, and do you see what I mean?

MR. HADLEY: That is something that I think maybe we can come back to the IPT and discuss that, but, I guess, the way this was thought of is, from a reporting perspective, at least now, is, is there going to be a mandatory reporting requirement that goes along with this permit, and the idea is something like MyFishCount or something like that, where every trip is reported, sort of census-level data.

If you're thinking of specific sampling, say if it's a subset through MRIP, I think -- I don't know, and I would have to further -- That's something I would like to go to the IPT about, to see if that's something that can be handled within the existing regulations, or is that something that would need to be addressed through this amendment, specifically.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I'm asking -- It seems like you would have to answer the census versus survey question first and then figure out, because it sounds like you're saying reporting equals census, and some folks are saying reporting equals survey, and so I guess, yes, the IPT could help us with that. All right. Chris and then Carolyn. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I was just thinking, for wording, that it's back to our observer program, right, and, I mean, we have -- Folks with the shrimp permits, we don't have observers in place, but, if you are asked to take one, they're required to take one, and so, I mean, it seems like we could do

similar language. If you have the permit, and you are called, that you're required to report your information, and I don't know if that stands, but it seems like it's a precedent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and it looks like John captured some of that for the IPT. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: On some of my licenses, if I've been fishing out of state, or hunting or something like that, then I can't renew my license, and like I might not get a survey in the mail, and I might not get a call, but, when I go back to get it again, I have to take the survey before I can get through to get -- It's sensitive to whatever data somebody decides they're looking for that year.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and that's the way that it works in every state, and it's a pretty simply survey, and it takes you forty-five seconds, but you have to complete that survey and answer each question before you're eligible to renew that, and so I think it really depends on giving yourself the flexibility to develop the best survey that you can, balancing costs and burden on the people and everybody else, to make sure that you can get the most information you can, and, like Mel said though, I think, if you put mandatory reporting in there, it's going to spook people pretty bad, not to mention the fact that Andy will probably run down the hallway and completely leave us, because, I mean, you would be talking about a massive management and administrative burden there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. It does strike me that it seems like we're trying to get pretty prescriptive here, and there's a lot of people that have thought about this an awful lot, and so you might just list main points that you want folks to consider, things like whether you look at vessel versus an angler, and there's a lot of people that have looked into that. Obviously, with anglers, you have the temptation to provide exemptions, and, for instance, older than age-sixty-two, you don't have to get a license, and then you have to find a way to adjust for that, and that gets tricky, and so there's lots of stuff that a lot of people have thought about for a long time.

I wouldn't be afraid of the big data though, and we are in the era of big data, and many of us are putting mechanisms in place to handle much bigger data streams than something like that, and so I wouldn't shy away from it because you think it's not doable. We're in the era where it is doable, but it's just a question of how meaningful that information would be.

I think, as many of you probably are aware, enthusiasm for self-reporting starts to wane after a while, and you get a lot of people that start out with, yes, I'll report all my catch, and then, after a few times, all of a sudden, you see a lot of zeroes popping up, but, again, there's been a lot of people that have thought about that, and I think you could just keep this pretty high-level.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to look to the last couple of questions, I think, in this document.

MR. HADLEY: All right, and I think that's very good material for the IPT to kind of dig into and come back to you with additional information in June. Some of the other topics are the sort of ad hoc advisory panel that was mentioned as a recommendation from the Private Recreational Reporting Workgroup, and is that something that you would like to convene? If so, we would

work on populating that workgroup, and it would come back to you in June, during SSC and AP Selection.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would look to Spud. I mean, this is something that the workgroup talked about, and I think it would be helpful, because you could have state folks, like the folks from Florida, on there, and they can't be on the IPT.

MR. WOODWARD: Right, and I would strongly recommend that we include that and have as diverse membership as we can, to make sure that -- Because, if you look back at the goal of the workgroup, it has state and federal coordinated in there, and that's the way this is going to work, and we need to make sure that we facilitate that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and John is getting some information on there. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was wondering about from SERO's point of view on this, and what do they need? What does the Science Center need? We're hearing what we're afraid of from what mandatory reporting could be, for different things, but, at the end of the day, the data is needed to do stock assessments, and it's also to give equal accounting, or accountability, of the use of the resource, similar to the for-hire and commercial, and so what are some of the parameters, from SERO and the Science Center, that said we need 1 through 5, or we need 1 through 10, and we really need that to be able to do something, to put a track record, because what I see that could be a possibility is some of the guidance here for somebody that might be timid to say what we need, because they might upset the apple cart of the public, and it might be millions of comments or something, and I am just asking, and where does the guidance from SERO on this of what is needed for data collection purposes?

We've been going around and around this for a long time, and it seems like we're finally gaining traction that, hey, we're finally going to do something on what's needed, and I'm just curious of what's the response from SERO or GARFO on what is needed to actually do some quantity that has been lacking in some of our stock assessments that would help, particularly to mandatory reporting in this, and what happens with mandatory reporting is you will get the naysayers that start out, and then finally you get compliance, after three or four years, and it increases, and I've seen it in numerous things, and, at the end of the day, you see what your universe of fishers are, and hopefully what's catching, and it catches on early, and people say, hey, you've got to report. That's the way it works, but I would like to hear like how is the Science Center or SERO going to say, hey, what do we need.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Good question. Obviously, what we need is accurate statistics, accurate and precise, and so there is more than one way to do that, and so I'm not going to be prescriptive here about exactly how you would accomplish it, but, if you had mandatory reporting, and it was a census, as long as you could ensure the accuracy of that reporting, then you can't do better than that, right, and, I mean, if you actually had a census, and you knew everything that was caught, and the trick is, with mandatory reporting, making sure that the reporting is accurate, and so what mechanisms are you going to do it.

I am not suggesting this, but, for instance, if you had some level of enforcement that people had to report before they landed it, then, obviously, there is a mechanism there to ensure that the

information is recorded accurately, because, if it's inaccurate at the time of landing, and they're intercepted, then there are consequences, and that would be a really big lift, but that is a way to do it, and, like I said, there may be other ways that we can do it, but the key point is, if you had mandatory reporting, and it was 100 percent, and you can ensure the accuracy, or at least reasonable accuracy, you can't do better, and so, as close as you get to that, the better, but, obviously, discards has been a huge issue, and it's all still self-reported information, and even the landings -- You guys know all the issues there, and so more intercepts and better effort estimates, and you will get better statistics.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Certainly I won't be prescriptive either, in terms of what we need, but, you know, we're well aware of, obviously, the challenges of recreational data collection and some of the uncertainty and the variable statistics, and so the hope is, with precision and accuracy, and maybe even timeliness, that we can remove some of that variability in the system to help with management as well, and use it, obviously, for better management approaches, responsiveness to catch limits and accountability measures, and so there's a lot of, obviously, I think, ways you can use the data, once it's ready for use.

The concern I have is that there's a ramp-up period, as you pointed out, and it's going to take time, and you then have to calibrate to the prior data series, and then the expense, which I mentioned earlier, and so, in terms of your question of what do I need, I need administrative staff and funding in order to support this, right, and so figuring that out, to me, is kind of the top question, regardless of how we ultimately implement and use it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think this is a good segue into the fact that staff is going to come back with this list of people to be on this advisory panel that we're directing them to go do that, and they would help us figure these things out, and so I feel like we've given guidance to staff on that, and there's one more question in the document about do we want to scope this, and I'm going to just go out on a limb here and say I don't think this is ready to be scoped.

We definitely need to see this, and I don't know what we're scoping either, and the public has already told us that we need a recreational permit for these species, and so we already know that, and I think that we need more detailed information before we go out to scoping. Anything else on this document, before we conclude for today? Yes, ma'am, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I missed this somewhere, and so is this -- What you're going over today, is this a scoping paper? What is this, and then what will be the next version of this that you will see, and I'm asking because we've had similar discussions, long, long ago, in the Gulf about a permit, a federal permit, and I will probably add this to Other Business during Full Council in the Gulf, because I think you pose a good question, and maybe it was Dewey that was posed it, as far as, well, if you do go down this route, would you want to look at something -- Is there some utility in having something universal that could be applied in the Gulf as well, and maybe there is and maybe there isn't, but I think it's obviously a conversation that we would like to have in the Gulf, since you're going down this path, and so could you kind of cue me up on what's coming next, as far as an actual amendment or document in front of you?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to let John answer that for us.

MR. HADLEY: Sure, and I think what will come back in June is -- Well, let me take a step back. The idea here was just kind of to reboot the conversation, and we don't have enough information, and really time, at this meeting, to really get to the details of it, but what will come back in June will be a more developed options paper, and so it looks at -- Now that the guidance is to look at an individual permit, or sorry, a private recreational permit, that could be applied to vessels or individuals, that's sort of starting to flesh out some of the options that may be pursued.

Then additional information on the reporting side, and so additional -- By that, I mean can we have additional information on if we are going to look at census-level data, some of the details on that, as well as some additional specifics on how a permit could be implemented into existing sample frameworks, to help improve some of the precision of recreational estimates, and so the idea there would be some sort of -- How can it be used to help calibrate say the MRIP effort, rather than implementing a separate reporting requirement, and I'm just using this as an example, but an electronic app, or something along those lines.

MS. BOSARGE: If I, at the April council meeting for the Gulf, if I asked that, possibly at our June council meeting, if we could have a short presentation from the South Atlantic Council staff on their Snapper Grouper Amendment 46, that might be doable for you all? Okay. Thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on this topic before we wrap up today? All right. Thanks, everybody. I am going to turn it back to our Chair to wrap us up.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Jessica. We're right on schedule, and so, those of you who are coming to dinner, it's just down the road, and we have the place at 6:00, and so you can walk, or you can ride in your car, and it will take a couple of minutes, and it's Tortuga Jacks, and so we'll see you there, and we'll be back in the morning, and we will pick up, per the schedule, at 8:30. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 8, 2022.)

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MARCH 9, 2022

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Westin Hotel, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Wednesday, March 9, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: First up this morning is the Wreckfish ITQ Modernization, which is Snapper Grouper Amendment 48, and I'm going to turn it over to Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Thanks, Jessica. Good morning, everyone. We're going to start you out with wreckfish, and, just to provide a brief background, and I know we're only seeing this every other council meeting, and so, to refresh your memory, this amendment is a direct response to the wreckfish ITQ program review that was completed back in 2019, and, overall, it found that the program has been relatively successful in achieving its stated objectives, but there is still room

for improvement, particularly with respect to modernizing the fishery and addressing some new issues, like needing to implement a cost recovery program, and so that's what this amendment intends to do.

In addition to addressing wreckfish, this amendment is going to formally incorporate the updated Snapper Grouper FMP goals and objectives, and I won't go over each of these in detail, other than to say that these are the goals and objectives that were developed through the snapper grouper visioning process, and they have been reviewed by this council, as well as by the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel, and approved, and they will simply be included here so they can be formally adopted into the FMP.

Additionally, the wreckfish ITQ program has separate goals and objectives, and these are listed here, and these were reviewed back at the December 2020 meeting, and, ultimately, the council determined that there were really no changes needed to these goals and objectives, because the modifications to the program are more about modernizing existing symptoms and not substantial modifications to the actual program itself.

These were also reviewed by the wreckfish shareholders, back in October of 2020, and they also agreed that these goals and objectives were still consistent with what they would like to see in the fishery, and so there are eight actions, including four sub-actions, that we'll be going over today, and the goal for this meeting is just to have you guys review the language that's used in the proposed actions and alternatives and make sure you're comfortable with it.

After that, staff is going to go through and conduct analysis on all of those actions and alternatives, and we would be bringing you back a draft amendment, where you would be able to select preferred alternatives and approve for public hearings in September of 2022, and, again, this amendment is scheduled to come to the council at every other meeting, and so you wouldn't see it again until September of 2022. With that, I will move to the purpose and need, but, first, I will make sure that no one has any questions about the general timeline of this amendment and the goals for this meeting today.

All right, and so then we'll go right into the purpose and need, and so the purpose of this amendment 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, 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 go ahead and pause here and see if anyone has any modifications they would like to see to the purpose and need statement.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any hands, and I'm going to assume that we're good with the purpose and need. All right, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Let's dive right into the meat of the amendment then. Action 1 would look at revising sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for wreckfish, and this is based on a recommendation that came from the Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel. There's been some concern that the recreational allocation for wreckfish may be too high. It's intended to be sort of

a bycatch fishery for the recreational sector and not a targeted one, and so a lower allocation may be more appropriate.

We've got four alternatives here, and the no action alternative would retain the current allocations as 95 percent commercial and 5 percent recreational. Alternative 2 would modify that to 98 percent commercial and 2 percent recreational. Alternative 3 would be 99 percent commercial and 1 percent recreational, and then Alternative 4 would be 99.5 percent commercial and 0.5 percent recreational. You can see the actual poundage that that would equate to in Table 1.

One of the reasons that this is being considered, in addition to a recommendation from the wreckfish shareholders, is that wreckfish are rarely reported through MRIP. In fact, there were -- As of 2019, there were no records of recreational wreckfish landings, except for one intercept in 2012. That being said, there is evidence, on social media, that recreational fishermen do occasionally land wreckfish.

Prior to the Comprehensive ACL Amendment that was implemented back in 2012, the commercial sector was allocated 100 percent of the available catch, and the rationale for establishing that 5 percent recreational allocation was just that I mentioned, that there was evidence being noted, by commercial and recreational fishermen, that they were seeing increased incidences of recreational harvest, and so, just as a note, the recreational season is July and August, with a bag limit of one fish per vessel per trip. With that, I will scroll back up to the action and alternatives and see if anyone has any concerns or modifications to this language.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. Just to restate, or clarify, what you said earlier, we're not picking preferreds today, but we're just making sure this is the correct range and that the wording is what we think is best.

MS. WIEGAND: Correct, and then staff will take this back, and we'll do analysis for you, and you will be able to pick preferreds in September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions? Are you good with the range on this? Kerry, do you have anything?

MS. MARHEFKA: I was just wondering if we wanted to keep that many and have them have to do -- Is the work that substantial? I mean, some of the differences are so small, but, if that makes it easy to analyze, no big deal. If it adds to your workload, then we can --

MS. WIEGAND: I would say it wouldn't add substantially to the workload, and it's a pretty consistent range to analyze. That being said, if you see alternatives here that you know, right off the bat, the council is not interested in even considering, we can remove those alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it's okay, but I would look at Kerry and on this side of the table. Okay. It looks like people think it's okay. All right. Back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Moving right along, Action 2 looks at implementing an electronic reporting system for the wreckfish ITQ program, and the purpose of this action is to sort of drastically modernize this fishery, and it could enhance the user experience, and it would increase timeliness of reported data, improve data quality, reduce costs and time for management, and provide additional flexibility and benefits to fishermen. If you guys will remember, these guys are

still using paper coupons for their fishery, which could clearly be updated to move towards an electronic system.

Alternative 1 retains the current paper-based system. Alternative 2 would implement an electronic system of reporting for the wreckfish ITQ program, to track ownership, transfers, distribution, transfers of quota pounds, and electronically record wreckfish landing information.

Here, you can see some of the differences between the paper-based coupons and the electronic program, and shares would now be done as a percentage, instead of these numbered certificates. Instead of mailed coupons that are in those 100 or 500-pound increments, they would have, you know, one-pound increments that are now stored online, and so on and so forth, and so one of the big things that I want to note here is that there are sort of two different aspects to electronic reporting.

There is the functional structure, and these are the components that sort of form the base online structure of an electronic system. These are the things that, if the council chose to change, would significantly impact the cost and time to put together an electronic reporting system for wreckfish, and this functional structure is already in place for a number of other ITQ and IFQ systems used by the agency. There are operational elements of an electronic reporting system, and these are sort of independent of the base structure, and these are things that are really left to the discretion of the council.

As we talked about before, in order to implement electronic reporting, there is going to have to be a pretty substantial overhaul of the way the CFR is written, because the CFR is heavily tied to that paper-based system, and so, fortunately, in order to allow these guys to report electronically, we just need this one action in the amendment that would allow it, but it will require a number of other changes, and so what you'll see in Table 2, which is a fairly lengthy table that I won't go over in detail, but I do want to explain to you how to read it, is the different operational elements that are within the council's discretion to change, what's in the current regulation, and then whether or not it's actively being addressed in this amendment.

For example, program eligibility, which we'll talk about a little bit when we get into the wreckfish permit, would be addressed through this amendment. Things like a hail-in and hail-out, and there is none right now, and it's not yet being addressed within this amendment. Things like the transferability rules for shares and coupons, there are current regulations. The actual requirements for transfer wouldn't be changed, but the language would be changed to allow transfers within the electronic system, and so there will be a lot of changes to the CFR language, and so on and so forth, through this table. With that, I will scroll back up to just the simple Alternative 1 and Alternative 2, to see if there are any questions or concerns.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Thank you, Jessica. We have been kind of dealing with this for a while, and I know that the shareholders really want to go to an electronic system, and we've heard, over and over again, that they hate these coupons, but my question is, in changing the reporting system over to electronic, I would like to get some sort of a feel for sort of the -- I guess the ratio or comparing the value of the fishery to the cost of switching over to electronic, because it may be that the cost of switching over to electronic is about equal to the value of the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and Christina is taking some notes on that. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Chester, have you been listening in to internal calls that we've been having within NMFS? That's certainly a point that I would make as well, and we want to look at, obviously, the overall cost of this program and amortize it over the lifespan of an electronic reporting system, with what the initial costs would be upfront, to determine how it compares to our current program. We do know, obviously, that we should be making a change, but the question is then kind of how big do you build out an electronic reporting system, and what does it look like, and what does that ultimately cost the agency and government and taxpayers, and so thanks for that point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Do we think that these are a good range of alternatives here? I am super excited to get rid of this paper-based program, and I think it's just -- Just imagine people tearing off these little coupons, and I just can't believe that that's where we are right now, and there's a stack. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Just out of curiosity, because I don't know, but what happens when that stack of coupons gets -- Are they read, because you fill them out like an SAT, like the bubble, and what happens? Do they go through a scanner down there, or does some person actually manually look at -- Does anyone know what happens to them?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Christina says that Jessica Stephen will know, and she'll bring it back at the next round, but, yes, I can't believe we're still in this paper system. Okay, but it sounds like we're good with the two different alternatives that we have under this action. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Jessica Stephen is listening online, and I guess has her hand up, if you can allow her to speak.

DR. STEPHEN: What happens with the coupon transfers is they're given to the Science Center, and they're hand-entered into an Excel spreadsheet, and so there is no scanning of it going on, and it's all manual entry.

MS. WIEGAND: Thanks, Jessica. The faces around the table are expressing condolences for everyone who is manually entering those into an Excel database.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just wow. Okay. All right, and so, as enjoyable as this is, to learn about these tear-off paper coupons, I am going to turn it back to Christina to go into the next action.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Next up, we have modifying the requirement to possess a commercial vessel permit for wreckfish, and so wreckfish fishermen are required to possess two permits, in addition to owning shares, and they have to have the SG unlimited permit, the wreckfish permit, which is open access, and then they have to have ITQ shares.

In going through the ITQ review, it was really found that this is kind of duplicative, and therefore unnecessarily burdensome, both for program participants and for the data managers. In addition to that, there is language in the CFR that requires NMFS to determine whether an entity is an employee or a contractor or an agent of the vessel owner, and this language is sort of really difficult to get around without requesting a lot more information than would typically be requested of a

permit applicant, and it requires a pretty significant administrative burden, both for applicants and for the agency.

We've got three alternatives under here. Alternative 1 would still require the wreckfish permit, in addition to the snapper grouper permit, to be issued and on the vessel, and, in order to obtain the commercial permit for wreckfish, the applicant would be required to be a wreckfish shareholder, and the shareholder must either be the vessel owner, the owner/operator, or the owner/operator must be an employee, contractor, or agent of the shareholder.

Alternative 2 would simply remove the problematic language of "employee, contractor, or agent of the shareholder". In order to get the wreckfish permit, the applicant would have to be a wreckfish shareholder, and the shareholder must then be the vessel owner. Alternative 3 would remove the requirement for that wreckfish permit entirely, but, in order to harvest or sell wreckfish, a commercial permit for snapper grouper, specifically the unlimited permit, would still have to be issued to the vessel, and the permit holder must be a wreckfish shareholder.

When we talked about this with the shareholders, there was some concern about sort of removal of this permit perhaps opening up harvest to wreckfish broadly, and what you need to remember, when thinking about these different alternatives, is that eligibility requirements can be built into the electronic system, and so this doesn't just open up the fishery to whomever, and it would still have the same sort of eligibility requirements as you do now, but it would just be built into the electronic system instead of tied to the permit. With that, I will go ahead and just scroll back up to these alternatives and see if there are any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Christina. This is one of the ones that was a little bit confusing to me, about does this open this up to all snapper grouper permit holders, or how does this work, and do we want to keep this permit, and I guess I would look over to maybe Kerry, to see if you think that this is enough alternatives here under this action.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm sorry, because I was talking to Leann about this, and one of the things that probably you all are aware of that is coming into my consciousness is sort of what can happen in these systems when a person that does not have a permit can buy the coupons, the whatever we're calling it over here, or some quota, for the purpose of holding onto it and then leasing it out and causing that, and so I just want to make sure that we are covering ourselves, and that's the system that I don't want to create here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and I agree. That's my concern as well. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I kind of share Kerry's concerns, because I have watched and seen what has happened in the Gulf with some of the snapper shares, and they, right now -- Kerry, they're at over 30 percent of those shares are held and owned by people who do not have a permit, and they bought those things for -- Investors came in and bought them, and they're going to be holding them until the Gulf Council -- Well, they're going to be holding them for a while, and so I see that as a real problem. In reading through these alternatives, I am kind of like Jessica, and I'm not really clear how that kind of situation is being discouraged in what we've got right here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, the alternatives specifically speak to you must be a shareholder, and have a permit as well, and so, in the Gulf, there was a de-linkage between holding shares and being a permit holder, right, and so that's the key, is having that snapper grouper permit. In this instance, we have it structured in the same way as the Gulf, with these kind of open accounts that people can obtain, and I do want to speak as well to Chester's point, and there is certainly a lot of debate about what has happened in the Gulf.

The 30 percent, yes, it's a large statistic, and it sounds like there's all these people that are essentially trading shares that don't fish in the fishery, but keep in mind that you can have multiple accounts, and there's a lot of people that hold shares in one account that are not associated with a permit, but then have accounts with permits elsewhere in the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Andy. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I am not real familiar with how all the permits work, but can you maybe tack on -- Is there a way to tack on say an endorsement to the snapper grouper permit that would be an endorsement for wreckfish? Is that a possible option, or -- That may be an Andy question too, but that's kind of how we handle some stuff with shellfish in North Carolina and the state license.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to let Christina answer that. We were debating that over here.

MS. WIEGAND: Creating an endorsement is certainly possible. It would be a little bit similar to the way the permit works -- I mean, sort of logically the way you think about it, and I'm not sure administratively how similar it is, but the wreckfish permit is open access, and anyone can get a wreckfish permit. You just can't really use it unless you have both the shares and the snapper grouper permit as well, and so it's thought that it's a bit duplicative, and I think -- I am sort of looking towards the agency, but, administratively, an endorsement would work similar to the way the wreckfish permit currently works, and so we could, but I think that's also sort of achieved by Alternative 2, which would just retain the permit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: We agree with that. Certainly, if you want to put constraints around the transferability of quota and shares, you could certainly limit the transfer of allocation, in particular, the poundage that comes along with shareholdings, to only shareholders, right, and so it could just be within the smaller universe of the wreckfish shareholders, and so it really depends on what your goals and objectives are and what you would accomplish there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A question, Christina. What we're doing here is we think that this does what we're after, but we're not 100 percent sure, and then, also, after this meeting, isn't there going to be a meeting with the wreckfish shareholders before we come back in June?

MS. WIEGAND: Yes, and that's the intent, is to have the wreckfish shareholders meet in between now and when you guys review this in September, and, at the end of this document, we can talk about anything that you would like to make sure the wreckfish shareholders discuss and cover at that meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: We're sitting over here saying let's leave it like it is, which was making me think let's just move it to Considered but Rejected altogether, but they did ask for it, but what hopefully we can talk about at that meeting is, now that we've had time to think about some of the unintended consequences and, once they consider that, to get their feel for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That sounds good, and so it sound like we will leave the alternatives under this action as-is for now, and then the shareholders will discuss it at their upcoming meeting.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, with that, I will move us on to Actions 4 and 5, and so Action 4 looks at modifying the commercial fishing year for wreckfish, and this is mostly an administrative action, and the calendar year was sort of to reduce administrative burden and the system downtime that's needed for the electronic reporting system. Most of the other programs that are within this ITQ system operate on a calendar year, with some downtime near the end of December.

Under Alternative 1, the commercial fishing year for wreckfish begins on April 15 and ends on April 14, with the spawning season closure from January 15 to April 15. Alternative 2 would simply modify the commercial fishing year to begin on January 1 and end on December 31.

There is also Action 5, which is sort of directly tied to Action 4, and it looks at modifying the spawning season closure to be better aligned with changes in the commercial fishing year that are proposed in Action 4, and, right now, the reason we have these two separated out is to allow the council to sort of choose different things for the fishing year, versus the spawning season closure. Right now, the spawning season closure is January 15 to April 15. Like I said, Alternative 2 would modify that to be January 1 to April 1, to better align with that calendar year fishing season.

Again, this is being proposed because the current electronic reporting systems require shutdown time from December 31 to January 1, to reset the system for the start of the year, and so this would just better align wreckfish to be set up within that electronic reporting system.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions? Yes, Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Christina, if the council chose Alternative 2 under Action 4, which would be to change the fishing year -- I see the second sentence is, from January 15 through April 15, no person may harvest or possess wreckfish, right, and then, if the council, under Action 5, chose Alternative 2, where they changed the spawning season closure to January 1 to April 1, you would have a conflicting provision there, where you've got opposing spawning season closure alternatives that have been preferred. I wonder if just want to, under Action 4, Alternative 2, if you wanted to drop the second sentence in that alternative.

MS. WIEGAND: You read my mind. When I was reviewing this document, I noticed that this morning, and I think this is probably a holdover from before we had separated them out into two actions, and so I would agree that it's probably wise to remove the spawning season language from Action 4.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and we don't need a motion to do that, and that's just direction to staff, and we have indicated that there on the screen. Anything else in Action 4 with these alternatives? All right. I don't see any more hands, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, moving on to Action 6, Action 6 would require all commercial vessels with the SG 1 permit that participate in the wreckfish portion of the snapper grouper fishery to be equipped with vessel monitoring systems, and this was suggested by wreckfish shareholders as perhaps a necessary evil, in order to eliminate the current offloading site and time requirements, which we'll talk about under Action 7.

When we talked to the Law Enforcement AP, they did note that VMS can be beneficial for enforcing these offloading requirements, as well as enforcing closed areas, search and rescue, and communication between owners and operators, and so you've got two alternatives under here, and they are fairly straightforward. Alternative 1 would not require a VMS system, and Alternative 2 would require all commercial vessels with the SG 1 permits that participate in the wreckfish portion of the fishery to be equipped with VMS.

Just to note, and so the industry does pay for the VMS system, and NMFS does have a reimbursement program for NMFS-approved VMS devices, which could cover the cost of the initial unit, but the industry would be required to pay the reoccurring transmission costs, as well as the costs associated with installation and repair and general maintenance.

Here, we also have an example of what is in place for Gulf IFQ fisheries, and one of the things the IPT talked about, and would like the council to have a bit more discussion on, is really the level of monitoring that is needed for this fishery, and the IPT wanted to note that we've got the Gulf requirements, but the wreckfish fishery is fairly different from the Gulf IFQ programs, and so a couple of things that the council could consider, and there is requiring VMS, and there are satellite and cellular options, and so certainly VMS is an option in this fishery.

Another option would be to extend the offloading time requirements, or to remove the offloading time requirements entirely, and that's under Action 7, and we can talk about that there, and you could also do a hail-out and hail-in requirement, where the vessel must declare that it's leaving the dock and provide pre-landing notifications, and so those are just other monitoring options, and the IPT was hoping that the council could have a little bit of discussion about the level of monitoring they feel is needed in the wreckfish fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Christina. We also have our Law Enforcement AP Chair here, if we have specific questions, and so we're looking for some discussion about the VMS and what type of monitoring we would like in this fishery. Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think the VMS would be a much better option than hailing-in and hailing-out, for sure. Once it's set up, you can pick whatever ping rate you want, but it just seems like it would be the least intrusive to your actual fishing trip, especially if your plans changed at the last minute.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Does anybody else have comments on this? Mel.

MR. BELL: I would just say that VMS represents a tool. If the industry is somewhat interested in the use of that tool, then it's a matter of just carefully tailoring it to the specifics of the fishery, in terms of how it might best assist in the operation of the fishery, and it's like Tim was saying, and you can pick a ping rate or whatever, but, I mean, you just want to use the tool appropriately for this specific fishery, and that's where we get into the details of how they operate and how it can help with the offloads and that sort of thing, but it's -- You answered the one question that I

did have, was if NMFS still had that initial ability to buy the first unit or whatever, because I thought that money was gone a long time ago, but it's good that it's there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A couple of points. I appreciate Tim's comment, and hail-in and hail-out and VMS, in my view, aren't mutually exclusive of one another, and certainly, from the agency's perspective, what we've seen and done in the Gulf, even the enforcement recommendations in the Gulf, the hail-out provides important information about the type of trip that the individual is taking, and then the hail-in provides both the time of landing and the landing location as well as the poundage being estimated to be landed, and there is some critical enforcement components to the IFQ program that help in the Gulf there, and so we would like to see alignment.

It was mentioned of satellite versus cellular VMS, and we do not use cellular VMS in the Gulf IFQ programs, because, once you get out of cell tower range, those points are just being archived, and then, obviously, it would be submitted to the agency once they come back into cellular range, and so I think something -- Further discussion is needed there with law enforcement, in terms of the intent.

Then the last thing is with the offloading time, and it's slightly different than what is done in the Gulf, and I think we have a broader range of hours, if I'm not mistaken, in the Gulf for offloading. You can land at any time, but you just can't offload those fish at any time, and so I would recommend alignment with the Gulf IFQ programs on that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's in the next action, and so do we feel like all the information is in there for this particular action, enough so that the shareholders could discuss this at their upcoming meeting? It looks like people think there is. Just to reiterate what Christina and I are talking about up here, she is suggesting that it seems like we want to at least keep VMS in for now. Okay. I see heads nodding yes.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then onwards and upwards to Action 7, and this looks at modifying those offloading site and time requirements, and this is in here, again, based on a suggestion from the wreckfish shareholders. They have indicated that the timeframe for offloading is overly burdensome and that allowing a different offloading time, or removing the offloading time requirement entirely, would significantly help the efficiency of their fishing operations.

Alternative 1, right now, wreckfish can only be offloaded between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., local time, and they have to offload only at the fixed facility of a dealer with the GSAD permit, and, if they are going to offload at a separate location, they do have to provide the NMFS OLE of the location, not less than twenty-four hours prior to offloading.

Alternative 2 would extend those hours to allow wreckfish to be offloaded between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Alternative 3 would extend those offload hours to 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., and Alternative 4 would remove the offload hours requirement entirely, which would allow wreckfish to be offloaded at any time of day, though they would still have to be offloaded only at that fixed facility.

We did talk about this with the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, back in February of last year, and they saw no problem with expanding to 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and this is Alternative 2 in the

document, and that is the hours that are specified within the Gulf program, and so I will scroll back up here and see if anyone has any questions or suggestions for additional alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so one of the things that Andy brought up was to try to match the hours for the Gulf, and there is an alternative in there for that. Any other alternatives that are needed? It looks like people are shaking their heads no, and I think we might be good on this one, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right. Then, last, but certainly not least, is Action 8, and this looks at implementing a cost recovery plan for the wreckfish fishery, and, again, this is a mandate by Magnuson, and so this is something that must be done, and so you will see, under all of these no action alternatives, a note that says, “this is not a legally-viable alternative”.

We have four sub-actions under here that sort of get at the who, how, when, and what of cost recovery, and so Sub-Action 8.1, which would implement the cost recovery program, this looks at sort of the who of cost recovery, and so, under Alternative 2, the shareholder landing wreckfish is responsible for the collection and submission of the cost recovery fee to NMFS. Under Alternative 3, the dealer receiving the wreckfish would be responsible for collecting the cost recovery fee from the shareholder and submitting the fee to NMFS, and so this is the who.

Then we get to Sub-Action 8.2, and this is collection of the wreckfish cost recovery program. Under Alternative 2, the fee is collected at the time of landing. With Alternative 3, the fee is collected upon the sale of fish during the fishing season. With Alternative 4, the fee is collected in the last quarter of the calendar year.

Sub-Action 8.3 is the frequency of the cost recovery submission, or sort of the when. Under Alternative 2, the fee is submitted once per year. Alternative 3 is twice per year, Alternative 4 is four times per year, or Alternative 5 is twelve times per year, or twice a year, quarterly, monthly.

Then last is Sub-Action 8.4, and this is how the cost recovery fees are determined, and so the what, and the cost recovery fees can be based on the actual or standard ex-vessel value, and Alternative 2 is the actual ex-vessel value, and that’s calculated by multiplying the wreckfish landings by the actual ex-vessel price, which is the total monetary sale amount a fisherman receives per pound of fish.

Then the standard ex-vessel value, which is Alternative 3, is calculated by multiplying the wreckfish landings by the standard ex-vessel price, which is based on the average ex-vessel price from the previous season and expected price change in the current fishing year.

I do want to note that one of the things that staff is working on right now is, for lack of a better term, a decision tree, or a decision matrix, for this, because these actions are iterative, in the sense that, if you say select Preferred Alternative 4 under Sub-Action 8.2, then you can no longer select Alternative 5 under 8.3, and so just know that staff will have that for you in September, when you’re looking at selecting preferred alternatives, to make sure that we can better explain how each of these sub-actions interacts with one another. Then the last thing that I want to note here is just a reminder that I believe the cost recovery fee can be between 1 and 3 percent, and that’s not something that is set by the council. Rather, that’s something that is determined by the agency.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: Just a technical question on frequency, and so I'm assuming, and maybe, with the electronic world, it's not a big deal, but the more times there has to be interactions between the agency and the customer, so to speak, I would assume that would increase the cost of administering the program, and I think the range is fine, but I guess is that a valid assumption? The more times you've got to handle stuff, and information has got to flow, and you've got to track things, I guess that would increase the cost, and so, if you went to a lower periodicity of basically submitting it, it would be a little cheaper, and I don't know, and I was just wondering.

MS. WIEGAND: I may throw that question at Andy, and that logic makes sense to me, but the systems to -- I believe you can even submit these through like the pay.gov, and so the system to transmit it is already in place.

MR. BELL: I may still be thinking of the paper and clay tablets and papyrus or something.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we have hands up. Chris and then Kerry.

MR. CONKLIN: So, if the agency wants to align us with the Gulf, why don't we just make them do the cost recovery just like the Gulf? I don't know how they do it, but just keep everything the same, so there is continuity.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is a little bit tongue-in-cheek, but not so much, and maybe we could have, under Sub-Action 8.1, an Alternative 2a and 3 that you implement the cost recovery plan minus the amount that industry paid for their stock assessment last time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything on that? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I would have to pull up the language in Magnuson, with regard to cost recovery, but it is specific to the cost for administering and enforcing and scientific research associated with the program, and I don't think we can go back in time and determine costs, and maybe that's something that would be evaluated and factored in, in terms of future costs, and we would want to look at that.

With regard to Mel's comment, the way it works in the Gulf is the money is -- Or at least the amount of cost recovery is identified at the time of the landing transaction with the dealer, and then, each quarter, that is tallied, and the dealer is essentially sent a bill saying this is how much cost recovery is owed, and then they pay through pay.gov, and so I agree with Mel, and I think you can do it monthly, but it's probably not necessary, and the way that quarterly bills work in the Gulf I think has been really effective.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I assume this is going to be a good discussion during the wreckfish shareholders' meeting that's coming up, and I was having a side conversation up here with Christina that I think that the cost recovery fee could go towards a future stock assessment, and so possibly not a stock assessment from the past, but maybe the next one, and I know there was some discussion about that at the last shareholders' meeting. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: This is less tongue-in-cheek, and it's an honest question. It's interesting, this idea, because we've never dealt with it over here, of the dealer paying the cost recovery fee, and what happens to a shareholder who is out there fishing if somehow the dealer gets in arrears from paying their share, their version, of the cost recovery fee, and that fisherman has no control over what the dealer does with the money, and I'm just curious, and, if people move around, or there's a bad relationship that happens, and how does that work in the Gulf?

MR. STRELCHECK: I might have said it poorly, and so the dealer is essentially collecting the fee from the shareholder at the time of the landing transaction, and so the dealer is responsible for paying that fee at the end of the quarter, but it's essentially fees paid by the shareholders for each of their landing transactions.

If the dealer does not pay their bill, at some point we lock their account, and they're unable to do transactions through the IFQ system, until such time that they pay their bill. We haven't had a huge issue with that, to date, in the Gulf, because they should have the money on-hand, based on the collections that they have received from the fishermen in the first place.

MS. MARHEFKA: Should, could, would.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes.

MS. MARHEFKA: So what you're saying then is that it's the dealer's account that is locked, and it wouldn't affect the coupon holder at all, even if, technically, it's a -- One wreckfish guy only sells to one dealer, and that one dealer collects the money and holds it for a month, and something comes up, and he uses that money for something else for a minute, and thinks he's going to get it back, and he doesn't get it back, and he doesn't have the money to pay the -- It's kind of like how sales tax works, right, and what then happens -- In essence, nothing happens to the fisherman, and he could still go catch his fish, but he would just have to find a different dealer to unload to.

MR. STRELCHECK: Right. That would be the impact to the fisherman, is that they wouldn't have the same dealer to sell to at that point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that clarification. We had another question from Tim.

MR. GRINER: Andy, they pay through the pay.gov, and where does that money go? Is it like permit money, and it goes into the General Treasury? So it would not be able to be used specifically for a stock assessment?

MR. STRELCHECK: It doesn't go into the General Treasury, and it goes into the limited access privilege programs fund, and then that money can be drawn upon to help administer and enforce and do science for the program itself.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would want to talk, obviously, more with Monica and others, but, just real quickly, kind of thinking on the fly with Kerry's comment about the stock assessment, I think the way that would work is if there was like a third-party contract for a stock assessment, and cost recovery paid into the agency could be used in a contract by the agency for a stock assessment. If

industry went out and just wanted to pay for an assessment on their own, those cost recovery funds wouldn't be available for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks for that clarification. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Andy, is that a nationwide cost recovery account, essentially, that that money goes into, or is there one specific for the Gulf, and there would be one for the South Atlantic, and then all the other regions that have limited access programs?

MR. STRELCHECK: It ties back to the specific program, and so we know how much cost recovery comes in for red snapper versus grouper-tilefish, and, in this case, if wreckfish is added, how much is coming in for wreckfish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. Since the topic of stock assessment came up, I just would remind the group that this is kind of like the same conversation we had with dolphinfish, mahi-mahi. It's not a unit stock, and it's an Atlantic-wide stock, and so we just have some fraction of it, and so I'm not quite sure what we would get there, and we would probably have to look at a stock assessment of a little different flavor, or maybe more like a management procedure, like we've been talking about with dolphin. The other point that I want to make is, even if it were contracted out, we still have to provide the data for it, and so it is something that would have to get a SEDAR slot. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else? All right. Back to you, Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: All right, and that brings us to our last topic for wreckfish this morning, and that is for the wreckfish shareholders' meeting, and so this would be a meeting that we would hold likely in conjunction, or side-by-side, with the Spiny Lobster and Golden Crab meeting down in Florida that I talked about earlier this week, and so, on the list of things to talk to them about right now, is, of course, an update on this amendment, and I've got notes to specifically talk to them about the permit issue, as well as the amount of monitoring that's needed in the fishery and VMS.

Then, if you will remember from back in September of last year, there was discussion about electronic reporting for the coastal logbook requirements, and it was indicated that the wreckfish shareholders might be able to voluntarily participate in a pilot program to do electronic reporting for the coastal logbook, and so we were going to talk to them about that at this meeting, and then possibly a fishery performance report for wreckfish, if that was something that the council was interested in having them complete.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other topics for the wreckfish shareholders meeting? All right. I see heads nodding no, no additional topics. Do we want them to complete a fishery performance report, if there's time? I see heads nodding yes. Okay. Then yes. All right. Thank you, Christina. I think this completes the run-through of the wreckfish document. Now we're going to jump into the amberjack document, and so we'll give staff a minute to get up here.

All right, and I know that some folks wandered off for a short break, but we're going to start diving into the greater amberjack document, which is Amendment 49, and I'm going to turn it over to Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're coming back to Amendment 49, and this is looking at catch level adjustments and allocations for greater amberjack as well as management measures and recreational annual catch targets. I'm just going to scroll right on down in the document to the timing that we've been looking at.

It was amended a little bit, coming out of the last meeting, and it was just pushed back by a quarter, basically, and so, today, we're going to be looking at the modifications to the amendment since the last meeting, and there were some things requested, some additional alternatives, that have been put in, and some preliminary analysis done, and I will talk about those. Then you all will look at what we've selected as preferred and make sure that that's still what you're wanting to go with at this point and consider approval for public hearings, if you're comfortable after we've gone through all of these actions.

I will bring up the purpose and need statement, and this hasn't been revised greatly, but, if there are any suggested edits, please let me know. The main revision since the last time was the addition of this language noting that this amendment revises the acceptable biological catch, as well as the catch limits, and then, for the commercial trip limits, there was kind of expansion, to make it more general, since now the commercial trip limits in both Season 1 and Season 2 are being considered to be changed, and so we just kind of generalized that, rather than saying only Season 1. Other than that, the language is generally the same, and so I will pause for a second, and, if there are any suggested changes, please let me know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Any suggested changes for the purpose and need? Once again, we're going through the document, and we're trying to make sure that everything is in there, so that we can consider approving this for public hearings, right, public hearings at the June meeting?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. I don't see any hands for changes to the purpose and need. Back to you.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. Next, scrolling down to Action 1, and, for the actions that you all have already selected preferreds, I'm going to move a bit quicker through those, because a lot of the analysis associated with those was available in the last iteration of the draft, and so I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time on it.

One thing that I do want to note, just for the purposes of when we get to some of the analysis that we'll talk about a bit more in-depth, please note that, in all of these, the ABC projections ended up with a declining catch stream, and what this means, when you look at analysis and projecting season length, is it means, the further into the future you look, the ACL and the ABC -- Those values would be lower, and so the projected closure dates would get earlier, as you go further out in time, and so, when I bring up some of these results, I will be putting out a range of dates, and that range of dates is going to indicate that the later, or the no closure dates, are going to be those earlier years, whereas the earlier closure dates are going to the years that are further out in time.

For Action 1, the preferred alternative, to this point, has been Preferred Alternative 2, which would set the total ACL equal to the ABC, and the ABC would be the recommended value from the SSC,

and that's what you see here, and there is no additional analysis for this option, and so I guess I will leave this up right now and just give opportunity, if anybody has any discussion or wants to change the preferred. Otherwise, we can keep moving.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion? All right. I don't see any hands.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Continuing on to Action 2, Action 2 looks at the allocation of that total ACL, and there has been a preferred alternative selected. The preferred alternative was the no action, and so it would maintain the current percentages that are in place. As has been talked about with king mackerel, this is one of those action/no action type of deals, where you're maintaining the percentages that were in place using the CHTS recreational numbers, but these would, in the future, be applied to the Fishing Effort Survey recreational numbers, and so this is the preferred to this point, and it's allocated approximately 60/40.

Scrolling down here, you can see this is what the recreational and commercial ACLs would look like moving forward, and the commercial fishery, just as a reminder, is a split season, and the fishing year for both sectors lasts from March through February, and so it's not a calendar year. The split season that is in place for the commercial fishery is March through August, and that's Season 1, and that gets 60 percent of the commercial ACL, and then Season 2, September through February, gets 40 percent of the ACL, as well as any rollover from underharvest in Season 1.

When we look at the analysis of these different options, the one that I included was the preferred, and, as we go through any of these analyses, the full analyses are available in Appendix F of Attachment 5b in your briefing book, and that's where all the full tables -- I didn't want to overload the decision document with all of those, but, if we need to pull up any specific tables, please let me know.

Otherwise, I have summary statements in here that kind of put those results out there, and so, when looking at Action 2, Alternative 1, which is the preferred, Scenario 1, which looked at a three-year average going into the past, didn't estimate any closures for any future year allocation alternatives. The last five-year average didn't have any closures until the final year, which would have a closure in February, and this is for -- Sorry. This is for the recreational sector. Then Scenario 3, which looked at the maximum landings over the last five years, had closures at the dates shown there on the screen, ranging as early as July and as late as September.

When looking at the commercial results from that analysis, looking at any of the averages, the recent averages didn't estimate any closures for Season 1. If you look at the maximum value over the last five years, then that had closures ranging from as early as August 3 to no closure occurring. For commercial Season 2, none of the scenarios looked at estimated any closures in future years, and so that's a summary of the analysis. You do have a preferred alternative, and I will pause here to see if there is any additional discussion or any request to change that preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a typo in Table 1, and I just wanted to point that. Under Alternative 3, it has 60 percent for recreational allocation, instead of 65, and that's just something that needs to be corrected. Also, I think I would like a little more explanation, from those that supported the choice of the preferred alternative, as to why a reallocation from the recreational sector to the commercial sector was desirable, just for the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Spud. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I can speak to the fact -- Using the term "reallocation" makes me a little uncomfortable, but I realize that it is sort of a de facto reallocation, and I can give some justification. It has become much more commercially important to us, much more, and the value has increased. I think we've talked a lot, before, about how -- You know, when it's in the commercial stream, it's actually getting eaten, and it's being used to its full extent of its yield, and I would argue that that's not always the case the other way around, and so I think there is justification. If you want to say it's a reallocation, I think there is justification for adding more to the commercial sector, based on its increasing importance to us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Kerry. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. To that, I would also like to add that -- Just to remind everybody that the commercial catch has been constrained through all this time series as well. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I certainly don't want to engage in a debate, and we've already debated it, but I guess I could say that, as we are staring down restrictions on the harvest of other snapper grouper species for the recreational sector, that the harvest of amberjack is going to become more important to those folks as well, to make a satisfying trip, and so I just want to get that on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: We heard that the Gulf amberjack is overfished and undergoing overfishing as well, and so I would imagine that the prices are going to compound pretty good, and fishermen in the South Atlantic need something to catch, a little bit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry, and I'm flipping between documents. Can you go to Alternatives 2 and 3, with regard to restrictions for both commercial and recreational and what the implications are of the different allocation scenarios? You've shown a table for Alternative 1.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: You're asking for the season projections for 2 and 3? Okay. This is PDF page 135 of Attachment 5b in your briefing book. This shows the recreational season projections, off of the recreational ACL, and the different estimation scenarios and the closure dates under Alternatives 2 and 3. With an estimation based on average landings, there wouldn't be any predicted closure. With an estimation based on maximum landings, there would be closures as early as July 15, within that range, and as late as no closure occurring.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess it's safe to say, with the exception of the maximum landings scenario, that the recreational sector is not harvesting, currently, or projected to harvest currently,

what the new catch limits would be set at, and so the struggle I'm having is we did an assessment with FES, and that not only changes the units in which the recreational sector is going to be monitored and managed to, but it also bolsters essentially the yield levels, because we're assuming higher levels of landings historically, and so this is in fact a reallocation to stay with status quo, because the commercial sector's portion of the catch level would go up, and the recreational sector would go down, as a proportion of how it's being monitored, and so I'm just --

This, at least, is evidence that there might not be any immediate impacts to the recreational sector, but, if quotas ultimately come down in the future, it could result in impacts like Kerry and others were talking in the commercial sector, given demand, obviously, for amberjack. I think I spoke against the preferred at the previous meeting, and certainly I think there would be better rationale, stronger rationale, to account for the change in FES and look at other alternatives.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion here? Are we wanting to add anything or change anything? Mel.

MR. BELL: Is the recreational ACL expressed in pounds or numbers?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It's pounds whole weight.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I don't see any more hands on this, and so are we going to keep the current preferred? I see some heads nodding yes. Chester.

MR. BREWER: The current preferred gives me a little bit of heartburn, and you might well imagine, and some of our overriding, and I guess I will use the word theory, or standard, when we started getting these recalibrations, was that you wanted to make sure that the commercial folks didn't get hurt, that they got -- Wherever the numbers came down, that they got to keep exactly as many pounds as they had before the recalibration, and I think we've applied that in a number of situations, but, here, we're actually saying, well, now we're going to reallocate towards the commercial folks, and as I've listened to the rationale, the rationale sounds like, well, it's because we think we need it, and we think the price is going to be going up, and that's -- To me, that's not a really valid way, or something really valid, to base a reallocation on, and so having this reallocation that is, I believe, in our current preferred causes me a problem.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that, Chester, but I don't really see it that way. I see this new calibration as evidence that the stock was more abundant all the way back, and so, when you look at it like that, I really don't see this as a de facto reallocation, and I see it more as a leveling, going back to where should have been in the first place. If in fact the abundance is this much higher, and we're comfortable with the 60/40 split, in and of itself, as it was, then, yes, we all should share the gains, and I don't think that we have ever decided that the whole idea of reallocation was to keep the commercial poundage where it was.

That, in effect, is a reallocation toward the recreational sector, and so I think this is one of those things where we try to share the pain and share the gain. The other aspect of this is this is an important fishery, and not just for the commercial, but for the recreational as well, and they are interested in abundance as well, and so having the ability to set an ACT below the ACL for the recreational sector is another tool that can keep this fishery open for the recreational sector,

regardless of the splits, and so I just want to make sure that we understand that this is, really and truly, more a sharing of what was originally out there in the stock to begin with. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I just want to point out that we're in the process of removing those ACTs, and I am just putting that out there. Mel.

MR. BELL: I understand what Kerry was saying, and I think, twenty years ago or more, I wouldn't have thought that amberjack were that important, or would be, and I know we went through a phase there where we had a bump in landings and things at one point, but I can see now where, from a commercial perspective of just being able to have harvestable product within a portfolio of different species -- I can see where it probably is more important, and it may become even more important as we deal with other fishery issues that are part of the portfolio.

I mean, I really understand that argument, and I understand where they're coming from, and, from an abundance standpoint, I don't see an issue with the way we're going with this, but, yes, indeed, that is a form of reallocation, where we're not changing the percentages, but kind of making a judgment on -- This is just me, but I can see where it is a bigger deal, in terms of them being able to maintain businesses and product on the market and that sort of thing, and so, twenty or twenty-five years ago, I might not have seen that, but now I get it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm going back and looking at our documents from our meeting on allocation in February, and I will start with our little introduction, where it says a report from the GAO recommends councils consider the following: sector allocation needs using trends in catch and landings, stock assessment results, economic analysis, social indicator analysis, and ecosystem models.

Then you go into what we're going to be asking ourselves, if we were using the allocation decision tree, which one could argue is available and we could try to use now to solve this problem, and, when you get into the questions, the economic questions, one of our questions in our decision tree is economic importance, and is the relative economic importance of the species changing, and the yes question is, is it becoming more economically important, and that is a big, fat, hairy yes for our sector. I don't know, but that's sort of how I'm approaching this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Kerry. Is it a possibility to come back and look at the decision trees, or do we not have enough time to do that? Were we just going to focus on Spanish mackerel coming up later in the year, and I can't remember where we were on running actual species through there.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I think it's possible to come back and make use of that, if that's what you all want to use to start your rationale, and it may not be something to go through in this meeting, but possibly at a future meeting before this is finalized, yes. If that's the direction that you would like to go, then that's possible. I think that you would also be able to still consider this to go out for public hearings, if you wanted to kind of keep that option and consider it after public comment, and that would be something you could do as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Chip.

DR. COLLIER: I do want to point out that the information that was in the decision tree -- Some of that was preliminary, and I have found some errors in it, and so I wouldn't say that that tool is exactly ready to go. The information was pretty good, but we would have to check it again.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I'm going to go back to you, Kerry. What are your thoughts? Remember there are a couple of decision points here, and we're not saying we can't use the decision trees later, and we're looking at this today to figure out if we have an appropriate range in there, and it will go to public hearing at the June council meeting, and do you have more thoughts about the decision trees and how and when to use them here on the species?

MS. MARHEFKA: No, and I am not really suggesting that we stop everything and look at it. I'm just pointing out that the rationale -- I am trying to build the rationale for why the preferred is the preferred, and I am suggesting that, if we were to have this, hypothetically, ready as a tool, we would end up with our preferred as our preferred, after going through the decision tree, and so that's the point that I was trying to make. I am making the point to keep the preferred the preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Got it. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just want to -- I appreciate Kerry's thoughts in going to that tool, but I guess I'm a little hesitant to use it now, because it's so in its early stages, and I don't want to say that it would set a bad precedent, but I just think we need to really work on that tool more before we start using it, and that's just my opinion, and I'm just a little hesitant to use something that is really in its early stages of being developed and looked at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: As part of the record and rationale, I think it's really important for the council to discuss how whatever alternative they choose is going to promote conservation and be reasonably calculated, right, and so I haven't heard a lot of that rationale today, and I would need to go back to the record for previous meetings, but we need to discuss is this fair and equitably calculated, is it reasonable to promote conservation, how does this align with the management plan objectives, and I think, importantly, given kind of what Spud started, in terms of the conversation, why is it fair and equitable for us to maintain status quo, which we then recognize is kind of a shift away from the recreational sector to the commercial sector?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I'm going to try to move the discussion here, and so lots of questions, and a lot of good discussion here, and it seems like some folks want to go back and look at our rationale from previous meetings, and do we want to make a change in the preferred right now? Otherwise, people can think about it, and we can talk about this more at Full Council this week. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The excuse I have heard, over the years, has been, well, we're just sending it out to public hearings, to let the public know what our preferred is right now, but, I mean, maybe we should just vote on it and see if we really want that to be our preferred. Otherwise, I need to pick something else, but you know where we stand, and I think, if we have this as our preferred, and it goes out, and we catch a bunch of flack for it or something, then we may want to change it then, but I think it's better to pick one that might get some interest than one that's going to just not make a big stir.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Procedurally, since it is currently the preferred, someone would need to make a motion to change the preferred to something else, and I understand that, if people aren't ready to do that right now, then we could come back and talk about this more at Full Council, if you want to make a motion to change the preferred before it would go out to public hearing, assuming that we approve this for public hearing. Okay. I don't see any additional hands, and I'm going to move on.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then we will keep moving through to the next action. This action was increasing the recreational minimum size limit for greater amberjack. The current minimum size limit is twenty-eight inches fork length, and there was an alternative that was added to those that were being considered at the last meeting, which is thirty inches fork length, and that was selected as the preferred, at this point. The highlighting that is there just shows that we reordered things, to have the numbers in sequence, but that preferred is shown.

One point of analysis that I wanted to bring up that wasn't available last time, but we dug into it a little bit more, and so the discussion surrounding the minimum size limit looked at the size at maturity, which was updated in SEDAR 59, and so I just wanted to make sure that those numbers were out there and available within this document, and that is shown in Table 7, and so there's the age and fork length estimated there, and the female maturity shown along with it, and so that's available for your consideration in both Action 3, and then Action 4 is the commercial size limit, and so you can take that same information and consider it when looking at Action 4.

When considering the season projections, the average catch scenarios for the recreational fishery did not estimate any closures in any of the future years. The maximum catch scenario did estimate closures, and these were delayed from what's shown in Table 5, and so they would occur later in the year, and they ranged from as early as July 20 to no closure occurring, and I will pause here to see if there is any additional discussion concerning the preferred alternative or any discussion to change what's selected at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just so I understand, there was new information, and so now the table, Table 7, includes the new information, because I feel like we made some of these minimum size limit decisions based on old information that was from a previous stock assessment, and is that right?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and it was one of those situations where we were on-the-fly looking for information within a meeting, and we referenced SEDAR 15, and SEDAR 59 actually had an updated maturity schedule, and so we got the new maturity schedule from that assessment, and that's what's included in the decision document.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that clarification, and so now, looking at Table 7, I don't know that we need to increase the recreational minimum size limit to thirty inches, because that table indicates 53 percent maturity at 19.6 inches fork length, and so I don't -- I am just throwing it out there for discussion, and I don't know if we want to retain that preferred of thirty inches, and we might be okay with continuing with the no action, which is the twenty-eight inches fork length, and so I will throw that out there for discussion. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I would like to make a motion. **I would like to move that we change our preferred alternative to twenty-eight inches.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. While we're getting that on the board, twenty-eight inches is the Alternative 1, no action. Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Tom. All right. **We have the motion on the board to change the preferred to Alternative 1, no action, twenty-eight inches fork length.** Any more discussion on this? **Any objections?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion is approved.** Leann, did we vote too soon? Go ahead, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I was just wondering, and could you summarize, real quick -- So you said the - - I don't know if it was length at maturity or age at maturity that changed from one stock assessment to the other, and did it go up, or down, or what were those numbers, just out of curiosity?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I would have to look back for exact numbers from SEDAR 15, but the general direction was the newer assessment had estimated the fish to mature earlier and smaller.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Moving next to Action 4, this considers reduction of the commercial minimum size limit. Similar to the other action, to Action 3, there was an alternative that was added, at the last meeting, of thirty inches fork length, and that was selected as the preferred. The current commercial minimum size limit is thirty-six inches fork length, and the analysis for the commercial size limit -- As a reminder, that's a bit lacking, because you can't do a whole lot with fish that are not legally able to be caught.

We do have some observer lengths, but that's only thirty-eight fish, and you see the distribution of those lengths here, but that is the extent of information that we're able to look at for sizes that are smaller than the legal minimum size at this stage. The discussion for the council here is if you all would like to continue with this selected as your preferred or provide any additional rationale at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mike. Once again, the same discussion as we had on the recreational size limit, and we've also had good discussion on why we wanted to decrease the size limit for commercial, but we had selected the thirty inches because of the information that was from two stock assessments ago, and we have learned since then, and we have newer information, that they're maturing earlier, at smaller sizes, and so I don't know that we want to stay with the thirty inches here, and maybe we do, and we just changed recreational to twenty-eight, and so I would look around the table and see if people want to keep it at thirty inches for commercial or change this preferred. Chester.

MR. BREWER: **I think a good rationale could be to change it to twenty-eight, given depredation. Also, those fish are not going to be quite as wormy as a thirty-six-inch fish, and they might have a little bit more commercial value, and they're still going to have the same number of pounds that you would be allowed to retain, and so I think it makes pretty good sense, given the new information, to go to twenty-eight inches fork length and to change that to our preferred, which would be to select Alternative 4 as our preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you, Chair. I just want to remind the council that the age at first maturity, or the size at first maturity, is almost irrelevant, and it's not really an important consideration. The main consideration is that, if you're taking fish at a smaller size, with the same quota in weight,

you're going to take a lot more fish, and so, ideally, we would do an analysis looking at, in combination, changes in size limit and quota. Obviously, it's not something we can turn around quickly, but that's something that could be requested as part of stock assessments, because the two things matter. It's the size of the fish you take and how many fish are taken in pounds, and they go hand-in-hand. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're going to type the motion. Okay, and so I think that Chester made this motion to change the preferred to Alternative 4, which would reduce the commercial minimum size limit to twenty-eight inches. Is there a second on this motion? It's seconded by Laurilee. Do we want to have some more discussion on this? A reminder that the Snapper Grouper AP was also suggesting to decrease the commercial minimum size limit, and the commercial minimum size limit is currently at thirty-six inches. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Could I hear from Carrie or Tim or Chris on their thoughts on this?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Trish. I don't think there's going to be a big difference in us, commercially, going from twenty-eight to thirty. I don't think that's going to make a huge difference one way or the other, but I will say that I think it's worth keeping in mind that, as we've talked about this fish becoming more and more important, and gag grouper is in trouble, and this fish is going to get hit harder and harder and harder, and so, the smaller the fish, the more we're going to take, and the faster it's going to happen, like Clay said, and you're going to take more and more fish, and so I'm almost thinking that there's not going to be a lot of gains from going from twenty-eight to thirty, and so thirty is good with me.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I am hearing a lot of support now for maintaining status quo at thirty-six, for the exact same reason that, Tim, you were talking about, is sort of what's going to happen with gag, and then also what happens, depending on how much we get allocated and how quickly we catch it up, but I would almost, right now, be in support of, in this case, maybe going to the public without a preferred, but I am not going to support, at this time, twenty-eight, because I think we are going to have an issue, because of the gag shift.

MS. MCCAWLEY: These are good points. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: So we just changed the preferred alternative to twenty-eight for recreational, but why -- I agree, and we don't want to re-create the same thing that has happened with gag with amberjack, and so what was the -- What is the logic of changing the minimum size to twenty-eight for recreational? Wouldn't it be better to have some bigger fish, or not catch as many small fish? I am not sure that I agree with keeping it at thirty-six, because what I heard, from Jimmy Hull, is that the shark predation on the bigger fish -- They keep having to throw fish back in, and throw fish back in, trying to get the big fish, and the sharks are behind the boat, and they're grabbing the fish as soon as they're throwing them back in.

Maybe thirty-six inches is still too big, and maybe thirty-two would be more -- Maybe it would make more sense, but taking a bunch of little smaller fish, like Clay said, doesn't make sense, and I'm not sure that I agree with, in Action 3, reducing that to twenty-eight inches. Why would we

go to twenty-eight inches for the recreational, but keep it at thirty-six for commercial? If we're trying to save some fish, so that we've got more to catch later, we should probably rethink the twenty-eight inches for recreational.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it sounds like we're wanting to go back to the recreational limit, and so we can continue this discussion on both the commercial and recreational limit at the same time and then, procedurally, we'll figure out how to fix it, but, Judy, you had your hand up.

MS. HELMEY: It is twenty-eight. The recreational is twenty-eight right now, and so I really wouldn't want to change it to thirty. In my situation, because of what we're all going to have to be dealing with here very shortly, and so I want to keep it at twenty-eight, and I'm not sure about the thirty-six for you all, for the commercial people, but, if you made us -- If you change ours to thirty, we're not going to be keeping a whole bunch of fish anyway, and we're not going to have a bunch of fish to keep.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Judy. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, I don't really have a preference on size, and I just think that they should both be the same. It's been sort of a problem between having two different size limits on what you can keep and what you can't, if you're a commercial or a recreational fisherman, and I've always -- It's been sort of a conundrum for me, but I do know that there is a lot of smaller amberjack inshore, where we are, and the charter boats catch a bunch of them, and they need them, and, if we go down to that small, the commercial guys are probably going to catch all those fish, and they will take that away from them, and so, I mean, I don't think twenty-eight is where commercial needs to be, but I could go with something different.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let me try to add more to this discussion here, and so there are two different size limits in the Gulf between rec and commercial, and so it doesn't match up in the Gulf, and I just want to point that out. In the Gulf, it is thirty-four for recreational and thirty-six for commercial, but remember, in the Gulf, amberjack is in poor shape, and it's not necessarily over here on the Atlantic, but it does sound like we're leaning towards maybe being a little bit more precautionary, because we think a bunch of effort is going to be redirected to amberjack, and so we've had some discussion on that. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: Just another quick question. What's the discard mortality on greater amberjack?

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're looking it up, and so give us a minute. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Waiting for that information, I'm just trying to think of a path forward. We're going to -- The AP is going to be back in April, and Jimmy Hull is someone who is really thoughtful of -- I know that his justification, rationale, for decreasing the commercial size limit had to do with shark depredation, and it also had to do with sort of he's seen less worms in the smaller fish, and so, therefore, there might be more marketability to the smaller fish, and so I know that was his rationale.

I am hearing from fishermen, in South and North Carolina, saying they want it to stay the same, and so we might up where we're at with some of our species, where we're hearing regional differences for what we want, and so, again, as much as I know -- Chris is right, and I think it's always better to go to public hearing where, if we think we're going to do something, let the public

know what we think we're going to do, and get a comment on that, but I am not hearing consensus about what we think we're going to do, and so I would -- **If it was up to me, I would de-select a preferred, don't have a preferred, and let the AP talk about it again, also with all the new information they're going to have based on what comes out of this meeting and what we talked about yesterday, and then pick a preferred after that.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I'm going to take that in the form of a motion.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and make it sound better than I just made it sound.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. On it. **Seconded by Tim, and so we'll be getting that substitute motion on the board, which is essentially to de-select a preferred under Action 4, which is the commercial minimum size limit, and then direction to staff that the AP look at this and come back with input for us at the AP's meeting in April.** Andy, did you have your hand up?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and two things. One, I couldn't find it in the document, but if someone could find the original rationale as to why we went to thirty-six inches, or point me to it, that would be helpful, and I think it would be good to have some recollection as to why there is that differential size limit to begin with. Then, in terms of the motion, I am supportive of the motion, and I was going to suggest picking no action, just to go out for public comment, but I think this is fine, to not have a preferred, as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: The rationale for the thirty-six-inch for the commercial was align with the Florida state minimum size limit, and this was also quite a bit back in time, during a time when greater amberjack, the status of it, from the assessment, and I think it was in the 1990s, was rather uncertain, and so there was that effort to have some consistency, and there was also some concern about the stock status during that time. That was around the same time that the spawning closure went into place, also out of concern about whether the commercial fishery would be impacting the stock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Mike, and so just a reminder that it's thirty-six for commercial in the Gulf. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. How long ago was that done?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Approximately the 1990s, but I can look up the amendment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry, do you have a question? All right. There is a motion, and it's been seconded, on the board, and so what the substitute motion would do would be to de-select Alternative 3 as the preferred, which is essentially selecting no preferred alternative under this commercial size limit, and then, if we approve the substitute motion, that will become the main motion, and we'll vote on it, and so we'll essentially be voting on it twice, if we approve it. Any more discussion on this substitute motion? We've had a lot of good discussion around the table so far. Anybody else want to weigh-in? All right. **Let's see a show of hands for the substitute motion, which is to de-select Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative, of those in favor, twelve in favor; any opposed; any abstentions, one abstention. The motion passes.**

The substitute motion is now the main motion, and so, one more time, and this is now the main motion, and those in favor of de-selecting Alternative 3 as the preferred, raise your hand, twelve in favor; any opposed; abstentions, one abstention. The motion passes.

What we've done there is basically selected no preferred alternative on the commercial minimum size limit, and this will go to the AP. The direction to staff is to have an AP discussion about the commercial minimum size limit, and so, before we leave this, do we need to back up to the recreational size? We've had some discussion around the table, and you heard Judy talk about how it's twenty-eight right now, and so we changed our preferred to the no action alternative, which is to keep it at twenty-eight. Are we good with that, at this time, or do we want to go back to the recreational minimum size limit and select a different preferred? I see heads nodding no, and so just letting folks know, and you will see this again in Full Council, and so we're at twenty-eight for recreational and thirty-six for commercial. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I just had a question, probably for Clay, I'm guessing, and so back to that sexual maturity for amberjack. In the Gulf, on the recreational side, we increased that size limit the last time that we looked at this, and we increased it to thirty-four inches for the recreational sector, and that was really premised upon trying to let more of those fish become sexually mature before we harvest them, because we have issues with greater amberjack in the Gulf, as far as the stock is concerned, and so I'm thinking about that, and I don't think that was even 100 percent sexually mature, at thirty-four inches, versus what I see here, and I think that table said twenty inches that pretty much most of your fish were sexually mature. Is it that big of a difference between the Gulf and the South Atlantic on when these fish become sexually mature? I mean, that's twenty inches versus thirty-four in the Gulf.

DR. PORCH: I don't think that it's a big difference between the two. The point is that really the work is done by the fact that you're taking bigger fish with the same quota, and so my point is that, if you're going to determine a quota, that's dependent on the assumptions you make about the selectivity, remember, which includes the minimum size limit implicitly, and so you have a quota that you were basing on one set of size limits and selectivity patterns, and then, after you set the quota, you're going back and changing that, and so, ideally, the quota would change with it, but it's not the fact that you set the size limit to the size at first maturity.

At that point, they're not producing many eggs, and they're not humans, where, once you become mature, you have the same amount of babies as you could at any age, and they don't produce many eggs when they are first mature, and it's really the older females that are producing most of the eggs, and so setting the size limit at first maturity isn't, itself, that meaningful, other than you're - I mean, you could set it at any other size bigger, and, basically, you're just trying to reduce the mortality on young fish, so that you're not taking a huge number of fish before you get to that quota, and so let me think of another way to explain that.

You're trying to find a way that you don't fill the quota with a bunch of small fish, and then they all die before they ever get to the point where they can produce a lot of eggs, but it's not that there is a magic number at the size of first maturity, and it's all tied together.

MS. BOSARGE: I was just surprised at the difference in the lengths at the age of first maturity, right, between the Gulf and the South Atlantic stocks. The Gulf seems to have to be a much larger fish before it comes sexually mature, versus what I see in the South Atlantic, that much smaller

fish are becoming sexually mature. I just wondered, and is that typical, to see that big of a gap between the two?

DR. PORCH: I think, in this case, we probably don't have all the samples that we would need to say that definitively, and there's not a huge number of reproductive samples that we have availability, and so it could be just the vagaries of that, not having enough sampling, but there may be some real differences between the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and the Gulf -- Actually, I might have almost expected it to be younger, but, then again, you could have some juvenation from higher fishing pressure, and there is just a lot of complications that could go on, but the bottom line is I don't think we have the samples to say definitively whether they're different, but my main point is that's not the main issue. The main issue is that, when you set a quota, it's contingent on a certain selectivity pattern. When you change the size limit, you're changing that selectivity pattern.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We still have a few more actions in this document, but let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break, and we'll come back and continue in the amberjack document.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's come on back to the table. We're going to get going again on amberjack. I am going to turn it back to Mike, who is going to go through Action 5.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Thank you. Action 5 is the one that looks at the seasonal commercial trip limits for greater amberjack, and this was originally brought up as a change to Season 2, but there were alternatives added at the last meeting that also considered changes to Season 1, and so those are included. The no action alternative, what's in place right now, is that Season 1, which is March through August, has a commercial trip limit of 1,200 pounds gutted or whole weight, and September through February has a limit of 1,000 pounds.

Alternative 2, and just a note on the structure here, and Alternative 2 is consideration of a change to Season 1, and Alternative 3 is consideration of a change to Season 2, and so, if you wanted to change the commercial trip limit for both seasons, you would have two preferreds selecting a sub-alternative under Alternative 2 as well as one under Alternative 3.

The amounts that are considered underneath each of those, and so, for Season 1, there is consideration of an increase in the trip limit to 1,500 pounds, 2,000 pounds, or 2,500 pounds. For Season 2, there is consideration of alternatives that would change the limit to 1,200 pounds, 1,500 pounds, 2,000, or 2,500 pounds. There were season projections run on each of these, and there's a summary of those included in the document.

When considering the average landings as the estimate, there were not any Season 1 closures estimated. When looking at the maximum over the last five years, there were closures estimated, ranging from as early as July 3 to no closure occurring. Then, looking at Season 2, looking at the average landings scenario, there were no Season 2 closures estimated. When looking at the maximum landings scenario, there were closures that ranged as early as February 8 to no closure.

One thing that I do want to note, when kind of considering these results, is that all of the years that are included here do not include the currently in place commercial split season, just because we've only had that in for a very short amount of time, and the first year that was implemented was 2020

through 2021, that fishing year, and the terminal year for the commercial data was 2019 through 2020, and so just noting that the intent of that, when it was put in, was to extend the length of the commercial season, and having that in place would notably change the fishing behavior that we would likely observe.

These are new alternatives, and there has not been a preferred alternative selected for Action 5, and so I would be looking to the committee to review these alternatives and make any recommendations to modify it, as you see fit, and then, if you see fit to select a preferred before going out to public hearings, then that could be done now as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick question. Are there closure dates that you mentioned associated with the trip limits -- Are those modeled based on a specific size limit for the commercial sector?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Those are modeled based on the current size limits, although there may be analysis in the full report that includes both effects.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion here, since this is new? Tim and then Mel.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am kind of hesitant to pick a preferred here, and I almost think we just need to let this go out like it is. I mean, I think the important thing to remember here is we only have a year of this new system of split seasons in place, and here we are talking about a species that's going to be very, very important, and we don't know what this shift in effort is going to do, and I just think, right now, we would be better off just to leave this alone and see how it shakes out than trying to go down a particular road. If we were to pick an alternative right now, I would be in favor of picking Alternative 1, no action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Tim. Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say this one seemed to be something that perhaps we didn't need to select a preferred, but we could take it to the AP, along with the size that we discussed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks, Mel. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I feel like, in December, you had like a table for projected closure dates or something, and could you stick that back in there and give it to the AP, and that might be in a different document.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Yes, and that's included in the draft amendment, and we can have it pulled up, if you would like it here, and we can also provide it to the AP for their discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what I'm hearing so far, but, if people have other ideas, then please raise your hand, but what I'm hearing is that we don't want to select a preferred alternative right now. Instead, we want the AP to look at this and for it to go out to public hearing and, as Chris mentioned, make sure that the document includes that table, the decision document I guess includes that table, instead of just the full amendment. All right. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Since I asked this question, I would just note that I've gotten a communication from the NMFS analyst, and they don't do different size limits, because they don't have any data for the lower commercial size limits, and they can't model what effect that will have on harvest.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. That makes sense.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Just clarifying, that means -- I appreciate, and I'm assuming that was Mike who had that communication, and so that means that the only results that we have available for consideration would be with the currently in place size limits, and we wouldn't be able to consider any of the potentially lower commercial size limits in that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike is going to type up the direction here on this item, but, while he's doing that, any more comments? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was curious, and, even though you don't have that type of analysis that's available, how about the weight of the fish from thirty-six inches to twenty-eight inches and what that -- Is that five pounds or two pounds or three pounds? I am just curious about what that would be.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't have that immediately available, but that's something that I can follow up on, to see what the weight range is, within like what kind of the corollary weight-to-size ratio type of thing is.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I am just curious. If you're landing certain sized fish, then, all of a sudden, you're going to decrease or increase your weight, and I'm just curious what that is. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Thank you. Since we're on the topic, I would just remind folks that you actually could include that in the terms of reference for an assessment, to look at the potential effects of different size limits, and so, with the next one being scheduled, it's just a matter of changing the selectivity patterns and some other technical specifications, but it could be done if you had an idea of what size limits you would want to look at.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more comments on this particular action? Just a reminder that we're not picking preferreds, and it will go to the AP for discussion and getting feedback at the public hearing. Okay. Back to Mike to go on to the next action.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. The next action is considering revision to the April spawning closure for greater amberjack, and, with the regulations currently in place, during April of each year, there is no commercial sale or purchase of greater amberjack, and the harvest and possession limit for the commercial fishery is one per person per day, or per trip, whichever is more restrictive. That is the same possession limit as what's in place for the recreational.

The difference that we see between the commercial and the recreational is that the commercial is still limited by their minimum size limit, and the recreational has its minimum size limit, and so there is some difference between those.

Alternative 2 would consider that there is a full closure of greater amberjack during the month of April, and Alternative 3 would consider removing the April spawning closure, and this would essentially be affecting the commercial fishery, making that month open for the commercial fishery, when it currently is not. This action was brought in front of you, but the addition of Alternative 3, that would consider removing the spawning closure, that was an added alternative, and so that's something new that you haven't seen before. There were season projections that were run, and these were focused on -- Primarily on the -- Excuse me.

These projections that were run first looked at the recreational, in terms of the alternative that would have a full closure of the fishery for both sectors, and, under the average landings scenarios, there were not any estimated closures in future years, and that included that April recreational closure. The maximum landings scenario estimated delayed closures from those that were shown with the default values, and those ranged as early as July 23 to no closure.

Then the commercial season was evaluated relative to an open April fishery, and so, if the April fishery were open to the commercial sector, looking at the average landings, there were no closures estimated, and, if maximum landings were used, then there were closures that were estimated that ranged from May 23 to no closure, and, as a reminder, that's applying only to Season 1, and there would no expected effect on Season 2 from April being open or closed on the commercial fishery.

The committee action related to this would be for you all to look at these alternatives and make any necessary modifications, and, if you would like to select a preferred before going out to public hearings, then we can do so at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, right now, there is a commercial closure during April for greater amberjack, and then the two alternatives that we have here -- Alternative 3 is to completely remove the closure, and Alternative 2 would be to add an additional closure for recreational at the same time. What do we want to do here? Do we want to select a preferred? Do we just want to get feedback on this? What do we want to do on this one? Judy.

MS. HELMEY: We do not catch, in our area, of Savannah, we don't catch a lot of amberjack in April. In fact, we don't probably even see them that much.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks, Judy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Thank you. In our area, in North Carolina, we don't catch many in April, unless you're considerably offshore and fishing on the break. I guess I would just go back and ask about the original April closure. Was it truly a spawning season closure, or was it more to constrain harvest in the southern part of the range?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: It occurs during the actual spawning season, and this is another one of those regulations that has been in place for a long time, and it started out as a closure south of Cape Canaveral in Amendment 4, which was 1991 when that was implemented, and then it was expanded throughout the region, through Amendment 9, which was also in the 1990s, and the rationale that was stated within all of that was due to the aggregation of greater amberjack during the spawning time period and the kind of concerns about the stock from the time and the uncertainty of the stock assessment that was in place at that time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thank you for that, and so, if it truly is an aggregated spawn, then it seems to me that, whether you're recreationally or commercially fishing, you ought to stay off of them, if that's truly the case, if they're aggregated and they are truly spawning. I guess the one thing I would be interested in is does the one per person -- Would that have a big effect on discards during that time of the year, if the recreational sector was not allowed to keep that fish?

DR. SCHMIDTKE: That's something that I don't think we've analyzed that to this point, and I'm not sure about our capability to analyze that, and I would have to talk to the analysts at NMFS, to see what we can come up with related to that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Regarding our spawning biology, is the spawning season the same in Florida that it would be in North Carolina, because we see really large aggregations in North Carolina in May and June, in particular.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: From brief reading, and I do not claim expertise on this, but, from brief reading, it does look like there is similar behavior, in the sense of aggregation, but the timing may be different, and it may occur at a different time in Florida, relative to North Carolina, because the April would be tending more towards Florida, whereas later in the spring would be when you see them in North Carolina.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I think I recall Ben talking about this a lot, and I remember that -- It makes sense that it started out in the 1990s, and is kind of a Florida-focused thing, but Tom is correct that the spawning behavior is the spawning behavior, and it just may be a matter of timing, and so then, to us, it becomes a matter of, okay, what's the value, or the efficacy, of just an April spawning closure and leave things like they are, add the recreational, do away with the whole thing, and I don't know that -- I certainly don't think that I have enough understanding to pick a preferred at this point, but I think it's worth following the -- Having this in there and discussing this, if we want to leave it in or take it out or modify it by adding the rec, but, again, the April piece I would think just has benefit particularly a little bit farther south, and I see the same thing in South Carolina and North Carolina, and probably Georgia, and we see those spawning aggregations, but later, and so April doesn't really do anything, in terms of a spawning season closure, for us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What I just heard is keep this in the document, but don't pick a preferred at this time, and get more input on this from the AP and at the hearings. Is that what people want? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I mean, that's certainly what I am hearing, and I was going to make a specific comment to the alternatives, but, if you want to first have the conversation around a recommendation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we want to pick a preferred here? It seems like we're not wanting to pick a preferred. I don't see any hands up, and I'm going to go back to you, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A couple of thoughts here. I mean, certainly it's been standard practice to implement spawning season closures for a variety of species, and the spawning season, as we're pointing out, is variable geographically, and it's longer than the April timeframe, right, and so we're protecting a portion of the spawning season. I think there's justification to go any number of ways here, and I think the true question is how vulnerable are amberjack during the spawning season when they're aggregating, and whether or not this would afford them additional protection, because, if the mortality is spread out, regardless, throughout the year, including during April, there is really not a lot of added value to this.

The suggestion that I was going to make to Alternative 2 was to be very explicit that this would be the addition of a recreational seasonal closure, and so the public and others truly understand that we would be adding a recreational closure here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mike is taking some notes on that. Mel.

MR. BELL: I have a fuzzy history here, and I think some of this -- We talk about vulnerability during spawning aggregations, and I remember a lot of discussion about vulnerability, particularly when bang-sticking was popular, and I witnessed that firsthand, and so, yes, there is -- There was back then, and that was a concern back then, which drove a lot of other things related to bang-sticks and things, but, yes, when they stack up over these wrecks, or reefs, and they are more vulnerable, and, back in the 1990s, that was a big concern, particularly bang-stickers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To that point, I think that also that means that, when we have gag issues, we could see that shift again and that become a concern again, and so I am okay not selecting a preferred, and I'm inclined to have a complete spawning season closure, if there is biological value, but it sounds like we can get some more information on that and figure that out later.

MS. MCCAWLEY: But are you wanting to add an alternative though that would be for a longer period of time, so that we can get input on that from the AP and from the hearings, because this is just the month of April that we're talking about, but it could be two to three months, and are you wanting to add something here?

MS. MARHEFKA: I am really not saying this to be wise at all, and I think, in the back of my mind, it's hard for me not to go back and think about what we talked about yesterday and not know what's come down the pike, as far as other seasonal closures for whoever, that are going to have an impact on this, and so that's where really I am struggling. This on its own, should we look at a bigger, longer window for amberjack, probably just to see, yes, and get their input on it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I was getting some help from staff here, and so are we just looking to see an analysis, or are we looking to add an alternative, just because it could slow this down, if we add an alternative. Okay. It's just an analysis. Tim, is that what you were going to say?

MR. GRINER: Yes, and I was going to say that it was just an analysis, and I don't think we really -- I don't know that we could have the data to know what the regional differences are how long this time period is, and so, as long as April is capturing a portion of the spawn, I think that's kind of where we need to look at, and I don't know how we would determine what longer period.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I guess, just to make sure that I'm clear on what analysis would be looked at, is this like a season projection of what the change in the season would potentially be from adding May in as another closed month, or what would be -- What's being sought? What's the result being looked for, or the metric, rather?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Based on what I heard, it sounds like May, and so just the two months, April and May.

MS. MARHEFKA: Did we ever -- Was March ever a closure, or has it always just been April alone? I know I'm asking you probably something that would have to go back and be looked up.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I don't recall ever seeing March as a thing, and I'm sorry if I misspoke and said March instead of May, and I'm not sure if I did.

MS. MCCAWLEY: You said May.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: I said May? Okay. Gotcha.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I think we also need to think about the fact that I think, for the commercial sector anyway, a May closure for amberjack would be very problematic, once our grouper season starts, and so I think that could cause more problems than it's worth, doing the analysis, and so, like I said, I'm fine with just the April and leaving it like it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. No analysis. Okay. We were fixing that over here. Anything else on Action 6? I would just like to point out that Florida is closed March through May for commercial. Okay. Any more discussion on this action, before we leave this action? I don't see any more hands. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Okay. That was the last greater-amberjack-specific action. The last action in this amendment is Action 7, which would consider removal of recreational annual catch targets. There is no change in this from the last time you looked at it, and, last time, you selected a preferred of Alternative 2 to remove the ACTs, and there is no associated analysis with this, either because ACTs do not directly affect the landings that occur, and so that's what we have available for that, and, if you would like to maintain that as your preferred, then that's something that can be commented on at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any further discussion on removing all of the ACTs for species in the snapper grouper fishery, and we have a preferred already. Any more discussion, or any desire to change this preferred alternative? I don't see any additional discussion. Back to you, Mike.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: All right. Then, wrapping this up, the final action related to this, for the day that is, would be to consider approval related -- To consider approval for public hearings, and there's a recommendation from the IPT that these public hearings be held at the June 2022 council meeting, rather than in between now and June, and that would give us a bit more time, and there are some tables that we would like to clean up before we put out a public hearing document and finalize some of the analyses that are in that draft amendment, and so, if we can have that extra

time, that would be helpful, and the hearings would be held then. A motion would be needed for that approval.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in the interest of full disclosure, there are a lot of no action preferreds, or several no action preferreds, and there's been a lot of discussion, and we may end up with that, but I just wanted to provide my usual guidance, is to avoid keeping those in the document, and so, if they end up with no action, I will probably end up advising, in the end, that we move to Considered but Rejected, and so that's more a heads-up to staff. The only thing I would note is that, depending on which way you go with size limits -- If you change one and not the other, then I would probably leave the other action in, just so we have the full analysis and full comparison in the document. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Shep, and, at this point, we're wanting them to see the no actions, the AP to see that, and the public to see that, and so I think we want it that way on purpose at this point, and I would be -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A related comment, and we talked some about adding some alternatives, and we ultimately did not do that, but, based on the schedule, public hearings in June and final in September, and so my recommendation, to keep the amendment on track, is, if we want new alternatives, let's recommend them at this meeting, to ensure that we can complete the document by September.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds great, and so people keep thinking about that, and, if we need to add them, we need to do that when we come back to this in Full Council, in order to keep this on track. All right. I am looking for a motion to consider approval of this document for public hearings. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: **I would like to make a motion to approve this document for public hearing.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Trish and seconded by Mel. Any discussion? **Any objection?** All right. **That is approved.** Just to repeat, again, before we get to those public hearings at the June council meeting, this would go to the Snapper Grouper AP in April. All right. That wraps up amberjack for today. Once again, to go back to Andy's point, if you think about other alternatives that you would like to see, let's get them into the document when we talk about this during Full Council. All right. Next up, we're going to switch over to red porgy.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so I will walk you through Amendment 50 to the Snapper Grouper FMP, and this is the amendment that is adjusting catch levels for red porgy and establishing a rebuilding schedule, and so this is the final time, hopefully, that we're going to talk about this particular amendment.

Just as a recap, the red porgy stock in the South Atlantic was assessed through SEDAR 50, with data through 2017, and so this is the amendment that is implementing the new catch levels based on that assessment. The stock is currently undergoing overfishing, and it is overfished. The notification came to the council in June of 2021, and so we have until June of this year to put in place a rebuilding plan to address the overfished determination.

That's where we are, and there are six actions in this amendment, with two sub-actions, as you see on your screen. The timing is -- We're on time for the council to consider this for formal review at this meeting, which would put regulations possibly effective in mid-2022, and we would be meeting that statutory deadline no problem.

For this meeting, it should go pretty quickly. In December, you guys already reviewed, in a little bit of detail, the draft rationale, and so what I wanted to do today is just walk you through the more fleshed-out rationale for each of the actions, to make sure there's nothing that has been left off, and we also have a couple of tweaks to the language of alternatives in Action 3, which is for the sector allocations, and we would like to get a little bit more rationale from the council on why we only have two sector allocation alternatives under Action 3, and we also need to go over input from the Law Enforcement AP for Sub-Action 5a, and this is the one that addresses the recreational bag limit, and, as I said, make sure the conclusions are as you wish them to be before you consider approving this for formal review.

Another thing I would like to do is draw your attention to Attachment -- The draft amendment document, PDF page 19 of that document has a table showing the status determination criteria that are based on the SEDAR 50 assessment, and so one of the things that NOAA GC has recommended the council do is formally adopt these status determination criteria when you guys are provided with an assessment, and so this information is already included in the draft amendment, and I just wanted to bring it to your attention, so that we can talk about it on the record, that the council is in fact adopting these levels, and you can see here the deterministic values are the ones that are the recommendations, and so staff would simply add a sentence or two in the draft amendment to make that clarification.

Going back to the proposed actions, what I would like to do is just quickly walk you through these, and I am only showing the no action and the preferred, and so this is the action that establishes the rebuilding plan, and the rebuilding plan would be twenty-six years, with the rebuilding period ending in 2047, and year-one being the current year. Here is your draft conclusion, and I'm not going to spend a whole lot of time reading through this, and I'm sure you don't want me just to read to you, but, basically, this stock has been under rebuilding plans for some time, and there seem to be some issues with recruitment, or things that are not related to fishing, and the council has acknowledged this.

There is also discussion in there to the fact that the council is embarking on discussions that would address the snapper grouper fishery as a whole, and it is expected that those actions are going to result in benefits to the red porgy stock in the South Atlantic. Unless there are any desired changes or additions to the conclusion, we can move on.

Action 2 revises the ABC, the total ACL, and the annual optimum yield. Again, only the preferred is being shown here, and these are the recommendations from your Scientific and Statistical Committee for ABC and OY, in pounds whole weight. Again, the draft conclusion hasn't changed from what we went over in December, and I do want to point out that there was a revision to the economic analyses for this action, and they were revised to update the net economic benefits for the commercial sector.

The revisions basically changed the numbers a little bit, but they didn't actually alter the determination, the ranking of the alternatives, or the impacts analysis, for NEPA purposes, but I wanted to bring it to you all's attention, and, if anybody wants to know more details, as to what

those changes were, I'm sure John Hadley could come up here and explain, but, like I said, it was very minor, but I just wanted to note that on the record. Any questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and so we have a brief discussion about OFL, right, and whether -- I was wondering if we were going to try to add that text to this document, we as in you, Monica, and I, and not -- It wasn't a council thing.

MS. BROUWER: Yes, and I guess maybe I forgot to mention -- I just talked about the status determination criteria, and the OFL and the ABC is already part of Chapter 1, and what I said is we could clarify, with a sentence or two in Chapter 1 of the amendment, to make sure we capture the fact that the council is in fact adopting those levels, as recommended by the SSC through this amendment, and so they become part of the FMP.

MR. GRIMES: Okay. Thank you. Sorry, and I just wanted to make sure we gave notice of that. My apologies.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on to Action 3, this is where we start getting into some changes, and, here, basically all we did was take out the explanation for how the allocation, the sector allocations, were arrived at from the language of each of the alternatives, and you'll see that this has been done for all the other amendments that are currently under development, and so that explanation is now fleshed out in the discussion, but it just simply has been removed from the language of the alternatives, and so you see that in strike-through text there.

Preferred Alternative 2, for your allocations, is to use the allocation formula, which was originally not utilized for red porgy, because the allocation is 50/50, 50 percent commercial and 50 recreational. When you apply the allocation formula to the updated landings stream, meaning using the recreational estimates as a result of the Fishery Effort Survey, the allocations remain essentially very similar, and so there's an extra one-and-a-half percent allocated to the commercial sector than before. As I mentioned earlier here, we would like a little bit more rationale for why we are not considering additional alternatives to no action and then your preferred.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking for discussion on this. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, if I might, based on some of the discussion I've heard as this has been developing, is that the council has been very pleased with the existing allocations, and it's essentially a 50/50 split anyway, and that you weren't looking to make big changes relative to this, particularly given the stock status and the need to rebuild. Thus, there would be no need to look at larger changes in allocation.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you, and I guess I forgot to point out here that we do have language here that staff has put together for you to consider, and it's essentially similar to what Shep just said, and so the update to the recreational landings stream that I just mentioned didn't substantially change the historical landings ratio between the commercial and the recreational sectors, and so that would be why the council is not looking to make any other changes, and so, if you guys are okay with this rationale, and you don't have anything else to add --

MS. MCCAWLEY: It doesn't look like folks are wanting to add anything else to that draft rationale for the two alternatives. I don't see any additional hands.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. Moving on to Action 4, this is the action that modifies the commercial trip limits. Again, your preferred is on the screen, fifteen fish per trip, for both seasons, and we do have a split season for red porgy. I have included the link to the decision tool that has all the analyses, in case anybody wants to go back through, and the draft conclusion, again, is essentially the same that we went over in December, and so no changes here.

Moving on to Action 5, there are two sub-actions, the first one addressing the bag limit, and so this is where you had requested some feedback from your Law Enforcement Advisory Panel. Your current preferred is to reduce the bag limit to one fish per person per day, or one fish per person per trip, whichever is more restrictive.

We did note, and also went over this in December, that making this change would affect other possession regulations that are currently in the CFR, mainly the multiday trip possession, and so it would remain the same as it is for red porgy right now, and so a person aboard a vessel may not possess red porgy from the EEZ above that three-per-day, or three-per-trip, which now, of course, would be changed to one.

The Law Enforcement Advisory Panel did talk about this at their meeting in February, and their recommendation was to retain the current language and reduce that limit to one, to read one per day or one per trip, and they noted that, obviously, the one-per-trip restriction is more conservative. We do still have Captain Pearce here in the room, if you would like for him to elaborate on the AP's discussions on this particular issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do folks have any questions on this or concerns? I don't see any hands up, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay. I will also note the draft conclusion does discuss that the council considered vessel limits for headboats and charter boats, and it includes why those were ultimately removed from consideration. Sub-Action 5b addresses the fishing season, and your preferred is to establish a season that would be open May through June. Again, the draft conclusion is on the screen for you guys to read through it, and it's pretty much unchanged from the bullets that I presented to you in December.

Moving on to Action 6, the recreational accountability measure would be modified, and the preferred is to tie the accountability measure for the recreational sector to landings exceeding the ACL, and what would happen then is the recreational fishing season would be readjusted, and the overage would be affecting the recreational ACL for the following year, and so there is no longer reference to the status of the stock in the accountability measure, nor is it tied to the total ACL, as it was previously.

The rationale is unchanged from December as well, and so, lastly, what you have left to do here is approve the amendment for consideration for formal review. This draft motion will appear in the committee report for Full Council, and that's when we would do a roll call vote. I will also draw your attention to Attachment 60, which is a draft codified text, and, again, you will have that in your briefing book to look over before everything gets approved at Full Council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions or comments or concerns? Once again, this is for final action, and so we would consider that draft motion on the board when we get to Full Council.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I think it's only appropriate, and I've come full circle, and so I would make the motion to approve Draft Amendment 50 for final action.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. We have a motion by Kerry, and it's seconded by Carolyn, and we can approve this in committee, and, when we get to Full Council, it will be a roll call vote, and so any discussion on approving this amendment? Any concerns with approving this amendment? Once again, this will be a roll call vote in Full Council. **I don't see any hands.**

Thank you, Myra. It looks like we're done with red porgy, and, instead of jumping into gag, I am going to turn it back to our Chairman.

MR. BELL: Thank you, Jessica. Well done, everyone, and we're actually a little ahead, and so what I would like to do is what we did yesterday, and we'll just go ahead and start lunch now, at 11:30, and then we'll come back half-an-hour early, which would be 1:00, just like we did yesterday, and then we'll have an extra half-hour for gag, and we'll start fresh on gag on after -- Everybody eat a big lunch. Well, don't eat a big lunch. Eat lightly.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're starting back with the gag amendment, and, Allie, are we going to go straight to Genny with the SSC recommendations?

MS. IBERLE: Genny, you are good to go, and I will be driving.

DR. NESSLAGE: Great. Thank you. All right. In February, the SSC had an opportunity to review the gag grouper projections under alternate probability of rebuilding scenarios of 60 and 70 percent, and I will just be providing you some of the overarching feedback that the SSC had summarizing our recommendations and talking about the relative benefits, pros and cons, of 60 versus 70 percent.

To summarize, the SSC continues to recommend fishing levels be set for gag grouper using a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent, and our reasoning behind that is, as you can see from the spawning stock biomass, the plot here on the right, the stock is grossly overfished and undergoing overfishing. The spawning stock biomass estimate from the terminal year of the assessment was well below the minimum stock size threshold, and, as you are probably well aware, the lower the F target adopted, the greater the chance of rebuilding.

The main thing that we are concerned about, from a scientific uncertainty point of view, is uncertainty in recruitment for this stock. Recruitment is extremely low at this point, and it's difficult to project forward what we anticipate recruitment will be like in response to management, and so, in these rebuilding projections for both the probability of rebuilding of 60 and 70 percent scenarios, they're both reliant on a stock recruitment relationship that has difficulty estimating the expected recruitment when the stock size is low.

If you look at the graph in the lower-left, you can see that black curve that's used in the projections basically is overestimating recruitment relative to what we've seen at low stock size for this stock,

and so we're concerned about the accuracy of forecasting recruitment into the future, and that, of course, turns into uncertainty in our estimates of how productive this stock will be, and that's even in the projections, but, in the assessment itself, if you look at the graph on the right, some of the analyses that the Center had done indicated that the stock is -- The stock assessment model is likely overestimating recruitment, and so that's even before you get to the projections, and then you add the additional uncertainty in the stock recruitment relationship, and it's really -- We're not certain how this stock will respond and what near-future recruitment will look like for gag grouper.

The SSC had a couple of comments on this. In particular, we felt that it would be essential to monitor and assess gag recruitment in the near future, to ensure that these recruitment levels we're assuming in the projections are actually achieved, and they could end up being better, which would be great, but they could end up being the same or worse, and it would be very informative to the council to know that, of course.

Then we discussed a bit how changes in regulations to protect larger, fecund animals could be beneficial. The trick that I think John Carmichael mentioned, yesterday or the day before, was that these animals do change sex, and the largest animals are typically males, and so that creates a bit of a management challenge for you, and so you may want to consider some measures that would achieve balanced sex ratios for these larger animals that would be protected, in order to try and increase the probability of improved recruitment and stock rebuilding.

Then the SSC recommended that the council try to maintain its rebuilding plan until the next assessment, so that, at that time, we can assess the impact on the stock of the accuracy of those rebuilding projections, given how much uncertainty there is in how the stock will respond and how productive it will be.

We were asked what the potential consequences of adopting either a probability of rebuilding of 60 percent scenario over the SSC's recommended 70 percent, and we had a couple of summary highlights, I guess, of our discussion here. The first is that we felt that adopting a probability of rebuilding of 70 percent was more likely to ensure successful rebuilding, for a couple of reasons. The first was that median spawning stock biomass that was projected under the 70 percent probability of rebuilding scenario was estimated to be nearly 10 percent higher within the first five years after management kicks in, and more than 16 percent higher after ten years, and so that's a difference of a hundred metric tons in the first five years and 300 metric tons across the entire rebuilding timeframe of ten years.

We did spend quite a bit of time talking about how the lower bound of the projected spawning stock biomass is higher for the 70 percent rebuilding scenario, and so that means that there is a higher probability of improved spawning stock biomass, even under the worst-case recruitment conditions, which we felt was important.

The other concern the SSC raised was that three fishing seasons will have elapsed between 2019, which was the terminal year of the assessment and when management action is taken, and so, during that time, there has been continued fishing mortality that is exceeding sustainable levels, and so that's something to take into consideration as well.

We also talked about how the current projections used to estimate the probability of rebuilding don't account for variability in fishing mortality, and, in particular, we were concerned about how fishing mortality -- The fishing mortalities that are assumed in those projections, whether or not

they would even be attainable, given there is likely to be an unpredictable response to management action. As we've seen in several other fisheries when management action occurs, there's been an increase in discard mortality, and it's hard to say how that will impact the stock, and so that is something to take into consideration as well, and it adds to the overall scientific uncertainty in these projections.

Our economists, and folks from our SEP, weighed-in a bit on some of the other considerations that you might want to think about when evaluating these different rebuilding scenarios. They suggested that a cost-benefit analysis could be conducted to determine the economic impacts of the changes in landings for each of those rebuilding scenarios, and this is not just necessarily specific to gag grouper, but perhaps something to consider any time you're faced with this issue, but, with regard to gag, they did some very quick calculations and estimated that, basically, the future value of projected landings under the 70 percent rebuilding scenario, across the whole ten-year rebuilding timeframe, would result in 86 percent of the value of future landings under the 60 percent rebuilding scenario, but the thing that we talked about quite a bit was that the probability of rebuilding scenario, the 70 percent scenario, had reduced overall uncertainty in the landings.

Yes, the landings would be lower under the 70 percent scenario, but they're more likely to be realized than those under the alternative 60 percent scenario, and so, any time you're trying to weigh the pros and cons of alternate rebuilding scenarios at different probabilities of rebuilding, you want to think about multiplying, basically, the expected landings that are projected by the probability of rebuilding, and so, essentially, even though the probability of rebuilding scenario at 70 percent is projected to produce lower landings, there is a greater chance that those landings would be realized, and so there is kind of a tradeoff there.

Continuing along with the cost-benefit discussion, they also pointed out that reduction in supply may also lead to an increase in ex-vessel price, which would hopefully help offset the decrease in overall landings, and then, also, we discussed how a projected gain in harvest between those two alternate rebuilding scenarios may not be sufficient to account for the additional uncertainty in recruitment, and so, in other words, the short-term economic gains from adopting the 60 percent scenario may prevent the stock from rebuilding faster, which would result in longer-term losses, and so that's something to keep in mind.

We were asked to comment on any difficulties encountered in applying the ABC Control Rule, and we had done that back in April, and we didn't really have any difficulties there. The difficulties lay in trying to determine what the best recruitment scenario was that should be used in the projections, and that is still something we're struggling with, and the SSC will be receiving a report from our catch level projections working group at our April meeting, where hopefully they will be able to shed some light on the best approaches to take in sticky situations like this.

Just to remind you how we came up with these catch level recommendations, the overall OFL is based on F equals $FMSY$, and we then applied our current ABC Control Rule, where we applied an adjustment based on the fact that environmental conditions were not explicitly included, and also because the stock is overfished and overfishing, and because it has low productivity, high vulnerability, and high susceptibility. The total adjustments added up to 20 percent. When you subtract that from 50, you get a P^* of 30 percent, and then, to come up with our recommended probability of rebuilding, you subtract the P^* from one, and you get 70 percent.

You can see the resulting catch level recommendations from our recommended probability of rebuilding scenario of 70 percent on page 9 of our report, in Table 1, and then the council's alternative 60 percent -- The summary table can be found in Table 2 on page 10 of our report, and I believe that's all I have, but I can try to answer any questions you might have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Genny. Are there questions for Genny? I don't see any hands at this time, Genny, and that doesn't mean that we won't have more questions as we go through the document, but no hands at the moment. Thank you so much for that presentation.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I'm going to start with the scoping comment summary, and so, in December, you guys approved this amendment for scoping. We scoped this amendment, along with Amendment 51 and 53 together, the first week of February, and we received 364 online comments and thirty-five webinar comments.

I am not going to go through this document with too much detail, and I'm going to review kind of the applicable things, as we move through the decision document, and like this is Attachment 7b, if you want to review, and we had a pretty wide reach, and we saw some comments from the Gulf region as well, but kind of the highlights from scoping are most of our comments were in regard to restricting or removing spearfishing gear, and most were opposed.

We had some comments that suggested removing spearfishing gear only when using scuba gear, and I will go into detail a little bit more about what the spear fishermen noted in opposition to that action, and then the other thing I wanted to highlight was the increase in minimum size limit and slot limit, and that was another thing that we kind of heard a little bit about, and it was a mixed bag for people in favor and in opposition. Those in favor were in favor to eliminate the spearfishing gear from removing large individuals, but those opposed were concerned about discard mortality, and so, again, I will go through these in a little more detail as we go through the decision document. Any questions on scoping, before I head into this document?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any questions on that overall scoping document? We will get into some of the specific comments as we go through Amendment 53. I don't see any hands. Back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so just a quick review on the background of gag, and so our most recent stock assessment was SEDAR 71, and it had a terminal year of 2019, and it indicated the stock is both overfished and experiencing overfishing. In June of 2021, you guys received a letter that stated that action is necessary, and so we started this amendment, and we have a link to the assessment there, and I did want to note, or recap, that, in September, you guys were given guidance on the rebuilding plan for gag grouper, and it was noted that, if F equals zero, the stock could rebuild in seven years, and so, therefore, under National Standard 1, the maximum timeline for rebuilding would be ten years.

Then the AP reviewed this amendment, kind of before you guys saw it in December, just a really kind of like brief discussion document, and Jimmy provided you guys feedback in December, and, then, in February, we took this to the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel, and they kind of discussed a little bit about the spearfishing action, and so the AP noted that they required a little bit more detail on this amendment, to really provide better guidance, as far as enforcement goes, but they did note that fishermen could claim that they used a gaff to harvest fish, instead of a spear, and so that could pose some difficulty for enforcement.

They also noted that there are changes -- There would then be changes in state and federal regulations, and so, if you're transiting through state waters with a speared gag, it might be an enforcement issue, and then they also noted to consider the identification issues between gag and black grouper, and so we still have Captain Pearce, if you guys have any questions for him or any additional comments on this, and I will pause here for a second. All right. Then barreling right ahead.

For the ABC, Genny just covered a lot of what I have here in the decision document, and I added some language about the February SSC meeting, and so the Table 1 that you guys see in this document is ABC and OFL levels for that 70 percent P rebuild, and so these are the same values that you guys saw in December, and, again, we talked about the 60 percent in December.

For this meeting, we're going to review the scoping comments a little bit more as we go through, and the other thing that I would like to get from the committee, at this point, would be preferred options for Actions 1, 2, and 3, and so the reason we're asking for that is because of the timeline of this amendment and the amount of analysis that the IPT is going to be doing, and it will help us streamline analysis, and so that is what we'll have you guys do today.

Then, looking at timing, and so, right now, we're seeing a decision document, and we're reviewing scoping, and this will go to the advisory panel in April, and then, this summer, you guys will review a draft amendment, and then public hearings in the fall, and we should have a final amendment in March, and so I think I'm going to pause there, before the purpose and need, and see if there's any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: We had a briefing with council staff before this meeting, and one of the things that I raised was, given the condition of gag, if we take final action in March of next year, we won't be able to influence change in the 2023 season, and so another year is going to go by before anything is implemented.

I recognize this is a very difficult amendment, and it might be overly ambitious to take final action in December, and I'm curious, John, if you and your team had any further discussion, kind of following our meeting, about the idea of trying to do something by December of this year, so that we could implement it for 2023.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We recognize that it could be tough, and I think now it's scheduled to be final approval by the council in March, and so getting it done sooner will depend on the pace of the council in making decisions, and so how much progress you make here will have a lot to do with that. Then when we have the public hearings will have a lot to do with it, and how much you change things for after that.

The concern of trying to do something like a framework is that that will take away from time and energy and staff to work on this, and so it will most likely have the opposite effect, as far as getting this in, and it would slow this down, and, since this is on a statutory deadline, we don't think that's a good approach.

What we think could be considered is something the council has done quite often in the past, is to request emergency action when we think we're about a year from having the regulations actually go in, and, at that point, we could have a better sense of where the council is actually going on this, and so we could lower the ABC, potentially, in that way, and reduce the harvest levels. That would take certainly far less time away from the effort of working on this, and so I do recognize that probably puts more burden on the Regional Office staff to handle that part, but that seems to be, over all the workload concerns, the fastest way to do something quicker.

MR. STRELCHECK: John, I am generally in agreement with that, and there's certainly tradeoffs, obviously, with various approaches, and I think we'll want to, obviously, monitor the progress that we're making, and, at some point, a date certain, decide whether or not we need to head toward an interim or emergency rulemaking, depending on how quickly we're making progress. Then can I have a follow-up?

Related to the rebuilding plan, and what Genny just presented, during the SSC meeting, I made a number of comments, and I was, I guess, corrected, in terms of a misunderstanding that I had, but I think it's important that we talk about this as well, in terms of the options for rebuilding, and so the SSC has used the ABC Control Rule that we have designed to determine probability for rebuilding at 70 percent.

We have set the rebuilding timeframe at ten years or less. From what I understand that you said at the SSC meeting, John, that the council still has the authority to specify the probability of rebuilding, but, obviously, the SSC is recommending the 70 percent, and I think has provided strong justification, but I just want to make sure that's clear to the council members.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would just put out a question, and so the Gulf gag stock is in worse shape, and they are going to rebuild in greater than ten years, and I guess that's because, with fishing mortality at zero, that they could not rebuild in ten, and so they have a longer period of time to rebuild, yet, when we did that here on the Atlantic side, there was the ability to rebuild in ten years, and so we had to, and is that why we're at two different scenarios here for gag?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I don't think it's accurate to say that the Gulf is in worse shape. It might be in slightly better shape, and not much better shape, but you're correct. When the calculations were done for Gulf gag, under an F equals zero, it extended beyond that ten-year timeframe.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks. Mel.

MR. BELL: We had a little discussion of this earlier, with differences with amberjack in the Gulf versus the Atlantic, but I guess what we're describing here are differences related, biological differences, our gag versus gag in the Gulf, for whatever reasons, and the data that support those decisions are driving it, and it's just that it is the same species, but -- I'm just saying this for clarification, for people that would ask that question of why is that, but I guess it's the biology, over here versus the Gulf, that sort of drives that.

MR. STRELCHECK: That may be part of it, and I don't know how influential it is, and one of the major differences, from my recollection, is red tide events and the impacts of red tide in the Gulf relative to the South Atlantic and the severity of those red tides and how that then affects the rebuilding projections and that they base it off of some kind of medium red tide scenarios, which

ultimately result in a longer rebuilding timeframe, factoring in the fact that there might be some natural mortality events that occur that disrupt that rebuilding plan.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Mel.

MR. BELL: I guess I'm just -- This is me just thinking of the differences, but, in the Gulf, you have a rather limited latitudinal spread, in terms of variability of temperatures throughout the year and what the gag do. For us, it's all the way up the coast, and so, I mean, to me, yes, it's the same species, but they're in like different worlds, and so that might contribute to differences that we see in data, and, I don't know, and that's all I could kind of come up with as a big difference.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just in response, the other component of this is Magnuson has the ten-year timeframe, right, and I don't recall the exact numbers, but it wasn't like, when the Gulf calculated F equals zero, that it produced a really long timeframe, and it got over the ten-year hump, right, but maybe just barely, by a year or two, which then allows them much more flexibility, whereas, in the South Atlantic, based on the condition of the stock and other factors, we just fell just under that ten-year timeframe, right and so, if there wasn't, in my view, an arbitrary ten-year timeframe laid out, then this could be very different for the South Atlantic or for the Gulf.

MR. CARMICHAEL: It's something that we've commented on many times, and some of the Magnuson Act revisions actually finally went there, where they were being more consistent and allowing you the time at zero plus the generation, because what happens is, if you get to ten-and-a-half years, you add a generation time on that, and so, for these long-lived fish who are slower maturing, you might add six, seven, eight, nine, ten years, easily, and so that's always been the issue, and that's why this ten years has been such a concern from some of our fish. It's not just you get the time at zero that's a little more than ten, and you get to add on a whole generation time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anything else, before we dive into the purpose and need statement? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I don't know if this is the right time, or time to make this very frustrated comment, but, you know, I am going to read from North Carolina's website, and it says juvenile gag are estuarine-dependent and inhabit estuaries from Massachusetts to Cape Canaveral, often residing in seagrass beds and oyster reefs.

We are trying to bring back a fish that is dependent in estuaries, and I will take our Indian River Lagoon, for example, and we don't have no seagrass, and so we could probably completely stop fishing on this particular species of fish and have no results, and so I am very -- It's frustrating, to me, that the fisheries -- We keep having to cut back on quotas and do all these things to try to help bring the fish back, and we're not getting at the root of the problem, and the root of the problem is the destruction of the nation's estuaries, and it's very frustrating to me to go through this machinations and trying to pretend that we're going to bring fish back, but, if we don't address -- If somehow NOAA and the EPA and our nation's leadership don't start trying to fix the problems with our estuaries, we will never -- You know, there is some fisheries that will never recover, and that's my frustration, and I just wanted to air it, before we got going.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Anything else before we go back to the purpose and need? I don't see any other hands.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so the purpose and need that you see here is unchanged from December. For the sake of time, I'm not going to read it verbatim, but any modifications at this point on the purpose and need? All right. Then I will launch right into actions.

Action 1 is establishing a rebuilding plan for gag, and so, like we talked about, the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing. It does not currently have a rebuilding plan for the South Atlantic. Our Tmax is that ten years, and then the assessment projections indicated that the stock can rebuild in the seven years, in the absence of fishing mortality.

The options for this action are Option 1, no change, and Option 2 would be Tmin, and so seven years, with 2029 being the end of the rebuilding timeframe, and then 2023 would be year-one. We have a note that that Tmin assumes fishing mortality of zero and that discards are eliminated, and then Option 3 is establishing a plan with a ten-year timeframe, ending in 2032, with 2023 as year-one. Like I mentioned, we're looking for -- The IPT is looking for preferreds for the first three actions, to kind of help facilitate analysis, and so I do have a draft motion up on the board, after you guys discuss, and so I will turn it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie, and so we need to pick a preferred here on Actions 1 through 3, so that the analyses can be conducted in the document. Thoughts or discussions on selecting these options as a preferred? Mel.

MR. BELL: **Well, I move that we accept Option 3 as our preferred under Action 1.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so motion by Mel and seconded by Chester to select Option 3 as the preferred option for Action 1. Mel, is that because it's the longest time period?

MR. BELL: That's already going to be difficult enough, and painful enough, and so I wasn't trying to maximize the pain with seven, but that's just my approach there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I guess I would be interested in hearing staff's rationale for needing to select preferreds at this point. I mean, we don't have analyses, and we don't really even have a fully-fleshed-out document, and so I feel like it's premature, but I also recognize that we want to move on this fairly quickly.

MS. IBERLE: I think what the IPT was thinking was using the seven years or the ten years, moving forward, as we analyze, and the same with the ACL and the allocations, and we have a lot of management modification actions that will need that basis to help us analyze.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think so, and so discussions on selecting Option 3 as the preferred under Action 1? Chester.

MR. BREWER: I seconded it because Option 2 is really not viable. I mean, you're assuming that fishing mortality is zero and discards are eliminated, and that's like, what?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any more discussion? All right. **Any objections?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 2 revises the total acceptable biological catch, annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for gag, and so, like we heard from Genny, we have new ABC recommendations from the SSC, and we also need to incorporate the new MRIP-FES recreational landings. Previously, or the current gag ACL, it was set at 95 percent of the ABC, through Reg Amendment 22 in 2015.

I am not going to review the Snapper Grouper AP comments, and Jimmy went over those in December, and Table 2 lays out your options, and so Option 1 is having the ACL equal to the OY equal to the current ABC, and that current ABC includes recreational landings that are based off of the CHTS survey method.

Option 2 is the ACL equal to the OY equal to your updated ABC, based on those FES landings, and then you have a 5 and 10 percent buffer. In December, we did show you that 20 percent buffer, and the IPT was talking about this, and, if this isn't an option for the council, the IPT does suggest removing it, again to help streamline analysis, and so, if this isn't something that you would even be willing to consider, then we suggest removing that. Then Table 3 is your actual ACL in pounds gutted weight, and so I will pause here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion on Action 2? What do we think about these options? Do we want to select one as a preferred, or do we want to remove any? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I will just throw it out there for the sake of discussion, and, if I'm following everything correctly, there has been a lot of uncertainty already built into the assessment and the SSC's recommendations to us to this point. I wish we had that -- There was a lovely cartoon that I liked on the first day that explained what's our role and what's their role, but it seems to me, if I'm following correctly, that their rule has been done, and a lot has been baked in.

If that's the case, and anyone please correct me if I'm wrong, I would be inclined to choose Option 2 as a preferred, because I feel like we've already been precautionary, and I'm not trying not to be precautionary, but I feel like that's already been done, and we're already being as strict as -- We have to be, legally, as strict as possible on the rebuilding time, and that's going to be painful, and so that would be my rationale for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so that was a motion to select Option 2 under Action 2 as the preferred. It's seconded by Spud. It's under discussion. Would you like to comment on that, Spud?

MR. WOODWARD: Yes, and thank you. Yes, I support that motion, and I will look to staff, and is there any reason why we should consider that there is some management uncertainty that would justify a buffer, because, as Kerry said, I think there's been ample consideration of scientific uncertainty built into the catch advice from the SSC, and so I would support this, unless there is some compelling reason for us to consider some management uncertainty.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chester.

MR. BREWER: Another consideration, or something else to consider, is, if you are -- I mean, you're talking about a hell of a hit right here. Whichever one of these options you choose is one hell of a hit, and, as you look down the road two or three years, you see that your ACLs start to get up to certainly much better numbers, such that, by 2029 or so, you're looking at the potential

to be back roughly where we -- Not roughly where we are, but you've got some numbers that people will be able to fish successfully, and so I think some consideration needs to be given to, if you're going to take the hit, let's go ahead and take a really bad hit for a couple or three years, so that we've got more fish available in three or four years. That's all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chester. It seems like Option 2 is maybe the best scenario here. Mel and then Andy.

MR. BELL: I would just -- Spud made a very good point, and Kerry was talking about, of course, scientific uncertainty, and I got that, but, if there is some compelling reason, related to management uncertainty, that's where you base the decision on that, but, barring that, and then I would also agree that it's going to be a shock as it is, and I'm fine with 2 myself.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Whether it's 5 percent or 10 percent, it's a small fraction of the uncertainty compared to the difference between the OFL and the ABC. The OFL is 367,000 pounds in 2023, compared to an ABC of half of that, right, and where I think the management uncertainty creeps in, and how much of a buffer, if any, do you want to apply, is what's the likelihood of exceeding the catch limit and triggering the accountability measure, and certainly, with constraining catch and making a lot of modifications to management, our uncertainty is going to go up on whether or not we can effectively constrain catch, and I'm not convinced that a 5 or 10 percent buffer is going to really help us with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on this? All right. **Any objections to this motion?** All right. **That motion stands approved.**

MS. IBERLE: Then, for this action, I guess I would be looking for guidance to staff on whether or not you guys would be in favor of removing Option 5, and I don't think we need a motion for that at this point, and we can just strike it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see heads nodding yes, and so, yes, I think we're good to remove Option 5.

MS. IBERLE: Okay. Thank you. All right. Action 3 is revising the gag sector allocations and sector annual catch limits, and so we're revising that ACL and incorporating that new survey method, and so we need to revise allocations, and so the current allocations, set in Amendment 16 in 2008, are 51 percent to the commercial and 49 to the recreational, and the basis for this allocation was the distribution of landings from 1993 to 2003.

We also have the allocation formula as an option in here, and the allocation formula uses an average from 1986 to 2008 and an average from 2006 to 2008, and then, to take a look at how the fishery has been operating, from 2015 to 2019, the commercial sector has averaged 77 percent of the commercial ACL, and you can see that in Table 4, and there have been no commercial closures outside of that spawning season closure in that time period.

Then, when you look at the recreational sector, they average 33 percent of the recreational ACL during that timeframe, noting here that that percentage, and all of the numbers in Table 5, are CHTS -- They're in CHTS terms, because the ABC, or the ACL, for those years is based on CHTS numbers, and so you can see, in Table 5, those numbers, and there have been no recreational

closures, again, aside from that spawning season closure, during that time. Then Figure 2 shows the recreational FES landings and commercial landings from 1986 to 2019.

The options you're going to see are a little bit different than shown in December, and so, in December, I came to you with an option that had that 5 percent buffer between the ACL and the ABC, because that's what was previously set for the species, and you asked to see ACL equal to ABC, and so, going forth, that's how those are calculated.

Table 6 shows you all of your actions, and I want to start upfront and say don't look at Option 4 in this table, and I'm going to go over that separately, but Option 1 is a 49 percent/51 percent commercial and rec, and I'm sorry these are flipped here, and so that's the landings from 1999 to 2003 used in Amendment 16. Then Option 2 reallocates using that same basis, and so the distribution of landings from 1999 to 2003, but it uses the updated MRIP-FES landings, and it results in a 63 and change and 37 percent to the recreational and commercial. In the document, there is some weird things going on with the percent symbol, and so I apologize. The one in the briefing book had some errors there.

Then Option 3 would be using that allocations formula, like I mentioned, with the year range from 1986 to 2008 and then 2006 to 2008, and that would result in a 56.94 to the recreational and 43.06 to the commercial, and so, when you're scrolling down, and you are looking at Table 7, Table 7 is your ACL options for Options 1, 2, and 3, in pounds gutted weight, and so any questions on that, before I jump into Option 4? It's probably good to pause here for a second.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions? I don't see any hands, and I'm going to pass it back to you to go over Option 4.

MS. IBERLE: Okay, and so Option 4 is the new allocation method that we discussed in December, and it was really hard to put into that table, and, Tim, you mentioned earlier the share the pain and share the gain, and so I'm going to run with that theme.

All right, and so what Option 4, and all of its sub-options, aim to do is to allocate in two kind of steps, and so the initial reduction, or the share the pain, and so what this does is it takes the reduction in harvested needed to get from what you guys are catching now for both sectors to what that new catch level is, and so there's a reduction in catch needed. This reduces, for each sector, based on previous landings, and so you would take a reduction proportional to the landings observed before the rebuilding plan was established, and so it's a reduced status quo.

Then, after that initial reduction, and I have an example, and so, if none of this makes sense, hold tight. I have an example, and so, after that initial reduction, you're going to share the gain. Each year, that catch level is going to increase, in pounds, and so you're going to split that poundage increase and give it to each sector, and so you've locked in that status quo, and, each year, each sector will receive an increase in poundage, on top of the allocation, and so I know that was a lot, and so that's why we made a shadow shark fishery example.

Earlier in the week, Mike's shadow shark fishery was doing okay, and mine is not. Before I start this, the sub-options are where you have a little bit of flexibility for this allocation option, and so you can base that status quo off of a single year of landings, and so 2020, a three-year average, and so 2018 to 2020, or a five-year average, and so 2016 to 2020. That is how you are basing that

moving forward and what you want to represent how the fishery has been operating. For shadow shark, we're going to use just 2020.

In 2020, the commercial sector caught 100,000 pounds, and the recreational caught 50,000, and so you had a total landings, for 2020, of 150,000. The stock assessment comes out, and shadow shark is not doing great, and so you have a reduced catch level of 75,000 pounds. Based on those 2020 landings, a 50 percent reduction in harvest is needed, and so, in year-one, what you're going to do, according to this method, is reduce each sector's landings by 50 percent from that 2020 level, and so you take 100,000 pounds and cut it in half, and you have 50,000, and the same with the recreational, and they're down to 25,000 pounds, and so there's that 50 percent decrease for each sector. When you look at the percentage, that ends up being a 67/33 split between sectors.

In year-two, you already shared the pain, and now you have to share the gain, and so, in year-two, you went from 75,000 pounds to 160,000 pounds, and so you have gained 85,000 pounds, total, and so what this method then does is it allocates the poundage, and so you split that 85,000 down the middle, and each sector gets 42,500 pounds added onto their previous year's catch level, and so the commercial is up to 92,500, and the recreational is up to 67,500.

When you look at that, the allocation percentage changes, and it's going to change slightly throughout the rebuilding, because you're allocating the poundage and not the percentage, and so, when you go to year-three, now you're up to 247,000 pounds, and so you added 87,000, and, again, you chop that in half and add it on top of the catch level from the previous year, and so, as you can see, that status quo has been locked in in year-one, and you're building on that each year throughout the rebuilding plan, and so, in year-four, you're out to 330,000 pounds, and that's an 86,000-pound increase from the previous year, and each sector gets 43,000 pounds, and that percentage allocation is going to shift again.

It's not huge shifts, but it is going to change each year, because you're not allocating by the percent, and you're allocating by the pounds. I am going to stop here, with this still pulled up, and I hope I didn't royally confuse everyone, and so I will pause here.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Questions on this shadow shark example?

MS. IBERLE: Sorry, and my apologies, but what we're looking for today, with this allocation method, is, is this something that you want to include in the amendment, moving forward, and then, if you do, what kind of status quo basis are you guys thinking? Do you want a single-year, a three-year average, or a five-year average, and so those are the things to mull over, as you discuss. Thank you, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there questions or comments? Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, when this concept came up in December, I remember that we were rather enamored with exploring it, and so thank you for explaining that, and so, I mean, I certainly think it would be worth pursuing, or leaving in there, and it's kind of outside the box from what we're used to, but it has some appeal, and so then would have to figure out, like you said, how we want to start it, but I think it's worth pursuing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I agree, and I don't think you all mean that it's imperative that we pick a preferred for this right now, correct?

MS. IBERLE: I am going to leave that up to you. Because this is the first time you guys are seeing this, I think maybe you might need a little more time, and so that's up to you, and I also will note that, in the appendix of your decision document, I have kind of this graphic, without animations, in there for you to look at. The other thing that's included in there is this allocation method with the gag numbers, and so you can look at those as well, and those are Tables A3 -- So there's three tables, and you can look at the single-year, three-year average, and five-year average numbers, and I actually wouldn't mind pulling those up, after -- I want to let you guys discuss it a little bit more, but I will walk through those tables and how to read them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would prefer to definitely keep this, and I guess add it in, and I guess it's not officially added, but, anyway, I would like this in. Personally, I would like this in there, and, without looking at those tables, my gut instinct is to go with probably like a five-year average. I think, right off the bat, we should reject one year as being 2020, without a doubt, and I would think that we would need those extra years, to sort of smooth out whatever happened in 2020.

MS. IBERLE: The IPT actually has a recommendation to consider the three or five-year average, and they had concerns over a single year, and, in particular, 2020 may not be indicative of how the fishery is operating.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Good points. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: This is probably a question for Tim, and so Tim is the person that brought this forward as an idea, and this, to me, is a little bit different, in concept, than I think the way you proposed it, but maybe I'm misremembering, in that you were looking at sharing the pain based on kind of the percent utilization that was occurring previously, in terms of kind of how much are you harvesting with regard to the quota, and then reduce, kind of equivalently, based on that, and am I mistaken?

MR. GRINER: No, and I originally thought of it as just the year where we are, the 2020, starting where we are today, regardless of what a three or five-year average was, because the reality is we are where we are today, and so you could go back in time, for three years or five years, but the reality of it is, if you look at the last two years, they're pretty close to where we are in 2020, and so the trend is definitely there, and the numbers aren't very different, commercial or recreational, and so my original thought was to start where our current landings are and take the new ABC and go from there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Leann will probably appreciate this comment, because we've debated red grouper and red grouper allocation in the Gulf, but one of the things that has happened in the Gulf, with looking at allocation for red grouper, is that we had new FES numbers, and we changed the allocation, or the council proposed changing the allocation, but the stock also had declined, in terms of status, slightly, and so we have confounding factors that are kind of influencing then the

allocation and the setting of catch limits that not only include the status and health of the fishery, but the FES numbers themselves.

What I am concerned about, with this approach, is I'm not sure it's really accounting for the change in FES, and, from that standpoint, you can argue that we're sharing the pain, but, in reality, the pain, I think, will be higher for the recreational sector, because we've also changed the metrics in which we're quantifying their catch.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a good point, and I guess I would ask a question, but is there not a way to continue to consider this type of scenario, but have a different starting number, and so Tim is making a case for starting with 2020, and you're making a case of, well, but that was with CHTS, and so, if we used FES numbers, your starting numbers, and maybe your percentages, would be different, and so I guess could you still use this and just somehow account for FES in the start, in the beginning?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, and I want to confirm how the recreational landings are presented to us, because I'm assuming they're in the old methodology, CHTS.

MS. IBERLE: Let me make sure. My apologies. I should know that off the top of my head, but I want to confirm before I say either way.

MR. STRELCHECK: The bottom line is I think that you're correct, Jessica. I think, based on the underlying data, and how we decide how that pain is shared, and obviously the benefits are shared, we just need to make sure it's consistently computed.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got it. Other comments? I would like to look at the tables on this that looks at the 2020 data and the three-year average and the five-year average, but it seems like, I think, we're leaning towards this is an option that we would like to have in the document, and I'm just looking around, and I'm going to turn it back to you, Allie, to walk us through how this would work in the gag-specific example here with the different year timeframes.

MS. IBERLE: When you're looking at these tables, this first row up here, and, again, my apologies for -- I want to double-check these recreational landings, but you have the commercial landings, the recreational landings, and the total, and then this first row is your status quo, and then, in year-one, or 2023, you have this new catch level, the percent reduction needed, and then the resulting ACL and allocation for each sector, and so this is the essentially share the pain line, and then you have each year subsequently throughout the rebuilding plan, and you have that total ACL, the total increase.

Similar to shadow shark, it's around 80,000, or 85,000, and then the increase for each sector and the commercial and recreational ACL and then the resulting allocation. Each of these tables are the same, but it's just -- The only change is which year, or year range, you're basing it off of, and so that's how to walk through those tables, and those are in the appendix.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I see hands going up. Chris and then Chester.

MR. CONKLIN: By 2026, the recreational ACL would be higher than what they actually caught in 2020, and I just wanted to point that out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I'm not sure. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Well, what Chris just said is true if you take the old currency, but I think the real issue here is which currency do we use in setting our base year, because, if you're going to go with the old telephone survey, we know that those numbers are highly suspect, so to speak, and all the numbers are highly suspect, but the FES numbers are perhaps less suspect, and we're not looking at those in this example, and I'm not sure that they're brought forth in any tables that we've seen, and, now, I could be wrong on that, and, if they are brought forth, then could we put them up there, so we could get an idea of what they are?

MS. IBERLE: I didn't want to misspeak, but these are FES. This is based off of recreational FES landings.

MR. BREWER: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there more questions or comments? This is just the one for 2020, and do you want to show us the one for the three-year average?

MS. IBERLE: This is the three-year average, and, again, for the sake of time, I'm not going to go through all the numbers, but you can just take a quick look at how that shakes out, and it's slightly different if you're using a three-year average, and then I feel like people are looking, and so I don't want to scroll, and I will let you guys sit with this for a minute.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are people still looking, or are we okay to go to the other table? Okay. It looks like thumbs-up to scroll down, and this is the five-year average. All right. Now that people have had a chance to look at this, I think it's kind of an interesting way to look at this, and so what do people think about keeping this in the document? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I certainly support keeping it in there, and I want to echo what Kerry said. I think using the longer time series is the best way to look at performance of the fishery and the variability of the time and things that were going on, and so, whether we -- Do we need to make a decision now to discard the three-year and the single-year from further consideration, or does that just need to stay in there and carry forward through the process?

MS. IBERLE: I guess my only question for you guys would be would you like to see analysis with the other year ranges included, would be my guess at this point, and so, I mean, you can always leave them in there, if that's something that you want to explore.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We have more hands up, and I'm going to go to others. Tim and then Mel.

MR. GRINER: I would tend to want to leave them all in there, just so that they could continue to be reviewed and looked at, and we could get input.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I would be fine with that. I was just concerned about the amount of workload. If it's manageable, then leave them in.

MS. IBERLE: I think that's something I guess the IPT would have to mull over. This one does have a lot of analysis, and so I will say that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud, anything to add to this?

MR. WOODWARD: I guess the only thing I would say is the single year I don't think would really carry forward, but I don't know how much of a burden that will be from an analysis standpoint. I mean, one single year may not be that much additional work, and keep it in there, so we can have it to compare and contrast.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would kind of like to see them all, but let's see what others have to say. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I would recommend multiple years, and 2020 just -- Using a single year, obviously, there's a lot of variability in the statistics, but, also, that was a year where MRIP data was imputed, in many instances, just because of sampling challenges due to COVID, and so I don't think -- Even if we use one year, it's not a good reference year to be comparing against, and so I would recommend three and five years.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I have another idea suggested here. Instead of eliminating one set of years here, meaning the 2022 year, which is the single-year, the three-year average, or the five-year average, we could go back to the -- There is four different options for this action, and we could eliminate one of the other options, and so that would cut down on the analysis, instead of cutting it down here out of this new option. We're scrolling back to that.

There are the options, and so we just looked at Option 4, with the three different sets of years, and I don't think that we want to decrease the pieces, the sets of years, in Option 4, but do we want to eliminate Option 2 or 3? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I think, if we're interested in doing that, probably eliminating Option 2, because do I understand correctly that Option 3 is the previously existing allocation formula and just filled with FES numbers, and is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: Option 2 is the previously used method, applied to the updated landings, and Option 3 is the allocations formula, and that's included because it was used for some other snapper grouper species, like red porgy, and I think for golden tile, and it's been used before, and so we've been kind of including that as an option, and, as a reminder, the year basis for the allocations formula is 1986 to 2008 and 2006 to 2008, and so that can give you some discussion, if that's something you were wanting to eliminate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. Just throwing a suggestion out there, and so, if you choose to keep all four of these allocation approaches, that's going to be a lot of analysis, and so one thing you may want to consider is just directing staff to do sort of the bookend analyses, like a high and a low, and, of course, you can kind of imagine what's going to be in between, and that cuts down on the amount of work that the IPT has to do to have something for you guys to look at in June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What's the pleasure of the committee here? Mel.

MR. BELL: I know I said look at all of them, but it's obviously going to be a lot of work, and I appreciate Tim's approach to start where you are, but any other year other than 2020 -- As Andy said, 2020 is just an atrocious year, and so I would recommend maybe ditching 2020 as the first year, and then you're left with three or five, but I get it, but there just couldn't be a worse year, probably, to pick as a place to start.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so it sounds like you're making a suggestion that, from Option 4, we would remove the single year. Okay. All right. Anything else that we want to do to this particular action? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Did we want to get rid of Option 2, Spud?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's up to you.

MR. WOODWARD: I am still a little, I guess, confused about it, and so which one is the basis for the existing Coastal Household Survey data? That's 2?

MS. MCCAWLEY: It's 1.

MR. WOODWARD: Okay, and so it's that 1999 to 2003 landings distribution? Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Number 2 uses that same method, but with the updated landings information, and I don't know if you want to get rid of 2.

MR. WOODWARD: Then I would change my opinion then, I guess, and we would delete Option 3 and leave Option 2 in there, sort of, again, bookending things with the highest possible change to some more modest range of changes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let's go to Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: I think you covered it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we're getting rid of Option 4a, and then I'm a little unclear if we're removing anything else. Chris and then Tim and then Mel.

MR. CONKLIN: We're getting rid of 4a, and we're not changing the year to like 2019, right, and so the only other thing I was thinking is do we need to get 2020 out of the Option 4b and 4c and back it up to 2017 to 2019? That's the only thing I wanted to point out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Great question. I don't know who that's a question for. It's a good point, because 2020 was a -- Mel is right that, if 2020 is a bad year, then it's a bad year, and then maybe it needs to come out of the range, and so is the direction to staff to back up the three and five years so that they end in 2019? Okay. I see heads nodding yes. Go ahead.

MS. IBERLE: I just want to make sure that I'm recording this correctly, and so do you still want three sub-actions, one with 2017 to 2019, one with 2018 to 2020, and then the five-year, or do you just want to change the three-year to 2017 to 2019? I just want to make sure I'm getting that correct. The second? Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Just for the record, 2019 is the terminal year for this assessment.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tim, did you want to add anything else here?

MR. GRINER: I just wanted to make sure that I didn't get confused again, and so Option 3 is using the current allocation formula with FES numbers? Is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: The allocation formula is something that's been used on other snapper grouper species, but it's not currently used for gag, and so think of it as Option 1 is the method that they used when the allocations that we have now are set, but it's on the old landings, and Option 2 is that same method, but it goes back to 1999 to 2003, with the updated landings.

MR. GRINER: Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel, did you have something that you wanted to add here?

MR. BELL: No, and I think the direction that Spud was going in originally, where he was talking about taking out 2, kind of led to maybe taking out 3, but, if we want to just leave 3 in there, it's fine.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me see if I can recap, and so it seems like, from this table, we are deleting Option 4a, because it's based on a single year, and that single year is 2020, and then, in Option 4b and 4c, we are backing up those time series so that the end of the time series will be 2019 and not 2020. Otherwise, we're keeping all other options in here for staff to analyze. All right. I see heads nodding yes. I appreciate that discussion, and, Tim, thank you for thinking outside the box to bring something new back for us.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Moving on, in December, we talked a lot about modifying commercial and recreational management measures, and I want to kind of lay out how the rest of this document is organized, and so we have an action for essentially each sector, and then we have a gear action, because I know we talked about gear, when we talked about each sector in December, and so we kind of pulled that out.

Action 4 modifies gag grouper commercial management measures, and, currently, there is a thousand-pound gutted weight trip limit until 75 percent of the commercial ACL is met, and then that trip limit steps down to 500 pounds gutted weight. The commercial season is from May 1 to December 31, with that spawning season closure the first part of the year, and there is the twenty-four-inch total length minimum size.

I included some information here on the trip limit step-down, and so it was put in place in Regulatory Amendment 14 in 2014, and I wanted to look at, since it was put in, how many times landings went over 75 percent and how many times this was actually triggered, and so, since its implementation in 2014, the landings have gone over 75 percent a total of three years, and so 2014 through 2016. However, this trip limit step-down was only implemented in 2015, and so you see that in Table 9, and so the percent of the commercial ACL used and then which year there was a step-down.

Then a little bit of a look on the female maturity for gag, and so, when we're talking about the size limit, I included female maturity, based on SEDAR 71, and so about 50 percent maturity at around thirty inches, and then Table 10 you saw in December, and so that is the sex change, and so the proportion female.

In December, you guys discussed reducing the commercial trip limit, increasing the commercial size limit, creating the slot limit, and then restricting the spear gear, and so put a pin in the spear gear for right now, and so Table 11 is your summary of options for -- The way this is set up right now is Option 1 is the current state of the fishery with regard to trip limit, size limit, and spawning season closures, and so no changes across-the-board.

Option 2 deals with the trip limit, and so the sub-options there are the 200, 300, 400, and 500-pound options, and Option 3 deals with the size limit, and so this is based on that female -- The maturity length, and so you have twenty-eight inches, thirty inches, and then Option 3c is that slot limit, and then, in December, you guys discussed modifying the spawning season closure for the recreational sector. Currently, right now, the rec and the commercial are on the same spawning season closure, and so I wanted to pose it to you guys, if you're -- It's an option for the recreational sector, and so I didn't know if you wanted to discuss it for the commercial.

You're going to see these same options again for the rec sector, and so extending that spawning season closure one additional month in the spring, one additional month in the winter, or two additional months, one in the spring and one in the winter, and so those are just some options that the IPT put together.

Then, before I hand it over, the IPT does recommend that the council discuss the merits of keeping the trip limit step-down for gag. It's been discussed for other species, like with vermilion and Spanish, that the trip limit step-down cannot sustainably slow harvest enough to extend the season length, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

Actually, my apologies, and so, with the scoping comments, I did want to highlight those, and so many commenters were in favor of modifying commercial management measures instead of restricting spearfishing gear. There was a suggestion of reductions to a 500 and 100-pound trip limit, and then, like I mentioned in the summary, there was mixed feelings on increasing the minimum size limit, or slot limit, and, again, thinking about protecting those older individuals with spear gear and then some concerns over release mortality. With that, I will hand it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so what we're trying to do here is figure out do we like this range of options, and they are listed in that table. Do we want to make modifications to this? These are the commercial measures, and the item in yellow at the bottom is put in there because there was an option in there for recreational, and so we're throwing it in there, I guess, to match commercial to recreational, which we'll talk about in a minute. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Will there be analysis, at the next meeting, on how long the season would last with those trip limits? Okay. I think that's a pretty good range, and it's fine with me. I don't think that a slot for gag is going to help much, and the amount of fish that each sector is going to be able to catch is so miniscule that I don't think that extending the spawning season is going to help us out. I mean, we're taking a huge hit on the ten -- Everybody is taking a huge reduction

already, and I don't see the need for that, and, I mean, I would get rid of the spawning season and Option 3c as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Got it. All right. Let's see what others think.

MS. IBERLE: Chris, when you said removing the spawning season, you're just talking about removing these options and not removing the spawning season we currently have, correct?

MR. CONKLIN: That's correct.

MS. IBERLE: Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any more -- Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I have thoughts on all three, and I think, with Option 2, certainly I think you're covering a sufficient range at this point. If this stock responds, the question then becomes how do we react to that, and do we come back in and do a subsequent action and allow for trip limit increases, or do we want to build that in here, in terms of potentially a step-up of the trip limits going forward? There is pros and cons to each of those approaches, and so I would just throw that out there for consideration.

For the size limit, I agree with Chris, and I have a lot of concerns with the size limit, or the slot limit, and these are caught in deep water, and they're susceptible to barotrauma, and we've already had a lot of presentations this week about discards, and so my recommendation is not to consider a size limit change.

Then, with the spawning season closure, I would prefer that we at least keep it in for now and look at the analysis. I think it's going to be really important to think about what the commercial market can or can't withstand, given that we already have a four-month closure, but I think these are at least reasonable for consideration.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Mel.

MR. BELL: The one thing I was thinking was the size, and I would agree, and I think there's a lot of talk about protecting the larger and the larger and larger, and, in this case, these are males, versus females, and, in other species, where you're really trying to protect your larger females, and these aren't larger females, and so I think just leave the size alone, and we'll be fine.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I agree with Mel, and I would be supportive of leaving the size alone, and certainly keeping Option 4 in there, just to see what the analysis looks like, but certainly I think we could do without changing the size limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any other thoughts? Let me try to recap where we are so far, and so what you've heard is remove all of Option 3, which is the size limit and the slot limit, and we heard one comment to remove Option 4, and then two or three comments to leave it in there and see the analysis. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think we need to change Option 4a, and then it goes to 5b and 5c, and we just need to make those 4, so that everybody knows what we're talking about.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Any other direction on these commercial changes? I don't see any more hands. Sorry. Chris and then Tim.

MR. CONKLIN: Andy, were you suggesting that we add in some higher trip limits than the range of 500 pounds, at this point?

MR. STRELCHECK: The rebuilding trajectory, obviously, shows that you can start increasing catch limits very quickly, right, and so the concern I would have is if we set the trip limit based on year-one, and the stock responds, and then we're not going to allow the commercial sector to obtain their catch limits in year-two, three, or four, right, because you're constrained by whatever the low trip limit is.

There is some analysis that will have to be looked at, right, and so the reason I said that it's kind of a double-edged sword is that, if the stock doesn't respond, and we automatically start implementing the trip limits higher, then that's not going to do us any good either, right, and so my thought was that maybe you could do a tiered trip limit, and you could fix it at maybe two or three years and then go up, but that's also something that we could do through a framework, a few years from now, and just make adjustments, and maybe that would be a better approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Tim.

MR. GRINER: Thinking along that line, Andy, I think, when you look at the analysis of the 200, 300, 400, and 500 pounds, and you look at that analysis over the rebuilding timeframe, I think you're going to see that, early in this thing, we're going to struggle to catch 200 pounds a trip, and so I think that analysis will shake out, and maybe a 400 or a 500 is where you start, and you're never going to get there until later on in the rebuilding phase, but I certainly don't think you want to start too high with the initial trip limit, and I think you would be much better off starting low and then coming back and doing something again later.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Good discussion on this. Anything else on commercial? Chip.

DR. COLLIER: John and I have been talking about something to provide you guys, and what we've been talking about is looking at some of these overfished populations and trying to give you regular updates on how those populations are doing, and so our idea is to bring it to you guys at the June meeting. That way, we'll have an estimate of commercial and recreational landings, as well as, for some of these stocks, we could potentially have an index of abundance, and so that will give you guys kind of a chance to look at it every year and provide a little guidance on when we should start changing management for some of these species that are in rebuilding plans.

MS. IBERLE: I just want to, before we move away from this table -- What I'm hearing is you guys would like to look at an option with trip limit increases, and then we're removing Option 3, but keeping Option 4, just to clarify before we move on, and is that how this one is currently sitting? We're including options for a trip limit increase, step-up, each year, removing Option 3, and then we're keeping Option 4 in there for analysis at this point.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought that we abandoned the step-up, and, instead, we'll do that via a framework, and does that help? So that's not an option, and so, just to revise, we're keeping all of Option 2, removing Option 3, and keeping all of those under Option 4.

MS. IBERLE: Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else on commercial? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, I don't want to have Option 4 in there at all, I mean 4b and 4c. Excuse me. None of them. Sorry.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. CONKLIN: I was trying to watch my words, because, earlier, you all were saying that I was trying to get rid of the whole thing, but I don't like Option 4, and I don't think we need it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Got it. Other folks have asked that it remain in there, at least for right now, to see an analysis.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Our next action is Action 5, and that's to modify gag grouper recreational management measures. Currently, there is a one-fish-per-person-per-day bag limit within the three-grouper aggregate. They have the same season, from May 1 to December 31, with that spawning season closure, and then the same twenty-four inches total length minimum size.

We talked about the spawning season closure in December, and so I included a little bit about the spawning season closure, and so it was put in through Amendment 16 in 2009, to protect those spawning aggregations, and then I did put in a little bit, since there was discussion about extending the spawning season closure, and so, in 2020, Regulatory Amendment 30 extended the spawning season closure for red grouper an extra month in federal waters from North Carolina to Georgia only, and that was done because of concern over aggregations that people were seeing in May. Then, according to Farmer et al., gag grouper spawning occurs January through May, with peak spawning occurring in February and April.

Similar lists of guidance that were provided in December, and you guys talked about a recreational size and slot limit, and we also talked about a vessel limit for the recreational sector, and that was including and excluding headboats, and then modifying that commercial spawning season closure and the gear, and so, again, we'll get to the gear in just a moment, and Table 13 includes all of the options for this action, and sorry that this is a rather large table, but it's set up similar to the commercial table.

Option 1 is the current status quo for the fishery, with regard to the bag limit, size limit, and spawning season closure. Option 2 is establishing a vessel limit for all recreational vessels, and so that's inclusive of charter and headboat vessels, and you have a one through six-fish-per-vessel-per-day for all rec vessels. Then Option 3 establishes a vessel limit with those same number vessel limits for private recreational vessels only. Then I will note that all of these options still maintain the one-fish-per-person-per-day bag limit, whichever is more restrictive.

Option 4 is that size limit, and so the same options as you saw with the commercial sector, and then Option 5 is modifying the spawning season closure, and, again, those are the same options

that you saw for the commercial sector, and then the scoping comments, and, again, many commenters were in favor of modifying the recreational management measures, in lieu of restricting or removing spear gear.

There were comments that were opposed to that recreational vessel limit, and then one commenter that was in favor suggested a lottery system for headboats, and, again, we had mixed feelings on the size and slot limit, and then there were some mixed feelings on the spawning season. Some suggested extending it, and others suggested evaluating the effectiveness of the spawning season closure before modifying it, and so, with that, I will turn it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there thoughts on this range of options here for the recreational folks? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair. We decided to delete consideration of minimum size changes for the commercial fishery, and I would recommend, at least for discussion, that we consider doing likewise here, and so that would be removing Option 4. I would also recommend removing Option 3 and that we treat all recreational vessels the same with regard to any vessel limit that might be considered.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks for that. Discussion or other ideas, and so either discussion on that point or other ideas? Mel.

MR. BELL: I mean, I would agree with Spud that those seems like reasonable things to do, consistency with size, and then, for vessels, just treat them all the same.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more thoughts? I know that people are taking some time to look at this table. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just a question, I guess for Allie, and that is, is there any benefit to thinning down this list of options under the vessel limit? I mean, is going to fewer -- Would that lessen the workload a little bit? Then I guess I would offer up, for input from other council members, and is there a threshold below we certainly don't want to go? If we say, on average, you've got three people in a boat, do you want to have three as sort of the bottom of the tier, go from three to six, or something like that, for the analysis, or are we short-changing ourselves for future consideration?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was thinking about it like maybe we have a range, and like maybe we get rid of four and five, but keep six and keep three, and I don't know. I'm up for anything here, and I am just trying to thin it out, as you suggested. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I would concur with the previous comments, including getting rid of Option 4, based on the same rationale from the commercial sector. You know, I would like to hear about reducing the burden here by looking at what options we could decrease from under Option 2, given that we're going to treat all the vessels the same, but, at the same time, with looking at really constraining catches, I imagine we may need some options in there to see what it looks like, to see how we extend the season out, right, and I know that's a lot to ask of staff, but it is what it is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Fair point. Tim.

MR. GRINER: If you're going to treat all the vessels the same, and you're going to do a vessel per day, would it really not need to be divisible by six, for a six-pack? You can't keep half a fish. I guess the reason I'm saying that is, I mean, if you're going to treat them all the same, why not just stay where you are, with one fish per person per day, whether you're on your boat or a six-pack?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess because -- I think that we would all agree with that in theory, but we don't know that the reduction is enough for there to even be a small season. Chester.

MR. BREWER: We definitely shouldn't have one fish per vessel per day, and could we consider -- I am just thinking about how we fish, and, a lot of times, we've got two guys on the boat, or three or four, something like that, and that's on a private boat, and then, again, you've got six-packs, where you've got six people on the boat, and so I think our analysis probably needs to -- I think we can dump out one fish per vessel per day, and the idea of keeping half a fish -- Well, that's not necessarily what would happen.

What would happen is -- Maybe let's say you're allowed four per boat, and you will catch four, and then a couple of guys will take a half-a-fish home with them, and then the other ones will maybe take a whole fish, but hopefully they're all buds anyway, and they're going to take them back to wherever and cook them up and have a big fish fry, but I just don't -- I am leery of 2a, e, and f. The other ones I think certainly warrant evaluation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Where does this leave the headboats? Do they only get one or two fish, and they've got forty people on the boat? I don't see any provision in these options for headboats.

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's true. Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: To Chester's point, I think he's exactly right. You've got to think about how the recreational guys fish. If you get down to less than one fish per person that's on the vessel, and four guys go out, three of you are going to go for a boat ride and watch the other guy fish, or what, or all of you can't fish at the same time? I mean, I don't really understand how you would even prosecute that, other than just a catch-and-release fishery, or where one guys catches a fish, and you're done for the boat, and the rest of the guys go for a boat ride, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris and then Mel and then Dewey.

MR. CONKLIN: I was sensitive of what Laurilee said, and I think we need to add some sort of a provision in here for headboats or multi-passenger vessels, inspected ones, I guess.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Mel.

MR. BELL: I mean, it's unfortunate, but keep in mind we're trying to do things that can achieve a meaningful reduction in harvest, so we can stretch the season out a little bit, and that may particularly disadvantage headboats, and we do have other species where there is only one per boat, and I just -- I even struggle with like the six and the five, and, I mean, I was kind of thinking three long-term, and you bring three back in the boat.

It's also a multispecies kind of fishery, and you're not just going out, I don't think, to just catch gag, and gag is all you're getting, and, if you don't come back with gag, it's an unsuccessful day, and I think gag is just part of the catch that day, and it's going to be a mixture of other species, but we really do need to focus on achieving a meaningful reduction, which will help us stretch the fishery out, because, with the recreational sector, opportunity is everything, and so you want to stretch that opportunity out as far as you can, I would think, because, if you do encounter the gag when you are out there for various things, you would like to be able to keep a few.

I mean, I was kind of thinking along the lines of three, but that's just the reality of where we are, and it's unfortunate, and so what we're kind of describing is trying to maintain sort of a status quo in fishing trips and all, but that's just not going to happen, or, if we do, it's going to be a very short season, likely, or you would get accountability measures or something, and it's just unfortunate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey and then Tom.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Mel kind of got to my question about how the for-hire industry would handle one snowy grouper per vessel and how did they make that decision, on a six-pack charter, who is going to drop down to do that, and so I'm just curious, and so maybe can expand upon that from the for-hire industry, when this goes out.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I concur with some of the previous statements regarding to have to look at what we do, with particularly the inspected headboats, because that is a very different fishery. What I was getting at, and I think other people have touched on, is we need to have -- I want to see some analysis of how we extend the season, because, when we look at the recreational fishery, what's different about gags and snowy is the gags are a shallow-water complex, and they're very accessible to us, and just the value of having that fishery open, because you might catch one or two, is extraordinarily important for a lot of the for-hire industry.

Now, we may not want to admit that we may only catch one or two, but, on a lot of trips, this is about as good as it gets for a lot of -- For the fish that we bring in, and so I would just be really interested to see how could extend that fishery, and that's why I think we have to have a range of options there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thanks. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I was just wondering, and, recreationally, what's the average weight, typically, for the gag that you land, ballpark?

MS. IBERLE: I would have to look that up. I don't know that off the top of my head.

MS. BOSARGE: I ask because I was just trying to figure how many fish you all were actually working with, recreationally, because, to me, if you kind of know how many thousands of fish you're going to get the opportunity to even catch next year, whatever the first year you're looking at here, it probably would help you streamline your options a little bit. I am guessing it's only 20,000 or 30,000 fish, maybe, and I don't know. Maybe less.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We've had a lot of discussion around this, what is the vessel limit. Go ahead, Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Well, I fish on the bottom a lot, and I'm offshore of Savannah, and, to be honest with you, I probably didn't catch five gags last year, and I don't even think I caught five that I kept, and so what we do is everybody still gets to fish, even when we catch our limit of vermilion or our limit of black sea bass, but everybody still gets to fish, and they just separate the fish when they get back to the dock, after they clean it, but, if I can't say at least that we can still fish for them, or the option is there to keep them if you catch them, and they always ask me, how many can you keep, and I'm like, well, you can keep a couple of them, or one per person, or that's four people on the boat, but I never really tell them that they're not, most likely, going to catch anything, but it's me -- They're most likely not going to catch any.

MR. BELL: Come aboard.

MS. HELMEY: Well, they didn't ask me if they were going to catch them. They said how many could they keep, and so I answered. Anyway, I've said enough.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Now that we understand Judy's business practices, let me try to sum up, and then we'll go from there, and so, specifically, on this vessel limit, we've had a lot of discussion on this, and I'm hoping that the analyses would look at kind of how this vessel limit is going to affect things like headboats and private recreational anglers, but I just don't know how, until we see some of the analysis, that we could eliminate some of these options, based on the discussion that we just had.

We're trying to come up with a vessel limit that would be for private boats, for headboats, for charter boats, and I agree that we don't really know what the effects would be, and we also have a goal of trying to keep that recreational season open as long as possible, and so I just don't know how to narrow this down. Mel.

MR. BELL: Well, you could make one go away, because there's got to be one person on the boat, and so one is not particularly useful, and, if you want to look at the full two through six, fine, but, I mean, I would suggest maybe even three, four, five, but, one, I don't see any use in one, as a boat limit, because there's one person on the boat, and so you would still have your one fish, right, and you could always have one, if there's one person on the boat.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Having conducted these analyses, it's nice to provide the analysts with some direction, and I would recommend to eliminate one, and I think we could do two, four, six, and we can fill in the gaps between two and four and four and six and interpret that. If we wanted additional analysis, we could always go back and ask for that, and then the points that I believe Laurilee and Chris made -- I think it's easy enough for the analysts to say, yes, include headboat or, no, don't include headboat, in terms of what the impact may or may not be, and we still would need to discuss kind of the fairness and equity of doing that or not doing that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so there was a recommendation to analyze only two, four, and six from this list of vessel limits. Are we okay with that? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Well, I guess I'm still a little confused, and so would you not need an option that was one per person per day with not to exceed a vessel limit, because, if you're going to analyze six fish per vessel per day, you could still have just one guy going out and catching six fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: It will be written in there, and it's a little bit confusing, because we're just looking at this in a table form, as opposed to being written out, and so, to me, that's kind of Option 1, the no action, but, yes, a piece of no action paired with other ones, and that's hard to see, and so good question, and it's just the way the document is organized, I believe, in the table. All right, and we were having a debate up here, but I think that we're good on the recreational options table here. Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Just so I'm clear, on Option 1, you're not looking at a change to the individual bag limit, and you're actually, under Option 2 -- So that's going to stay in place, potentially, right, and what you're looking at is Option 2, a vessel limit, right, and it's probably going to be two, four, and six that are going to be analyzed, and there is no Option 3 anymore, and you're going to eliminate that, and are you going to eliminate Option 4 as well, the size limit? I see heads nodding, and so that's a yes. Okay. Then Option 5, on spawning season closure, will stay in. All right. Just for the record, the spawning season closure is January through April, and May 1 is when it opens back up, but we can fix that for the next version.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. I think we're good to go on to the next action.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 6 is to restrict spearfishing gear, including powerheads, during the gag grouper rebuilding plan, and so there was discussion, in December, that there was concerns over this gear type's efficiency in removing large males from the population, which, according to SEDAR 71, there is a lack of individuals in this larger, older size range.

I did want to note that we talked a little bit about powerheads and bang-sticks, and so, currently, the use of powerheads as an allowable -- I'm sorry. The CFR defines powerheads and bang-sticks as one entity, and so, as far as the wording goes, powerheads will be inclusive of that. Then, currently, you are allowed to use spearfishing gear with scuba gear. However, there is an existing prohibition on the use of spear gear with rebreathers, and so I just wanted to note that.

Then, in recent years, spearfishing gear has accounted for approximately a quarter of the total commercial gag landings annually, and that's what you're looking at in Table 14, and I just wanted to include a little bit of how this gear type is operated in the fishery, and, obviously, this is just commercial, and the IPT will continue to analyze this, moving forward, and then, in 2019, you guys were presented with a white paper pertaining to spearfishing. What I did was I linked that paper here, and then I also pulled out some data only applying to gag, and that's in your appendix.

In December, we talked about removing spearfishing gear altogether through the rebuilding plan, and then you guys did mention seasonal restrictions, and so Option 1 is no change, and so spearfishing and hook-and-line are allowable gear, with no seasonal restrictions. Option 2 would eliminate spearfishing gear, with hook-and-line being the only allowable gear, and then Option 3 -- I just built in three sub-options for you guys, and then what I am looking for are months for seasonal restrictions that you guys would like to include here.

Then I did want to review the scoping comments, and so we heard from a lot of spear fishermen. The spear fishermen were very adamant that spearfishing gear was limited by factors such as depth,

temperature, currents, weather, and they noted that, even when doing technical dives, they did not feel that they were affecting the larger individuals. They also noted the sustainability of the gear type, and the fact that they don't have release mortality when using spear gear, among other comments, and those comments are in that comment summary.

Then we did have some people, eight comments, that suggested removing spearfishing gear only when using scuba gear, and we did have a comment to create a spearfishing endorsement, and that would place a cap on the number of vessels harvesting with this gear type, and so, with that, I will turn it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What we would like to do with Action 6 here, regarding spearfishing? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Allie, could you scroll to that appendix? I would like just to look at the length distributions comparing the two gears, just because I think the concern has been that spearfishing disproportionately harvests larger fish, and is that -- That has been a concern right, affecting the larger fish that are either transitional females, larger females, or already males, but the data we've got doesn't seem to show that, and is that correct? Is that a correct interpretation, that the size distributions don't reflect that concern?

I know there's a behavioral aspect to this too, that there's concern about displacement of fish from habitat by scuba divers, but, I mean, I guess that could happen whether you're spearfishing or not, and so I'm just trying to make sure that we have the -- If we're going to select one group of gear users, we need to make sure that we've got a factual basis for disadvantaging them, or prohibiting them, from participation in the fishery.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Go ahead, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: This is in your appendix, and this is Figure 7 from that spearfishing white paper, and this is the distribution in gag numbers of fish from commercial hook-and-line and commercial spearfishing, and this is -- These were samples collected in North Carolina from 2007 to 2017, and so you have the fork length, and this is in centimeters, and so your blue line is spear gear, and hook-and-line is in orange, and then that gray line is the minimum size, and so that gives you an idea of size.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I got our folks to run this, just to update it, and it really didn't change that much, and I think hook-and-line actually might have gone slightly bigger, to sixty-eight, but, overall, the result really is not very different from what's here now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: What are the thoughts of the committee? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Personally, there is so few fish, at least in the first couple of years, that I don't see why it matters how we remove them. The only other thing is this kind of -- It's gained a lot of attention, and not necessarily on purpose, but it sort of draws a line in between our sector at a time where we need to be coming together to battle through the rest of all the crap we've got going on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: **I would recommend that we remove this from further consideration, and I will make that in the form of a motion, if it needs to be in a motion, and so I will move that we remove Item Number 6 from further consideration in the gag management approach.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Motion by Spud, and it's seconded by Mel. All right. It's under discussion. Does anybody else want to add to this discussion? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I support this motion, and I just kind of want to go on the record just to say why, because I think there probably are people listening who feel pretty strongly, obviously in both directions, and, Spud, you really spoke to me with your first comment, because I do think, initially, I was going off of some perception that this gear was taking bigger fish and having a disproportionate impact on this fish, and I don't think the numbers, at this time, are bearing out to that, and that's what we're here to do, is look at the science, and I feel like the science is leading us to this point, and so that's why, at this time, I'm in support of this motion. If someday, ten years down the line, we come back and we find out that it has shifted, then we'll look at it again, but, right now, the science is telling us that, like Chris said, it's not doing what we thought it was doing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. All right. Any more discussion on this motion? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I agree. I talked to quite a few spear fishermen on the phone, and it was quite educational, but I also talked to a couple of dealers, and they are very dependent on those speared fish, especially in the Canaveral area, because there's not a whole lot of longlining going on down there, and so, if you took the spearfishing out of our region, it would hurt our dealers very badly.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Laurilee. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I just want to say that I appreciate Laurilee's and Kerry's comments here, and I know there was a lot of really strong opinions on the record, both ways, but I think that's -- It's okay for us to ask those questions and look at the analysis, and I hope that people listening understand that. It doesn't mean you're going to necessarily go forward with it, but, when you have those perceptions, it's okay to talk about it and examine it further, and we got some good stuff here, and so thanks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion on this motion? **Once again, this is to remove Action 6 from this document. Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion stands approved.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. The last action for gag is to modify the gag grouper accountability measures. Table 17 is the current accountability measures for gag, and so we have that in-season closure for both sectors, and then the post-season accountability measure, which is reliant on the three triggers listed here, and so you need to have the sector ACL exceeded, the total ACL exceeded, and the stock status needs to be overfished.

Then the options that we have for you are Option 1 is no change, and I apologize, and I have this down here as recreational, and I'm not sure if that should be recreational and commercial, but Option 2 is NMFS will annually announce the recreational fishing season start and end date, and Option 3 is the option that you've kind of seen with red porgy, an uncoupling of those -- Or a

removal of the in-season closure and then that uncoupling of the post-season accountability measures, and so it will no longer be tied to the total ACL or the stock status, and so, if recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL, then the recreational ACL is reduced the following year by the amount of the overage.

Then Option 4 is, Trish, you mentioned, in December, kind of having an “or” situation, and so we have recreational landings exceed the recreational ACL or the total ACL is exceeded, and so I kind of pose a question to the committee, and is that how you would like that to -- Well, first, would you like that option, and then is it written correctly, where it’s just no longer tied to stock status? With that, I will hand it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What are folks’ thoughts here on accountability measures? We see some thumbs-up on the options. Chester.

MR. BREWER: I think you’ve got an acceptable range here. Personally, I think that we ought to go with Option 1, but I will leave that for later.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anybody have any other options that they want considered here? I don’t see any other comments. Before we leave this document, I will just throw out a thought, is that there’s been some confusion, in the past, between gag and black grouper, and I am concerned, on some of these management measures, what’s going to happen, and like do we need to modify the black grouper regulations, depending on if we’re going to adjust the season, for example, and I will just put it out there, that we might need to have this discussion when we look at the analyses.

MS. IBERLE: I don’t have anything else. As a reminder, this amendment will go to the Snapper Grouper AP in April, and then, in June, you guys will see a draft amendment, and so just a recap of where we are, timeline-wise.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. It looks like we’re done with the gag discussion. Let’s take a ten-minute break.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We’re going to get going again. We have a couple of things that we’re going to work on. The first thing I’m going to do is I’m going to start with Leann, who has something to add from the Gulf Council.

MS. BOSARGE: I was just going to say, before you leave gag, that, obviously, we have some issues in that same arena over in the Gulf, and we’re looking at very limited harvest as well coming up in the future, and so we’re actually going to have a presentation, at our next Gulf Council meeting, to see a couple of different options, but one of them will be an exploration of possible tags. We’re not sure how that would work yet, but we want to at least discuss it, and that’s twofold, as far as the rationale behind that.

One, as you know, when you have very limited harvest, or short seasons, things like that, MRIP -
- The landings end up getting very volatile, because it’s really not designed for that sort of monitoring, and so we have to think about that volatility and how to be proactive and alleviate some of that, and then the other thing is, if the recreational sector is going to have a very, very shortened season, how do we give them access when they want it, and the tags may be an option

that gives them that access when they want it for their fishery, right, but lots of things to work out. It may not be able to be implemented, but I think it's time. In that particular species, it's a viable option to at least talk about at this point, and it's gotten that bad, and so I'm just throwing that out there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Leann. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One more thing, before we leave gag, and so I was confused, going into the break, about the accountability measures and whether they would apply only to recreational or to recreational and commercial, and I talked to both Mel and Allie, and the intent is to at least look at a range of alternatives for both sectors, even though we were provided just the examples for recreational accountability measures, and I just wanted to make that clear.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. Next up, we're going to ask Captain Scott Pearce to come back to the table and give us some more updates from the Law Enforcement AP for items that weren't on our agenda this week.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Good afternoon, everybody, and so a couple of things that we were asked to do was to reach out to officers in the states and find out how things were going with the compliance for the for-hire electronic reporting requirements, as well as the compliance we're seeing with the descending device requirement for snapper grouper vessels, and so I'm going to just kind of read through the notes for each, and, if you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them.

For the compliance for the for-hire electronic reporting requirements, the discussion went as follows. AP members offered the following pertaining to compliance with the reporting requirement for for-hire vessels. For Florida, I said there have been two warnings and two citations by FWC since the program started, and the compliance seems pretty high right now, and we haven't had a lot of negative feedback.

South Carolina has seen fairly good compliance, with approximately 88 percent of vessels reporting and about 78 percent reporting on time. NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement has started working closer with the Southeast For-Hire Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) Program. Eighty-nine referrals were sent for vessels that have not reported at all, and that's throughout the whole South Atlantic, and including the Gulf, and so, if there's eighty-nine within that whole area, that's really not that bad. NOAA OLE intends to step up the effort to increase compliance among that group.

Once the federal agency steps up effort to increase compliance, that will help us as state agencies enforcing the requirement and NOAA OLE continues to conduct outreach and education on the program. A law enforcement mobile app is under development that will assist with enforcement efforts and compliance. The app is expected to be completed and available in May or June of 2022, and that's pretty much the rundown for that. Are there any questions for the for-hire electronic?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I don't have a question, but I would just point out that you mentioned our compliance, and one reason I think we have good compliance is we had a program in place for years and years

and years, and so we've developed a relationship with all of the for-hire folks, and I give credit to Amy Dukes and our staff there that have been very hands-on to get that level of compliance, and so, to get that level of compliance that early on, it requires a lot of hands-on interaction and face-to-face stuff, and so it's not easily achieved, but that's how we were able to do it that quickly, I think, and get that much success, and that's just something to think about, as we kind of look -- However we look at compliance rates across-the-board, and it just takes a lot of contact, sometimes.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: I will say that one of the positives with this is when NOAA added the SEFHIER to the JEA requirements for offshore patrol, and so we have an offshore patrol element where we're actually looking for this type of activity, mostly looking for illegal charters, but it all falls under the SEFHIER compliance, and so that gives us the tool right there for the JEA to focus on this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey had his hand up.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Given that we're talking about the for-hire electronic reporting, I was wondering, and when will the council hear, and this is interesting and good for the compliance part, but when will we hear back on species caught and numbers and how it will be used in the stock assessment, and when will we be hearing back from SERO about that, or a presentation? We heard a little bit about compliance before, but what's the actual numbers and different species, and what's being caught and reported, and I think that would be interesting, given that it's been a year-and-a-half, I believe, since implementation.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: We've been asked similar questions by the Gulf Council, and we are going to have to have some sort of time period to essentially compare and calibrate the landings relative to what we get under MRIP, right, and so we have to have that side-by-side time period that we're expecting is going to be three years.

That will then, obviously, plug into the stock assessment multiple years down the road here, and, in terms of what you're asking for, in terms of landings data, we can provide some summary statistics and information, in terms of what was collected last year, and I would not use them in any sort of landings estimates, because last year was really a ramp-up period, getting people, obviously, in compliance and doing, obviously, the compliance checks and enforcement, and so we could bring that back to you probably, I would say, at the September council meeting, but I would to talk to my team, in terms of kind of what overview we would be able to provide at that point.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So like three to four years before something could be used, or will it be used, once the calibration is done?

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, to be honest, there's lots of questions about whether or not we're going to be able to use this for management, going forward, because, right now, we do not have a way of really validating and determining compliance with the program, but, with that said, we will be, obviously, looking at the data and information carefully. At a minimum, it's going to provide us estimates of kind of the lowest known catch that's been reported into the agency, or to the Fisheries Service, for consideration.

In the Gulf, we have much more stringent accountability measures for the program, including vessel monitoring system data, to ensure when trips are being taken, as well as information about reporting hail-out and hail-in for landings, and so we expect that that's going to be much better data, because of the ability to determine compliance in the Gulf of Mexico compared to the South Atlantic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Scott, do you have another update for us?

CAPTAIN PEARCE: Yes, and so we'll move into the descending device compliance. AP members offered the comments below regarding compliance with the requirement that vessels fishing for snapper grouper species have a descending device onboard that is readily available for use.

An estimated 50 percent of vessels in Florida are complying with this requirement. Law enforcement officers are no longer simply providing education, but enforcing the regulation. There are currently seven warnings on the books. One of my lieutenants on the east coast, and obviously the east coast, was telling me that he's working with NOAA agents over there to issue some of the citations for people that are non-compliant.

North Carolina Marine Patrol has done outreach and is generally reporting adequate compliance, but very few enforcement encounters. It was noted that there is more awareness of the requirement among fishermen. South Carolina also reported adequate compliance and continuing education and outreach efforts. Georgia reported one warning and one case that has been referred, and both were at Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, and so, overall, again, I think there's a lot of work to be done on education, but we are at the stage of this where we are starting to enforce it with either warnings or citations.

I think one of the things that people are seeing, when they say non-compliant, for Florida, it was a lot of seeing that they have the device, and either it's not rigged and ready or it doesn't have adequate weight and things like that attached to the gear, and so, again, more education on those areas might help, through an education program, but we're working with them, and we're educating those people as we encounter them.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: On this descending device rule, and I probably should know this, but is it one descending device per vessel, no matter how many people you have onboard that are actively fishing at the time? So that one descending device has to be passed around, at different times, to be used, and so, if you have fifty or forty passengers on a headboat, you've got one descending device, and is that the reg? I see here there is no "s" on it, and it's "descending device", and it don't say "devices".

CAPTAIN PEARCE: To my knowledge, it's just having that one descending device onboard, rigged and ready, and so I don't think -- There's not a requirement, that I have seen in the law, that requires it for an increased amount per people on the vessel.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what staff is indicating, is just the one. All right. Any more questions? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: How do you define “rigged and ready”, when it comes to a descending device? I was just curious.

CAPTAIN PEARCE: I would have to have the folks behind me pull up the regulation, because I can't remember off the top of my head.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Christina is coming up here, but, Monica, do you want to go ahead?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Sure, and I can read you the one for snapper grouper. Descending device, at least one descending device is required to be onboard a vessel and be ready for use while fishing for or possessing South Atlantic snapper grouper. “Descending device” means an instrument capable of releasing the fish at the depth from which the fish was caught and to which is attached a minimum sixteen-ounce weight and a minimum of a sixty-foot length of line. A descending device may either attach to the fish's mouth or via a container that will retain the fish while it's lowered to depth. The device must be capable of releasing the fish automatically by actions of the operator of the device or by allowing the fish to escape on its own when at depth.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Christina.

MS. WIEGAND: If you guys will recall, way back to I think it was maybe 2019, when we were talking about this definition, and there was a desire to keep the definition sort of vague enough that fishermen were able to make their own devices and create something that would work well for them on their vessel, but would also still be effective, and we went back and forth quite a bit with the difference between using the idea of having the device rigged and ready, versus having the device readily available, and we had a lot of discussion about officer discretion and how there was going to have to be some with these terms.

If you're got your descending device still in the package and tucked away underneath a bunch of junk on your boat, it's probably not what one would consider rigged and ready or readily available, and we ultimately decided on readily available, specifically because that language is used in other law-enforcement-type regulations, particularly in terms of like the safety gear you have to have onboard, and so that's ultimately why we chose the term “readily available for use”.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just to add to that, I think, when we were coming up with our definition, we wanted that definition to be inclusive of all the components that made it necessary to actually work, and so it wasn't just the thing that attached to the fish, but it was all the other components of it, and so, to have a legal descending device in our definition, you've got to have the weight, and you've got to have the line, and that's one of the things that came out during the LE AP discussion, is a lot of folks are not making -- They're not understanding that it's all those things together.

They go to West Marine, and they buy a SeaQualizer, and they're kind of like, okay, well, I've got a descending device. Well, yes, technically, it's a descending device, but it really doesn't meet our definition of a descending device unless it has the line and the weight, as Monica described in the language.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions for Captain Pearce? All right. Thank you for that update. Next up, I think we're going to get an update on the -- Well, Mel, do we want to stop? We'll go ahead to Chip, and see if he can give us an update on the management strategy evaluation.

DR. COLLIER: In December, you guys asked that we initiate the RFP for the management strategy evaluation, and I just wanted to let everybody know that it is up on our website, and we did send it to a few researchers, and they indicated interest in working with us to work on the MSE. We have not got any applications, and I think they're due on the 21st, and so, currently, we're developing some criteria to evaluate the proposals, and so, as we work on that, and we're going to let you guys know, in June, who the selected candidate was, but we would be working with them beforehand, in order to set up some of the other things that will be needed for that management strategy evaluation, and that's all I have on that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Any questions for Chip? All right. Over to you, Mr. Chairman, to prepare us for public comment.

MR. BELL: All right. Thanks, Jessica. Good job, everybody. I don't have anything to fill in four minutes here, or three minutes, and so we'll go ahead and break for public comment, and we're going to need to set things up, but public comment will start at 4:00, and the way we're going to work is kind of like we did last time, is we have people that are here, and we have people online, and the people that are here will get to go first, and then people online, and, if some additional people join us -- We don't have a huge crowd, and so we'll be okay, and so we're adjourned for the day and moving into public comment, I guess.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on March 9, 2022.)

MARCH 10, 2022

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

The Snapper Grouper Committee of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Westin Hotel, Jekyll Island, Georgia, on Thursday, March 10, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Jessica McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Continuing in the Snapper Grouper Committee, we are going to dive into the snowy grouper amendment, Amendment 51, and I'm going to turn it over to Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Good morning, everybody. Like with gag, I'm going to start with the scoping summary for you guys, which is Attachment 8b. Really quickly, I wanted to note the webinar comments are at the end of this document, and so we scoped all three of those amendments at the same time, and a lot of the comments started with gag, and then, as people mentioned snowy, they were all in the same comment, and so, for ease of reading, I highlighted the portions that pertain to snowy, and so, when you're looking at the comments at the bottom of this document, that's what the highlight means.

We had eleven online comments and six comments on the webinar that people brought up snowy, and, again, I'm not going to read this word-for-word, but one of the main highlights, or comments, that we saw, over and over again, pertain to the commercial trip limit, and so there was a couple of people opposed to a reduction in the commercial trip limit, and they noted that any trip limit under the current 200-pound trip limit would not be worth the trip to depths where snowy are caught. One of the commenters expressed that earlier season closures would be preferable to a trip limit reduction, for that reason.

They also noted some issues with gear, and so we had some suggestions for gear restrictions that would help reduce dead discards, especially when fishing for other deepwater species, and then we did have one commenter that felt that the recreational bag limit should be increased, because they are commonly catching more than fish at a time, and so a one fish per person, instead of per vessel, was suggested, and so I'm going to switch over to -- Unless there is any comments on scoping, and I guess I should pause here. All right.

A little review on the background of snowy, and so the SEDAR 36 update is your most recent assessment of snowy grouper, and the stock assessment had a terminal year of 2018, and it indicated that the stock is both overfished and experiencing overfishing, and you guys were notified, on June 10 of last year, that action was necessary. However, snowy grouper does have a thirty-four-year rebuilding plan in place, with a terminal year of 2042.

We did take -- We reviewed snowy grouper, Amendment 51, with the Law Enforcement AP, and there was not much discussion there, because we took this to scoping with -- It was a little more open-ended, but we can take this back to the Law Enforcement AP, and then the Snapper Grouper AP saw this in October, and they will see it again in April.

For this meeting, we're going to look to you guys to flesh out some options for some of these actions, and I will walk you guys through that as we get there, and we reviewed those scoping comments, and I will kind of go over those again as we go through each action, and then, just like with gag, to help facilitate analysis, we're looking for you guys to pick preferreds for Action 1 and Action 2. That way, we can kind of narrow down analysis for the rest of the actions.

A little bit on timing, and so we reviewed the scoping comments, and we'll kind of flesh out some options today, and then, in April, this will go to the Snapper Grouper AP, and then, in the summer, we'll conduct public hearings, or I should back up and say, in June, you'll see a draft amendment, and then we'll conduct public hearings in the summer, and then we have this scheduled for final review in December of 2022.

Then the purpose and need statement, and so the purpose of this amendment is to set an acceptable biological catch level, revise annual catch limits, annual optimum yield, and sector allocations for South Atlantic snowy grouper based on the results of the most recent stock assessment, and modify management and accountability measures.

The need for this fishery management plan amendment is to end overfishing of South Atlantic snowy grouper, continue to rebuild the stock, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the extent practicable, adverse social and economic effects, and so I will pause here for a minute and see if there's any edits to the purpose and need at this time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Does anybody want to make any edits or suggestions on the purpose and need? I don't see any hands, and I'm going to turn it back to you, Allie.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The ABC and OFL, and so you guys have seen this, and I believe you saw it for the first time in September of last year, and so just refreshing, and Table 1 is your ABC and OFL, and so you received these in total removals, and we went back to the SEDAR 36 update and calculated those in the blue columns in landings and pounds gutted weight and landings in numbers of fish, and so, as you remember, the commercial and total ACL are expressed in pounds gutted weight. However, the recreational sector is expressed in numbers of fish, and I believe, in September, you guys said that you wanted to keep those units, moving forward. I guess I will pause here, really quickly, if there's any questions or comments on the ABC and OFL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Thank you. Looking at the removals in the number of fish, how is that segregated out between the recreational and commercial, given -- So we're under the assumption that, for both sectors, the size of the fish is the same, of the harvest, and is that what we're assuming here, looking at this? There is no geographical -- Or maybe I'm trying to ask too much, and so we're assuming that the fish, for both sectors, is the same size, average, that's harvested, and is that correct?

MS. IBERLE: I believe so, but I might look to Chip to clarify that for me.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Maybe further along -- The reason why I'm asking this question is because I've got just something to maybe ask for that I think would help in showing the size of the fish in the different catches.

DR. COLLIER: Clay can probably speak to this a little bit better than I can, but, when the snowy grouper assessment was done, there was a recreational fleet and a commercial fleet, and the selectivities of those are calculated independently, and so they are going to be different if there is a difference in size selectivity, or age selectivity, between the two different sectors. Does that make sense? It's going to be based on the data.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay. I am just looking at some way to get to some better data, because it's my belief that there is some big differences in different areas, and maybe we can look at somehow having the dealer help in counting the number of fish that makes up that 200-pound catch, which I think would help better, given that 200 pounds is not a lot of weight, but I also believe that it would show the geographical differences of the size fish caught by the commercial, versus the recreational removal size, which I believe is a big difference and a driver in why we see some of this overfished here, in particularly the snowy grouper.

DR. COLLIER: You are right that the geographic difference is not included in the assessment, and it's just assessed as one unit stock throughout the region, and so, if there is geographical differences, that's not picked up, but the overall sizes would be picked up, and so, if there is -- They try to spread it out. When they're developing the size-at-age matrices, they look at the catch at a state level and expand to the landings in that state, and so they do try to account for some of those geographical differences as they are developing it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Chip has it exactly right, and we do have samples that we can look at geographic differences, and, obviously, it's not a huge fishery, and we don't have huge numbers of samples, and so there is going to be some uncertainty associated with it, but, yes, there are some data there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Would it be any help if the dealer, particularly the commercial, wrote down how many fish that that 200 pounds make up throughout? It's not going to be a million transactions, or 10,000 transactions, but it's going to show the geographical differences, probably, I believe, because I have experienced some of it, looking at data, particularly north of Cape Lookout, where one dealer accounted for 35 percent of the catch in North Carolina, and I looked at his records, and he had definitely -- He got to show where he was catching -- The poundage he was catching was large fish, over like twenty pounds or something, and so I'm just saying how much --

I believe it's relatively easy, for a dealer, especially when it would improve the data, to say, hey, we've got 200 pounds here, and it's thirty fish, or ten fish, or whatever like that, and it's not too hard to count and send that one number in, which I think would be important to show, up and down the coast, exactly how many fish made up this catch and coming from what area. I don't think that's too much of a hard ask, from the dealer and the fishermen to work together, but it's also what's the purpose, if there is any goodness in it for you all scientifically, or the science part.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: There might be some utility to doing it that way, but the best way would be to actually measure all the individual fish, because what we would like to get is the size and age composition, and, if you did that -- The more fish you can measure, the better for us.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So, basically, if you had a certain amount of fish houses, for different weights, if their catch was all measured, even though it would come from one or two, and that subset -- Then you looked at the percentage that was caught in that state or something, and, I mean, I don't think -- I think it's kind of hard to ask every dealer to measure the snowy grouper, per se, but I don't see this stock getting any better, at all, because we're missing the recreational input of exactly what's being caught and the magnitude, and, if we go below this 200-pound trip limit, I don't see commercial -- A lot of folks ain't going to be able to go fishing, commercially, because of where the species is located and the cost of it.

I don't see -- Something drastically has to change here, or else this is going to stay in the dismal outlook that's here, and it's not changing, no matter what we do, and so I just wonder about that part, where something has got to be different here, because, you know, ten years ago, or whatever the last thing, we thought that, here we go, and we're sitting on a projection of rebuilding, and, come to find out, if we look at this thing here, it's like, wait a second, it wasn't doing nowhere near as good, and we overthought that, and so I clearly think, today, no matter what we do here, something drastic has got to happen on finding out the age and size of the fish and exactly who is catching where, and I believe that there has got to be a better way, because I don't see this changing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: It would actually be pretty easy, and I was just pulling up my SAFIS page, and there is already a market category for grading, and so, if you really didn't want to collect that information, you could simply go into SAFIS, and, next to the large bracket, a length, or a weight, whichever was more useful, and then, with a little bit of education, calls to a couple of dealers, and say it's really important, and I know it takes a couple extra seconds, but it's right there, and how hard would it be to just put something in parentheses on the SAFIS page?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Do you think that's something that if there was dealers, five or ten dealers, up and down the coast in the South Atlantic here, that did something like that, that took the time, that there is some utility? I mean, I know you want the most samples as you can get, or different things like that, but I just don't think this is going to change unless we get something like that to show the geographical differences of where fish are caught at and the size fish are caught at and what the commercial side is catching, because clearly, commercially, you can't sit there -- You're not going to find a way on three and five-pound fish, and you're going through -- The commercial fishermen that's in this know where to go to catch what size fish, predominantly, and it's just part of it, and so you're not going somewhere to catch small fish or whatever, and so I am just wondering about the utility -- I'm asking.

If industry got ten dealers, up and down the coast, or three or four for different states, to actually do that, is it something that's going to be used, because clearly the direction we're going presently, with what we have, is not going to -- I just don't believe it's going to work.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Dewey. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I feel like -- Well, I don't feel like, and I know that our state, and I don't know if it was done through like top-down from the feds, but they took the gonads out of -- They want us to bring in like a certain species of fish, and maybe it was red grouper, and I can't remember, and it's probably been fifteen years, but bring them in, and we didn't gut them, and then the port sampler would come and cut their reproductive organs out, and they would take those and sample them, and would there be any utility to perhaps having a few people get in a program like that, like we participated in before with the different species?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am looking at that end of the table, because I don't know how this would work, meaning I don't know who would be the entity to say, hey, dealers, put this -- Like Kerry is saying, put this on your report, and is it okay that it's just a subset and not everyone, but just how would we do this? I don't know who to look to to answer, and I'm looking at that end of the table, because it doesn't seem like that the council should tell them to do it, and it seems like someone from NOAA should tell them to do it. Clay, do you have some suggestions?

DR. PORCH: I think this is something that we could have a small group talk about exactly what it would look like, but it definitely needs to be representative. When it's just voluntary, then you can't tell what the real distribution of those sizes is, and so it either has to be everybody or some sort of representative sub-sample, and, again though, I would reiterate that it be -- The best thing is if we can get a true picture of the actual size composition, because then we can even use that directly in the stock assessment.

When it's something like market categories, you can get an idea of what's going on, but it's not something that is plug-and-play, in terms of how you would incorporate it into an assessment, but there may be some other analyses that would get at some of the questions that you're asking, that we could use that for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before we go back to you, Dewey, I'm going to go to Julia over here, to talk about some of the projects that are underway.

MS. BYRD: Not projects underway, but I just wanted to mention that I wonder if this is something that citizen science could help with, and it sounds like there is -- Within SAFIS, there's already a place where dealers can report information. If this is something that's a priority to the council, for our citizen science projects, we try to get people from the assessment team who may use the data with dealers, talking about how something like this could work, and so we could talk through some of the issues maybe, Clay, that you're bringing up, and so I just wanted to kind of float that out there as an idea too, as you all are kind of having this discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go back to Dewey, Clay, is that something that you guys would like to do and have a meeting outside of this meeting, and we're certainly not going to solve this at the table today, but have a meeting outside of this venue to try to figure out a way to do this?

DR. PORCH: Yes, absolutely, and, as always, the details matter. I mean, it's easy to talk about something at a conceptual level, but then we have to look at what kind of data we would actually get and how we would make sure that it actually means something, and so, yes, I think that would be a great approach.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Clay. Dewey and then Chris.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I always think, from the science part of it, you always want the best. Well, we don't have always have that, but what we need is that template from the Science Center that says, hey, if you do this, you get 35 percent bang for the buck. If we get to this level, we get 50 percent, and, if you get to this level -- Like a template. Then go out to industry and partners and different things, because I might be wrong, but I don't know how many dealers it is that pack snowy grouper, but I venture to say it's probably less than a hundred, seventy-five or something.

This is something that, if we get a template -- Because clearly going this route here, for what we're doing right now, from the commercial point of view, I don't see -- I see this continuation of an overfished status, because we're not gathering the data needed to show exactly what's being caught by who, which, if you did that, it would show how you're going to have to manage one sector different than the other, per se, based on what we're catching.

I just think there's a way that, if the Science Center wants to provide a template in looking at something, that the industry could get onboard and provide that at different levels of standard that's needed to help, and I think that would be a good thing, because, clearly, as I'm rehashing myself, this is not going to get better, presently, with what we're doing, and, in these alternatives in here, I just see that it means less fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I appreciate that, Dewey, and, ideally, of course, to get at some of the questions you're asking, we would like to know where every fish came from and what sector of the fishery caught it, and so size, space, time, and who, and, if we had every one of those, of course, we could answer a lot of the questions you're raising. That's unlikely to happen, because it's very expensive to do that, and we just don't have the resources, but I am very open to clever ways to try and get the information we need, and so this is a great cooperative research opportunity, and I think the citizen science angle is a good way to go, since they've already had some working groups looking at those sorts of things.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: So I guess, for this to get some teeth, do we like need to write a letter and send it to you, requesting to outline a program for what needs you think that we need, or you guys need, from us to implement a citizen science program to collect the information you need to make this assessment a lot more robust, or could you use some of your funding from your deepwater longline survey or something to supplement this program? I mean, I don't know how to go about it, and, I mean, I know we can't tell you what to do, but I know we've written letters and asked before, and, if it's necessary, I think we can do that.

DR. PORCH: That deepwater longline survey is precious, and I'm not going to detract from that. I will try and keep that whole as long as I can. That is, I think, a critical piece of new information that we've been running, but I think the way to go is along the lines of what Julia said, and they already stand up working groups, and, I mean, I don't mind if the council wants to send me a letter encouraging that, but I think that's something that we would be keen to do, too.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I apologize if I missed this, but TIP sampling, and do we not do TIP sampling anymore, and how would TIP move into this?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: That's what I was thinking about when Dewey first started talking, and we, personally, do get sampled quite a bit, and I don't know if that's just our proximity to Charleston and where everyone is, and so I don't know if Chris is getting sampled a little less, but that's certainly one element of it. They're not catching every snowy that we bring in, but we do get TIP sampled, absolutely.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so lots of folks' hands going up, and so just stand by. John and then Mel and then Chris.

MR. CARMICHAEL: Citizen science is a council program, and so you don't need to write a letter like to Clay to get us to do that, and just saying, hey, you would like us to look into how to use that to get more snowy grouper samples, and we can easily do it and have the infrastructure in place, and we would work with the Science Center, as we have on other programs.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I was just going to say what Chris was describing was our TIP grant, and that's something that we use state personnel to get that, but it's directed -- It's technically a grant for us, and that's what that was, or is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The only other thing I can think is the observer program, when we take observers out, and I think that they have the skills to be able to take some organs out of the fish. If that's some information you need, if you could direct somebody to do that, it would be fantastic.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Clay has got his hand up, and Allie is going to capture some of this in the report, as direction to staff here, and so, even though we're not going to write a letter, we're going to make sure we capture all this. Clay.

DR. PORCH: You're exactly right, and that's sort of the sampling that I was alluding to, is TIP sampling, and then there's some recreational sampling as well, and, yes, we would love to step that up, but that costs, and, typically, as Mel said, there is grants, and some of it from us, for the states to do the TIP sampling, and, yes, if we could step that up, so that we could get a large fraction of the fish, that would be great, but, again, it's a resource issue.

Chris, I would love to get more observers out on vessels, because I think that's the best way to get information, because it also gives us the discards and size and some idea of their condition and all that, and you just can't beat having an observer, and, obviously, captains don't usually have, or the crew have, time to write all that kind of stuff down, because they're busy catching and processing the fish, and so, yes, I would love to have observers, but, again, it's a resource issue, and, historically, we haven't had much of an observer presence in the South Atlantic, and we have a little bit in the Gulf, but, even there, it's like 4 percent of the trips, and 1 percent for the shrimp fishery, but we are trying to ramp up our observer coverage in the South Atlantic, and it would be nice if we could get at least 10 or 20 percent of the trips, but I think that's pretty pie-in-the-sky right now. There's just not the resources.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Maybe one thing to note for citizen science, if possible, is a sort of outreach to dealers, and, I mean, we're sort of passive about how the TIP sampling works, and they call or text us and say, when are you coming in, and we let them know, but, obviously, they're not getting every trip, but I can say, personally, in our case, if there was some sort of way to -- Not way, and there is already a way, but maybe if we did outreach to dealers and said it's really important that, if you know you're going to have snowy grouper, be proactive and call your port sampler, and so that level of outreach, so that -- They're already doing the job anyway, but you're going that one extra step, and I don't think that would be an issue. I mean, we don't have any problem having them come and get their sample.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Before I go to Tim, and then Dewey, note what Allie is typing on the board here, to work with the council Citizen Science Department to create a project to gather additional snowy grouper data, including outreach to dealers, and, if you want to add some more specifics, as you're giving your comments, then speak up and say I want this added to the document here. All right. So I've got Tim and then Dewey and then Carolyn.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. Clay, is there a -- Is there a protocol for getting observers, or, if we wanted to pool observers, or find observers, is there a method, or a way, that observers have to be vetted to be used that would be validated?

DR. PORCH: Thank you for the question, Tim. Absolutely, and observers have to go through pretty extensive training, safety training and sampling training and learning to identify the species and all those sorts of things. That is really important.

We also have to work through a contracting process, and we have to have the funds to fund the contract, and so there is a whole process, and it's rather elaborate, that we go through, and that includes things like making sure the agency has appropriate COVID protocols and all those sorts of things that you can imagine, and then, at the same time, we need to make sure we have a representative sampling design.

It hasn't been as much of an issue recently in the South Atlantic, because we haven't done -- We haven't put many observers on boats, and so you can't be representative if you're sampling thirty sea days, which is about what we were doing, historically. Last year, I think it was a hundred, and so we stepped it up, and, coming up, we're hoping to get at more like 500 sea days, but that's still a tiny fraction of the total sea days being fished, but, yes, there is a process, and we would need to work along those lines, because, as a federal agency, we do have to be very concerned with things like safety and all those sorts of protocols that I described, but, yes, I would be happy to have more conversations about that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are you good, Chris?

MR. CONKLIN: So, if you all did a hundred a days, I probably covered over 20 percent of that. The only other thing is I'm just curious, and there was an observer program through the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, and it's been dissolved now, and I know Frank Helies, on your staff, was an observer onboard our vessels for a long time, and is that information available, and is it looked at in the stock assessments, or is it omitted because it wasn't done through NOAA?

DR. PORCH: I would have to get back to you on that. I am not sure about how it's been used in the South Atlantic.

MR. CONKLIN: I know they covered a lot of sea days, like a ton, and so that would probably be very helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: My asking the questions is looking at doing something with very limited or no money, but the standard that we would do it, whether it's citizen science, would have to have, as I laid out, a template from the Science Center of how much, with no money, if you were to do these three things, does this get us, and we have nothing right now, kind of, and so I'm looking at getting at a higher level, and I believe that, through fishermen, dealers, and some citizen science - - You know, we kind of work with sweat equity and get it done, but we have to have the standard that you tell us what does these things get us, because there's no doubt that we couldn't go up and down this coast, I believe, with folks on our AP and different things, to look at some of this, but the futility, and that's why I say that simply measuring the fish, and maybe weighing the fish, that's not like something that takes over the moon to do.

You get your dealers working with your fishermen, and something that takes a minimal amount of time, and so I understand the part of doing something with no money. Fishermen, a lot of times, are able to do that, but we have to have that standard that, once we do it, it's not ten years down the road that we've got to calibrate something before we use it, and that's what I'm looking at doing here, because I don't see this snowy grouper thing getting any better until something is changing, and I'm just thinking outside of the box, with citizen science and dealers and fishermen, that we can do, and I believe we can do it, because it's not a whole bunch of folks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To that point, in the direction to staff, there is no timeline or do something by a certain date, and so, just as we're going around the table, if there's something that you want to add to this, then think about that. Carolyn and then Chris and then Trish.

DR. BELCHER: I was -- Integrating cit-sci I think is a good approach, but I do think we need to go back to the idea of the workgroup. You've got TIP involved, and you've got the general canvass, which has some of that fish house visiting that's built into that, and we haven't done it in a long time, because we've moved towards electronic reporting, and so there isn't the need for port samplers, or creel clerks, to go to the fish houses anymore and actually go through and log boxes.

I think that there is some mechanisms there, but a lot of it may be just blowing the dust off of some of these. If concerns are relative to sampling protocols and making sure it's a valid sampling approach, TIP has that built into it. If it needs to be -- I would almost rather see us try to enhance stuff than try to come back and start with a brand-new project and grow ground-up, but, if there's approaches to brought in, integrating cit-sci, and, again, the observers going back to the fish houses, and maybe there's something that we can talk about within the states that might get your numbers there.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We tried to add that, to consider creating a workgroup to include, and then we would want to list out who all we think should be in that, and maybe we want a report back at the June council meeting, and I'm just trying to get us moving here on what it is we're looking to start and when we want to get a report back on how that creation of this, or restart of this, is going. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I just wanted to add that I think North Carolina does participate in the TIP program, but, on the discussion of collecting the data that Dewey is talking about, I just want everybody to also consider how the state data collection is and what that might do to that infrastructure, because it may be simple on paper, but it might not so much for the state statistical collections, like our trip ticket program, and it might have to make adjustments, and I'm not sure how hard or easy that would be, and so just to think about that too with the state data collection infrastructure.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Julia.

MS. BYRD: I was just going to say that I think you all are bringing up really great points, and it seems like, you know, as we're getting a design team together, which is what we call them, and that's kind of our citizen science language, we need folks from the Science Center who are doing TIP, and we need state people who are kind of TIP samplers and who also -- As Trish mentioned, there's dealers, and there's lots of different entities doing things, but I guess what I'm hearing here is maybe we need more samples on this species, and so can citizen science help supplement the

data collection programs that are around, and it seems like we need to get all the people who are doing those data collections and us together to kind of figure things out. Again, great points, but we want to see if citizen science can help supplement what's going on in a way that could make it useful to you all.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Julia. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Listening to the discussion, I'm trying to think of ways not to get bogged down into bureaucracy, and I apologize, but I just what I see here is I see a way to change a flat tire, and I don't need a commission for six months later to figure out how to change it, and so that's why I'm going directly -- I think citizen science is a great avenue, but I am thinking of the standards with citizen science, and we can go and we can see how many fish were caught, snowy grouper, and we can see what seasons they were caught, and we can see the locations of the dealers right now, and so my thing is the futility of, from the Science Center point of view, because, once we start about dusting off all these existing programs, it's been my experience that we'll have a lot of excuses of why it can't get done, and it takes years to do, and so that's just from my experience.

I am looking at ways of doing something with no money and getting it done that has the standard, and, with citizen science, I believe it's a great way to segment it, and I believe, with the tenacity of the dealers and the fishermen needing to get it done, because they see that this particular fish is not going to get no better, unless we maybe segment our way out to what has happened, and so I don't want to get bogged down, because I know, a lot of times -- I understand standards that need to be done, but I also understand a lot of excuses of why it can't, when you start getting more folks involved.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Clay.

DR. PORCH: Dewey, I think we're talking about exactly what you're saying, and so, rather than us unilaterally handing a template, we would work through the citizen science working group, and we would just use that as a mechanism to kind of guide this process along, but I think we're talking about exactly what you're saying, and we get smart people from industry, from the Center, council staff, and other participants, and we figure out a way to do this, like you say, with zero resources from the feds, potentially.

Maybe there is some ways, or some aspect of it, that we could fund through a cooperative research program or something, but I think that's exactly what we want to do, and so I'm sensitive to the worries about bureaucracies dragging things out, but I think there is a way that we can use existing mechanisms to get that done.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I think you're right, because, presently, sometimes, particularly up in northern North Carolina, we have port samplers that could maybe do it, and sometimes, when they're not doing it, we have citizen science groups doing the same thing, and so I like that kind of thought process, but I just am looking at ways to make something better, because this is not going to get better unless something changes.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris and then Carolyn.

MR. CONKLIN: What I was trying to say earlier was I want to make sure this program is validated, through the Science Center, and the information is actually used and not omitted. If we

spend a couple of years doing all this, and our own money, we sure would like to see it actually used and not thrown out, and so I want it designed in a way that it will have a lot of utility and be robust and not omitted.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: Piggybacking on Chris and Clay, that's part of the struggle that we've had at the state level with TIP sampling, is that funding -- The framework is there. We've done it, and we know the amount of effort that needs to go into it, but, as funds have gotten tighter, those programs were kind of dwindled down, and so the resources just need to be reengaged, and that's what I meant by dusting it off. It's not to go back and change. We have that framework, and it's already been vetted, and it's already been said that it works for what we need it to, but, bringing cit-sci in, I think we have the potential to strengthen what's there and leverage the money, rather than try to come from the ground up with a new project and new approach and figure out how it's all going to meld together. The question is what can we do to supplement it, rather than complement it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: I think Dewey is going down the right path here, and so does -- Does funding validate, or not validate? I mean, can you do this on a volunteer basis, and can we bring people in? I mean, we know who is catching the snowy grouper, and we know where we're catching them, and so, I mean, does funding really have to be a portion of being vetted and validation, or can this be done without funding and somebody getting paid for it?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: Somebody has to run the program, right? I mean, you couldn't just have people kind of randomly say, hey, I measured a fish, and I will type it in. You're going to have to have somebody that is coordinating the whole thing and making sure it's representative and making sure the data is going somewhere and being processed, and so, I mean, there's nothing that is completely free, and I think that's the advantage of using a system that might already exist, but, again, then, as Carolyn mentioned, generally, things have been flat-funded for better than a decade, and I think almost all the programs are more or less in that shape, and inflation has increased, and so buying power goes down, and that's part of the problem. Finding creative ways is important to get this sort of information, but, no matter what you do, it's not going to be completely free.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, before we go to Chester, I'm going to read what we've been capturing here, and, if you want to add to this or change it, then try to do that in your comments, and so we have work with the council's Citizen Science Department to create a project to gather supplemental snowy grouper data. Include outreach to dealers and consider creating a workgroup, or what Julia said was a design team, to include Science Center, state TIP samplers, citizen science workgroup folks, dealers, and, also, we noted that we want to consider how this meshes with state data collection programs, and then we put a timeline on there to provide an update on this and how this is going to this committee at the June council meeting. If you have more to add, or change this, then raise your hand, and we'll get it on there. Chester.

MR. BREWER: Would there be any utility in picking out a point group, or a point person, maybe somebody whose first name is Julia, to get this -- To be the person in charge of getting that going, because you're going to need a point person, somebody that's got the responsibility and is going

to have to come back to us at the next meeting and say, okay, this is what we've accomplished thus far.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John.

MR. CARMICHAEL: If we do it like it says, as a citizen science project, then that's Julia, and we'll get this started, and she can bring her people together, and so I think that's what we do, and we'll have Julia get together with -- We have infrastructure in citizen science, and we have program groups, and we set up project groups, and they've done it multiple times already, and all of the folks are included, the state and feds and everybody, and we bring in advisors and such, and so we have the ability to do all of this and get people together.

They can start on the design aspects and think about what it would look like and how long it would take to get going and what it's going to cost and where we're going to get the money. Any of these programs -- One of the things we're really learned is super important is you don't just need Julia, who can create all this stuff, but you need that person who is like Nick right now on the other projects, on the Release, who is out there every day doing all of the boots-on-the-ground work to get people to do the outreach through the dealers, to get everybody involved in that stuff, and so we're going to have to figure out where the money comes from to pay that kind of person as well, but we have the people to do all this, and that's not the problem, and I think they can start working on the plan and give you progress reports, and we're planning a Citizen Science Committee in June anyway, and so it works out pretty good.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sea Grant. All right. Kerry and then Chris.

MS. MARHEFKA: In an effort to try to sort of wrap this up, because I think we're all really excited about it, which is why we're talking about it a lot, but I also realize that that could go on for hours, but my expectation, in June, would be that the -- Julia has -- Are we expecting for her to have identified people to be on the working group, and then what I would also like is sort of very clear bullet points, from whether it's the Science Center or whoever is going to end up using that data in an assessment, to say this is what we need, and I would like to see that by June, that this is what is going to make whatever you do actually be used in the assessment, and so, if we could have those two things by June, I feel like we would be cooking with gas.

MR. CARMICHAEL: We can do that, and, actually, I will say the program -- Having the people who use the data is -- That is a fundamental principle of this program, and that's what makes it different, in our approach, from a lot of other efforts in this way, because, everything we've done, we've had the stock assessment people as part of that initial small group that starts thinking about how do we make this work, and so, yes, they will absolutely be involved, and I think, by June, Julia should have at least been able to touch base with them and start thinking about what's needed and touch base with the others that have been involved in other projects, our advisory panel representatives in citizen science, and start saying, okay, let's start putting the pieces together and think about who we need in a broader team, and that shouldn't be any problem to achieve by June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to point out that, next Friday, March 15, there is an omnibus budget for 2022 coming out, and the Fisheries Service and the councils are both going to probably get line items for much larger budgets, and I think the largest we've ever seen, and so I'm optimistic about

that. There's direct line items for fisheries data collection, surveys, and assessments, and that's up, and there is also direction to follow the prior year's direction and fund levels adopted by Public Law 116260 on the following topics: electronic monitoring and reporting, cooperative research, and bycatch reduction.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I added Sea Grant to the list of folks on the workgroup, so that they can help here, and maybe even bring some money to the table, and just saying. All right. This has been a really good discussion. Anything else that we want to add to what we have listed here? Of course, this will come back in Full Council, if you think of any other things or want to clarify any of these pieces. All right. Thanks for this discussion. I'm going to turn it back to Allie to get us going back through this document.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and so I'm going to dive into the actions for Amendment 51. Action 1 is revising the acceptable biological catch, total annual catch limit, and annual optimum yield for snowy grouper. What you're looking at in Table 2 is the -- Just to give you an idea of the percent difference that you're going to see, and so we talked a lot, with gag, about how those catch levels are going to be reduced, and I did want to know that current ACLs were determined using those MRIP-CHTS numbers, and so this is just to give you an idea, and then your options are in Table 3, and so Option 1 is setting the ACL and OY equal to the current ABC, again based on those CHTS numbers, and Option 2 is setting the ACL and the OY equal to the updated ABC, based on the MRIP-FES recreational landings, and then Options 3, 4, and 5 give you a 5, 10, and 20 percent buffer, respectively, again using those MRIP-FES numbers.

Table 4 gives you your actual ACL numbers, and these are in pounds gutted weight, and so, again, you're looking at the total ACL here, and so we'll come back to numbers of fish when we look at the sector annual catch limits, and so these are going to stay in pounds gutted weight.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay and so just -- I had to review, since we were down in another discussion, and so what we're trying to do here, on Amendment 51, is kind of like what we did on gag, is provide guidance on the actions and alternatives that are being developed, and so the options, right now, are listed in the tables in the document, and so we're trying to figure out are these the right options and alternatives that we want to see the analyses on. Here is Table 3 that also has those options written out in another way, but that other table that we were looking at, which was Table 4, was showing kind of the results, and so this is 95 percent, 90 percent, 80 percent. Any thoughts on these various options here? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would be inclined to get rid of the 80 percent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we don't need a motion, and we're just direction to staff at this point, and so this is an option that we removed in the gag document, because we would likely not select that, and so I agree that that's probably a good rationale, and we're probably not going to do the 80 percent option here either. Mel, have you got something?

MR. BELL: I just had the same thought.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Other thoughts on these options? Are we good with these options? Do we need to add more, or does this seem like this is part of the range that we would consider? All right. I see heads nodding yes. So then -- Okay, and so Allie is reminding me, just like gag, that we really need to pick preferreds on the first two actions in the document, so that they can do the

analysis on the rest of the document, and so think about which preferred you would like to see here. Here is Table 3 for the options, and we've already removed 5, but do we have one that we would like to select as a preferred here? Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: For discussion, I would say Option 2, because it's basically just the direct substitution for how we're currently doing it, with just the updated numbers.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good, and so motion by Carolyn. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Mel. It's under discussion. Any discussion on selecting Option 2 as the preferred? **Any objection to selecting Option 2 as the preferred?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 2 is revising the sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for snowy grouper, and so a little bit of background on how the fishery has been operating. From 2015 to 2020, the commercial sector averaged 106.6 percent of the commercial ACL, and, in Table 5, you can see how that played out, and there have been commercial closures each year of that time series.

Then, looking at the recreational sector, they have averaged 68.8 percent of the recreational ACL, again from 2015 to 2020. Just like with gag, those numbers that you're looking at are CHTS numbers and not FES, because you're comparing it to a CHTS ACL, essentially, and then Table 6 shows you how that broke down, and there was a recreational closure in 2015. Then Figure 2 shows the commercial and recreational landings, and these are recreational FES landings from 1986 to 2020.

Your options for this action, Option 1 is no change, and it applies the current allocation percentage, which is 83 to the commercial and 17 to the recreational, using the average landings from 1986 to 2005 from Regulatory Amendment 20, and then Option 2 uses that same method, and so the average landings from 1986 to 2005, but it uses those updated landings streams and applies them, again, to that updated ACL, and that results in an 87.55 percent allocation to the commercial and a 12.45 percent allocation to the recreational, and then, just like yesterday, you have the allocation formula as an option, and the years used in that formula are 1986 to 2008, an average from 1986 to 2008, and an average from 2006 to 2008, and so I will make sure that I don't have anything else.

Table 8 is your actual sector ACLs, and so this table has a lot, and the first two columns are the recreational ACLs, and so the first column that you're seeing is the percent allocation, and then that second column is the recreational ACL in numbers of fish, and so, when we converted this, we used an average weight from 2016 to 2018 from the SEDAR 36 update, and that was 8.93 pounds, and so that's how we converted that, and that's how you're seeing that ACL.

The rest of the columns are the commercial ACL, and so you have, again, the allocation and then the total commercial ACL, and snowy does have a split season, currently, with a 70/30 allocation to Season 1 and Season 2, respectively, and so then you see how that gets broken out by each season.

We did have some scoping comments. Two commenters were opposed to any reallocations which resulted in a higher allocation to the recreational sector, and one commenter expressed concern over increasing discards with reducing catch levels, especially as fishermen continue to target blueline tilefish, and, again, with this one, we're looking to just make sure that all of the options

for this action are appropriate, and add any additional that you see, and then, for analysis purposes, if you guys pick a preferred, that will help us analyze throughout the rest of the amendment, and I will hand it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chairman. All the numbers we're seeing, and the percentages we're seeing, are CHTS-based, right?

MS. IBERLE: The Option 1, no change, would be that 83/17 applied to the updated ACL, and so the method that was used to create that allocation was based off of CHTS landings, and so, essentially, what you're doing is taking that percentage allocation and, for lack of a better word, slapping it on the new ACL. Then Option 2 is using that method that got you to 83/17, but redoing it on updated landings, which shifts the allocation slightly. Did that answer your question?

MR. GRIMES: Yes, but the ACLs, or ABCs, that we looked at are CHTS, I thought I heard you say, right?

MS. IBERLE: The CHTS that I was talking about -- Sorry if this was confusing, and so, when you're looking at the ACL usage that I included here -- It was just to give you an idea of how the rec sector has been kind of executing their ACL, but, with this, you can't compare FES landings to an ACL based with CHTS numbers, and so these recreational landings, and the percent ACL that they used, is in CHTS landings, because you have to compare apples-to-apples for that one.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to ask Shep's question another way, just to make sure that I understand, and so, back on Table 7, Option 1, no change, that includes FES numbers, right?

MS. IBERLE: The ACL that you're applying that percentage to, yes, does include the FES numbers. You're just kind of moving that percentage onto your new ACL, if that makes sense.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you. Okay, and so what I was just trying to come around to is whether we have that typical problem we're facing with allocation, and it sounds like, yes, we do, correct, that the rationale to support the no action alternative is based on data that is no longer best available scientific information. Thus, if the council wants to keep the same percentage, they need to develop a new rationale to support -- I think I will go ahead and take the opportunity to make this point, but we focus too much, in this council, on like with the historical landings and say that's the catch history, and that's our rationale for our allocation, and that's not really -- I do the same thing, and I tend to focus on it as a rationale, but it's not, by itself, right, the rationale, and this is how we calculated it.

The rationale for it is why it's fair and equitable, why it's reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and we have conclusions that we often state about how the allocation is consistent with the goals and objectives of the FMP, yet we seldom, if ever, walk through the goals and objectives of the FMP and include a discussion of how that is actually so. I would like to see us do more of that, and I think this is going to be one -- We're doing a lot of these, but, as we progress through them, I think this is a good one where let's take the opportunity to do a better job. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Shep. Those are good points, and so I just want to -- Just continuing, because I'm a little confused myself, and so, Option 1, no change, is it a viable option or is it not? On some of these other allocation documents, it's still a viable option, because it's already converted to FES numbers, and I am just not understanding whether it is or isn't viable here. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am sure that Shep or Monica will say the same thing, but, if you want to maintain the current allocation, you've got to build a record, right? You've got to justify it, and so the time series on which it's based is now changed, in terms of the underlying data, but you could certainly argue that 83/17 is an allocation that you want to maintain for other reasons.

I do have a question, while I have the mic. Option 3 is fully in line with my expectations, in terms of how the allocation would shift when we incorporate FES, and Option 2 is not, and so I'm surprised that, when you incorporate updated recreational landings, that the allocation actually shifts away from the recreational sector under Option 2, and so is this a nuance with the rare-event species, or can someone help with that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Chip is coming up here.

DR. COLLIER: I did look into this for snowy grouper and a couple other deepwater species, and one of the big changes that occurs with FES is I guess on the shallower side, and there were increased trips, and so that's accounted for in the change in the survey when it changed from the telephone survey to the paper-based survey, and so that's going to be an increase there. However, there was also a change with APAIS, and what that did is it typically decreased some of these deepwater species, and, for snowy grouper, that's exactly what happens. The APAIS resulted in a decrease in the FES, and it did not result in a substantial increase.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so, continuing this discussion, Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Just to add to this, so, as I understand this, if we were to choose Option 1, that is a reallocation, because, if you use Option 2, which is simply replacing the Coastal Household Telephone Survey numbers with FES numbers, and, if that had existed back then, that's the way it would have been. Option 1 is, like it has been in some of our previous deliberations, is a de facto reallocation, and so, if you want that, you have to make the case for why that's a desirable outcome, versus just simply choosing Option 2, which is just a mathematical exercise of replacing numbers.

If you will allow me to continue, Madam Chair, I do think this is an acceptable range of options, and I would make the motion, if it's appropriate, that we choose Option 1. My rationale for that would be that we are seeing increased demand on snowy grouper, for good or bad, because of some of the technologies that are out there, from the recreational sector, and that would allow some of that demand to be provided for, going forward, and so that would be my -- I mean, I realize that's maybe a little skimpy rationale, but that's my rationale, and so I will offer that for consideration.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're getting that motion on the board to select Option 1 as the preferred under Action 2. Do we have a second to that motion? It's seconded by Chester. It's under discussion. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: With these new updated FES numbers, do you have the PSEs for that, and what would be the PSEs for these updated numbers? Is it over 50 percent, or just what would they be?

MS. IBERLE: I would have to look into that, but I believe they're pretty high PSEs, and I'm looking at Chip. Yes, but I would have to get you exact numbers.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: They're not, or they are?

MS. IBERLE: They are pretty high.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So, if they're over 50 percent, the stuff on NOAA's website and different things, you don't use them for management, and I am just curious about, when we look at these new numbers, and we look at the PSEs, and I'm just curious of when is that going to change, or how is that going to change, when we're going down these rabbit holes with these rare-event deepwater species, and, if you looked at the fact of reallocation, as discussed here, are we going to be rewarding that industry with high PSEs and uncertainty and a continuation, which I think is driving the reason why snowy grouper is in the state it is now, and so I'm just asking for that discussion, when we look at this. What is going to be the end result of fixing, while we continuing to go down with these high PSEs, or how is that going to change?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Dewey. Spud and then Tim.

MR. WOODWARD: I think this takes us back to Amendment 46 and the need for some permitting processes and examining the feasibility for fisheries like deepwater species, and can we actually implement something that would be close to a census, so that we can -- I don't think we're ever going to fix the PSE problem, for some of these rare-event species, with a permit and MRIP, and, I mean, it's just not the way it's going to work, and so we're going to have to consider, in these sort of more specialized, but growing, fisheries, is it feasible to have a permit that has mandatory reporting, or some sort of mechanism in place that addresses your concern, Dewey, because, I mean, that's my concern, too. I mean, I think we're all concerned.

The smaller these ACLs get, the greater the likelihood of exceeding them, and there's a lot going on here, and so that's just, again, and not that Amendment 46 is going to fix all the ills of our world, but that's the path we're going down, and that's why we're going to have to think very carefully about what we want to use that amendment to do and what can we accomplish, and so thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. Tim and then Chris.

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Dewey and Spud, and I share your concern there, and I think these PSEs and these rare-event species really lend themselves to what Spud was just alluding to, that this is where you start with that permit, and these rare-event species -- This is the perfect place to start that. You've got to start it somewhere, and you can't start it with every single species, but this is exactly where you start it, and, when you're talking about PSEs this high, and these rare events, then this is exactly where this comes into play and where we need to use this. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: It's just we've reallocated fish based on FES numbers for the last few species we've done, and then, now, all of a sudden, there's one thing that -- You know, I'm not saying that I believe any of it, but there's one instance here where the commercial guys weigh-in, and we're going to go back to CHTS, and it's like, oh, we believe that one and not this one, and, I mean, with all due respect, I don't see -- I mean, I see there is some merit in everybody needs fish, but this is -- I mean, I'm just calling it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Chris. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, several thoughts, and I wanted to comment on Dewey's theme and about rewarding for uncertainty, or something along those lines, and I think we need to be careful with comments like that, and I know that allocation pits sectors against one another, but the recreational sector is accountable relative to the regulations that we impose for it, right, and the commercial sector is the same way, right, and we're not trying to take anything away or give anything to people without the construct of the regulations we've already built around our fishery, and so just keep that in mind.

Snowy grouper is a rare-event species, and it is difficult to sample, and we have acknowledged, obviously, the shortcomings here, and there are certainly improvements that can be made. There was also a comment made, because of the MRIP website, that they're not presenting those numbers anymore, and that they're not going to be used for management, and that's not the case, and we can still use for those management, but we need to obviously, look at the uncertainty around that and base decisions based on that uncertainty.

In terms of the motion, I'm going to speak against the motion, and the rationale is that the commercial sector is fully utilizing their allocation, currently. Yes, the recreational sector is not well estimated, with regard to their catch estimates, but, in looking at what's been caught in the last four or five years and reported, it appears that that catch level would be at or under the allocation in Option 2, and well under the allocation in Option 3, and so I think, from a conservation standpoint, we have a heavily-regulated commercial sector that is tightly monitored, and they get most of the allocation, regardless of what option we choose, and then the recreational sector, in the regulations we have established to-date, have been constraining harvest, and so, from a conservation standpoint, it's been effective to achieve our goals.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Do you want to make a substitute motion?

MR. STRELCHECK: I would prefer not to.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **I will make a substitute motion that we choose Option 2 as our preferred.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so motion by Kerry, and it's seconded by Laurilee. Kerry, I'm assuming that the rationale is more along the lines of the rationale that Andy gave, and do you want to add to the rationale?

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, I basically told him to say that, and, yes, Andy's rationale is exactly what I was going to say.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: It's not about this motion, but I just want to address what Chris said. We have reallocated from recreational to commercial in mackerel, and we're considering doing it in greater amberjack, and so I just want to make sure that's clear and on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Spud. All right. Is there discussion on the substitute motion? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just want to put on the record that that was based on FES numbers, the reallocation, and so we're keeping up with what we've already done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Anything else on the substitute motion? Okay. **Let's see a show of hands in favor of the substitute motion, which is to select Option 2 as the preferred option under Action 2, and so let's see a show of hands in favor of the substitute, those opposed; any abstentions. Okay, and so I've got eight in favor, four opposed, one abstention, and that motion passes.**

The substitute motion now becomes the main motion, and we need to vote one more time, and so those in favor of the main motion, which is to select Option 2 as the preferred option for Action 2, and so, those in favor, please raise your hand again. The substitute motion is now the main motion, and so it's the exact same motion, and so you're probably going to want the same way, and so, if you're in favor, raise your hand, eight in favor; those opposed, same sign, four opposed; any abstentions, one abstention. The motion passes. That is now the main motion, and so we just approved the new main motion. I am going to pass it back to Allie to go on to the next action. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Sorry, real quick, but I wanted to go back to something that Shep said earlier about our justification in the future being about looking at the goals and objectives of the FMP, and I was going to back to look through the original FMP, which I can't pull up right now, but, when you say that, are you talking about what was in the original Snapper Grouper FMP?

MR. GRIMES: No, and the goals of the objectives of the current FMP that have been changed, and I would encourage us, and I will ask that staff go over this when they bring -- Maybe in the decision document for allocation alternatives, or allocation actions, excuse me, they could go through and take a look at the current goals and objectives and identify ones which seem to clearly be at issue, and the council can discuss those.

You know, you don't have to have your entire rationale here today, right, and you state a rationale to get it -- To get support for your motion and get it on there, and staff is going to go back and work at the IPT level, and we'll flesh this out more, and you're going to see it again, and we'll have time to revisit that and decide, and you can bolster your decision, and maybe you will get information that leads you to a different decision, but that's how this process goes. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: A reminder, and I will go to Christina here, but a reminder that we have updated the snapper grouper goals and objectives, and it's inside the wreckfish amendment.

MS. WIEGAND: Keep in mind, like Jessica said, with the wreckfish amendment, you guys are intending to formally update the new goals and objectives, and, if anyone is interested in looking

through those, they are in the wreckfish decision document, which was Attachment 4 in the snapper grouper briefing book.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Christina. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Real quick, and I'm sorry, but I just think this is important, because, basically, those are a roadmap, right, and that's saying this is what we want to do, and sometimes, when they're not right in front of us, we get bogged down in these details and forget what our overall plan was, and so I would suggest maybe that -- I feel bad that I didn't -- I think because I go straight to the decision documents of things, and not necessarily read the -- For wreckfish, I didn't go and read the whole thing, but whether there is some utility in those always being sort of a stand-alone document within a tab, and I would have a second screen, or I would have it printed out, and, I mean, I'm almost not kidding, because, as we're sitting here and we're deliberating, and we get lost in why we're doing what we're doing, and I do think sometimes it does help lead to a different decision, and so I just think it's really important to remember where we're trying to go with this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that's a great idea, Kerry, and, yes, it actually was in the decision document this time, and I did look for it, but I like the idea of, maybe in a stand-alone document, because remember that, with wreckfish, we're only looking at it every other meeting, and so it will take a while to get approved, but those were the updated goals and objectives that we had for snapper grouper, based on the visioning, and so we found a mechanism to place them in there, but, yes, I like the idea of maybe it's a stand-alone document and that we could look at it every meeting, because wreckfish isn't coming to every meeting. Okay. Good discussion on that. I am going to turn it back to Allie to go back to the commercial trip limit.

MS. IBERLE: All right. Action 3 is reducing the snowy grouper commercial trip limit. As a recap, currently, the commercial trip limit is 200 pound gutted weight. All of this background, you guys have seen, I believe both in December and September, but I will review them here, and so Figure 3 is the percent commercial trips harvesting in each kind of binned trip limit, and then the predicted change in landings from 100 pounds and a fifty-pound step-down in trip limit.

Then your options for this one are no change, at 200 pounds gutted weight, and Option 2 would be 150 pounds gutted weight, and Option 3 would be 100 pounds gutted weight. We did give you guys a preliminary analysis in December, and, again, this is a pretty large table, and so apologies there, but this looks at each of the allocation options, and so, now that we've picked a preferred for allocations, we can kind of trim this down a little bit, and so what you're going to want to focus on is this middle section here, because that is applicable for the commercial ACL from Option 2 for Action 2, and so what you're looking at is the ACL per season, and so the first three rows are Season 1, which again has that 70 percent allocation, and then the last three rows are Season 2, and so you can then see each bag limit here, and so you have 200, 150, and 100, and then the expected closure date and season length there.

Again, I don't want to spend too much time on this, because you guys have seen this before, and I will just remind you that there were several comments that were opposed to a reduction in trip limit, again noting that it wouldn't really be worth it to go out far enough to catch snowy for less than a 200-pound trip limit, and there were people that expressed that they would rather have an earlier season closure than reducing that trip limit. There is no need to pick a preferred for this one right now, and what we're kind of looking for is are these options acceptable and adding or removing anything, and I will scroll back up and hand it over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Allie, and so we have Table 10, which is the summary of the options, and so what do we want to do? We don't need to pick a preferred here, and what we're trying to figure out is do we want to have additional options that would be analyzed, and what is the committee's thoughts? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Listening to the comments last night, and the guy with the slow boat -- When I was fishing, I had a slow boat too, and it brought back a lot of comments that we've heard in public comment down through the years, and these small trip limits on a fish that, for the most part, we're fishing way, way offshore, is really, really burdensome on the boat owner, because you burn a lot of fuel going out there, and you waste a lot of time, with a slow boat, going out there, and so I would like to think outside the box and throw out an option that would include the ability to take your weight that you would have on a trip limit, but make it a weekly limit.

If we went with the 200 pounds for a trip limit, it would be 1,400 pounds for a week limit, and the captain may be able to go out and catch that in two or three days and then come back and tie the boat to the dock, and so, instead of burning a lot of fuel, and a lot of wear-and-tear on the boats, and, when we break down, we can't get parts now to fix the boats, and sometimes we wait six weeks for a part, and so I think that would be a lot more productive, and it would certainly help the commercial fishing industry. Fuel is going to shut us down, even for 200 pounds, and the price of fuel is going to make it unprofitable to go fishing, and so I would like to throw that option out and see what you all think.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me try to restate it. It sounds like what you're suggesting would be to add an option for analysis that would actually establish a weekly trip limit, and did you say 1,400 pounds?

MS. THOMPSON: Well, a weekly seven-times whatever we end up voting on for a trip limit.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. All right. Thoughts on that or thoughts on other options? What do people think about that? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Interesting. We've never done anything like that before, and so I'm having a hard time sort of wrapping my brain around it, and some of my thoughts also, as a slow boat owner, is just looking at the closure, and my concern would be -- I mean, we're already at 200 pounds, for what really is still -- I mean, we go for a week, and we get our 200 pounds, and that's all we get. If everyone that was doing that went up to 1,400 pounds, I think we would probably be open for - - It's April 15 for 200 pounds, and I think we would probably close pretty darned quickly, at the end of January, or maybe the beginning of February, and then we would have a glut of snow on the market all at one time.

Then I'm just trying to -- The enforcement of it, I'm trying to think how that would work, and that's giving me a little bit of a headache, and I love the concept of it, but I'm just not sure that it's really doable, and I think it would make a very, very short fishery.

MS. THOMPSON: Instead of keeping it at 200 pounds, then maybe you would drop down to 100 pounds, but I'm trying to reduce the back-and-forth trips to the dock, and so, if you went with a lower trip or -- If you went with a lower limit, you wouldn't be going back and forth to the dock all the time, and you could stretch the trip out and have -- Right now, you're fishing for a week,

but only 200 pounds of snowy, and you might be able to maybe catch 500 pounds of snowy during the week, and I am trying to get it so that we're more efficient and help the boat owners and the captains in being able to catch more fish and spend less time going back forth to the dock.

MS. MCCAWLEY: John and then back to Kerry.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think the concept is a great idea, and it's the kind of thing we should be looking at. I don't know if it's the thing to look at in an overfished stock that we're struggling to rebuild that has pretty low limits, and I think that's -- Where I think it's an incredible idea, and, when I hear us talk about things like the two-for-one that's out there, that we've said we want to talk about, I think, in a way, that is a place to look at the future of the fishery and how we better manage it, and that's how it's kind of been discussed on the two-for-one, because it's been like, well, how do we bring new people in, and how do we make it encouraging, and how do we have a better, more efficient, successful, productive fishery, a more profitable fishery, and I think it's the perfect thing to bring in there, and it gives us a chance to talk about it when we're not under a statutory deadline on a stock that's overfished, because I do think there is a lot of concern to do something like that.

I would expect that, when you bring this up, law enforcement is going to start raising all kinds of questions about verifying, and this easily crossing into one of the things where, well, if you had VMS, and we could show what you were doing, sure, we could enforce that, and so I think there's going to be a lot of ancillary things that pop up that are just probably more than we can handle under snowy grouper, but we should keep track of this as something to definitely look into in a bigger-picture way.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got a list of hands. Kerry, Tim, and I don't know if you wanted me to go back to you, Mel, and then Laurilee.

MS. MARHEFKA: Thank you. Sorry to take up more than my fair share of time. Basically, the way I'm thinking about it, Laurilee, is we do -- I mean, we're going to have X number of fish, right, and I forget what it's going to be. It's 80,000 pounds, and I do feel like it's sort of -- That is our commercial pie, and it's up to us to sort of provide guidance on how we want to catch that, how fast we want to catch it, how slow we want to catch it, and so there's utility in that conversation, as far as having a higher trip limit.

We have been struggling, in the past -- We've always gotten guidance from our advisory panel that -- In the past, they've always wanted longer seasons and lower trip limits, and this is the first time we've heard sort of the opposite of that, and we'll be talking to them again in May, and so we could go -- I don't think there's anything constraining us to 200 at the upper limit, and the reason that constraint has been there is because we were trying to extend the season longer.

Then, to you point about sort of going that far and getting the 200 pounds, I think how we've all sort of adapted, for better or worse, is, obviously, that's one of the things we're targeting, and you, quote, unquote, run offshore, and, in our case, we crawl offshore, and whatever you're allowed to get on snowy, and then you start working your way inshore, and so I think it would be really interesting to find out from the AP, again, that -- Would they rather have a higher trip limit, to make that run offshore worthwhile, knowing it's going to create a much shorter season, and, in which case, if we want that feedback, then do we need here to consider a higher option, whether it's Laurilee's idea or some other higher number than 200?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and that's what I was going to put back to you, because the direction from the AP, in the past, was the 200-pound option, the no action option, and so, if you're wanting the AP to consider something else, can you think about whether it's the option that Laurilee put out there, which you heard some concerns from John, or something else, and so I'll come back to you. Think about how we could word a couple of things, so that they could consider it. Tim and then Mel and then back to Laurilee.

MR. GRINER: Thank you. I just want to reiterate the way that we fish for snowy, at least in my neck of the woods, and the size of the fish and the depths and the currents. You simply cannot have anything less than a 200-pound trip limit. I mean, these get to be very, very big fish, and you're talking about four to five fish and you're done, and so I cannot see anything less than 200 pounds, regardless of how you do it, but 200 pounds is the absolute minimum for a trip.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Tim. Mel.

MR. BELL: I am not going to restate everything, but, Laurilee, great idea. I like the concept, but I think John kind of covered it, and this particular fishery, at this particular time, maybe that wouldn't work so well, just given the restrictions we have, but I do like the concept, maybe moving forward into other fisheries.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I appreciate that, and it all boils down to the regional differences in how we fish. I mean, you guys -- You can go offshore and catch your snowies and then work your way in, and, in our case, that's all we have, and we can't -- We're fishing during the spawning closure, and so we're running past all the other fish to get out to the snowies and catch them and then chug back to the shore again, and so it's the regional differences and the timing on how we fish. I appreciate everybody considering this, and it's on the table, and so, John, I hope we follow up on it, and I understand why we can't do it with this particular fish, and Tim is right that we cannot, absolutely cannot, go below 200 pounds on a trip limit. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Kerry, I'm hoping you're going to put some things out there that we're going to ask the Snapper Grouper AP to react to.

MS. MARHEFKA: I'm going to try, because that helped me. The regional differences, I was not aware of with snowy, but also because we're really under the gun here, time-wise, and so, Laurilee, tell me what you think about this idea. **I would make a motion, I guess, if we need it, and I know we don't need to pick a preferred, and I know that, but I do want the AP to really react strongly and give us advice on where we're going with it, and so I personally, right now, would move that we pick Option 1, 200 pounds, as our preferred.**

I believe -- I don't know if -- Again, I'm still confused, sort of legally, if we, right now, have to throw a higher number, a 300 or a 400, if we really needed to go higher than that for some boats now, or have the AP -- Maybe have the AP suggest it, and I'm not sure where that goes, and then, finally, what I would like to suggest is that we consider regional management for snowy grouper in the MSE -- Whatever that document -- Whatever we're calling that document, that we make sure that that's captured and we start talking about regional management for this fish, and I wish we had time to do it now, and I just think there's no way we could get it done.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We're trying to capture all those things, and so good suggestions, and so just check the board and make sure that we got everything captured there, but there was a motion in there to select Option 1, which is the 200 pounds, for Action 3. Do we have second to that motion? Seconded by Laurilee. So that's under discussion.

One thing I would also like to understand, Kerry or Laurilee, whoever it is, is are we asking the AP for input on this weekly trip limit, or are we saying, hey, this type of idea is good, but for a different species, and I'm a little unclear on that piece of it. It seems like we're thinking maybe not at this time, not for this species, and is that -- Okay. Laurilee says yes, and so I'm going to have maybe Allie just note that this is a good idea to consider for other species, but not snowy, at this time. All right. Is there more discussion on this particular option?

Once again, we don't have to pick a preferred, but the rationale is that we're picking a preferred here so that we can get some feedback from the AP at their next meeting, since we have to move quickly on this. Any more discussion? All right. **Is there any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.** Let's go ahead and take a ten-minute break, and we'll come back and continue going through this document.

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am going to turn it back to Allie to take us to the next action.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and Action 4 is establishing a commercial spawning season closure for snowy grouper, and so you guys discussed considering a spawning season closure to allow an increased change of spawning before fish are harvested, and decreased fishing pressure on snowy while they're spawning, and so we looked at some -- We brought you guys some literature, the IPT brought you guys some literature, showing that snowy grouper spawn January through October, and the authors considered peak spawning May through August, and I will move down to the figure here, which you guys saw in December, and so we won't spend too much time on it.

The Snapper Grouper AP did note that April and May are important times for snowy, and then, as far as scoping comments, one comment was in favor of closing the commercial fishery during peak spawning months, while another suggested modifying the season to correspond with seasons of similar deepwater species, and shorten if required, and then other comments opposed any commercial season modifications, and so, for this action, we took this to scoping without any options, and so what I would be looking to you guys for today is whether or not you want to retain this action and, if so, what options would you like the IPT to analyze, moving forward, and so, at this point, this one is short and sweet, and I will hand it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What are our thoughts here? Tim.

MR. GRINER: Normally, I'm all in favor of not fishing on spawning fish, but we're talking about a 200-pound trip limit and barely 100,000 pounds of quota, and I don't even think we really need to consider a spawning season for the fish. I mean, we're barely touching the fish as it is, and so I really can't even fathom why we would even think about a spawning closure for snowy grouper.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. How do others feel? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: To add to that rationale, I would just remind everyone that we do have several marine protected areas and closed areas that were designated to protect these spawning fish, and we don't really know what's happening, and I know we can't quantify what we're getting out of it, but that would just be further rationale for the fact that we're already protecting them in some manner.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anybody else on this? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am just trying to look at the closure dates in past years, and the commercial people can help me out, but my recollection is that we have closed prior to the June 30 timeframe, and so we have a pseudo spawning season closure already, and I also struggle with the justification of why we would close commercial, but not recreational, and essentially have the recreational season right in the middle of the spawning season closure, and so I would support getting rid of this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so we don't necessarily need a motion, but it sounds like direction to staff to no longer consider this action. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: If we're catching them when they're supposedly roed-up or whatever, it would be a great time to get the gonads and other reproductive organs out of them, but there's been a lot of talk about snowy over the years, and there's a good record established for market demand as well. I'm not a catching of fish that are spawning, but, if we can utilize them, and there's a big demand in the marketplace for a little tiny bit of fish, I think this action should go away as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you. We're typing some of that information on the board there.

MS. IBERLE: All right, and we'll go ahead and move on to Action 5, which, Andy, you mentioned how the rec season currently coincides with peak spawning, and so Action 5 considers modifying the recreational season, and so this came up in discussion for exactly that reason, and you guys talked first about modifying the commercial season, but then you would have the rec sector fishing during the commercial spawning season closure.

We have got some preliminary analysis, and we've reviewed this, and I think this is the second time you guys are seeing this, and so we've got Figure 5, the recreational landings of snowy grouper, in numbers of fish by year by wave from 2010 to 2019. Then Figure 6 shows the average number of snowy grouper landed by the rec sector by wave, and you can see kind of the months and how the recreational sector is catching most of their fish in May through June and July through August.

Then, in December, we brought you Table 11 and Table 12, and so what we did was looked at the average number of snowy grouper landed by the rec sector from 2015 to 2019, and so those are the bold rows here, and so this is when the rec season is currently open, and so we looked at those numbers, and then we looked at the options for the recreational ACL, and so we essentially took Action 2 and looked at a predicted season length, and so these are kind of really rough estimates, looking at Table 11, and, based on those numbers, and so those landings by wave, about how long the season, in waves, you would get for each allocation option. Again, we looked at this in December, and this just gives you an idea of how the fishery is operating.

The other thing I wanted to include is you guys had mentioned, and we asked, during scoping, a little bit about the co-catch of snowy grouper and blueline tilefish, and so we asked about that in scoping, and then we also brought you an additional analysis, Tables 13, 14, and 15, looking at the co-catch of snowy grouper and other species.

Table 13 is you're looking at what was caught when snowy were caught, and so you can see the number of trips and then the species that were caught. Then Table 14, you're looking at the species that were caught on trips that discarded snowy grouper, and, again, your year range is 2015 to 2019, and then Table 15 are species that were caught on trips that harvested snowy grouper, and so a little bit of variation there.

I will review scoping comments again, and so two comments were received that suggested gear restrictions for the recreational sector, to help reduce dead discards, particularly when fishing for other deepwater species, and one commenter felt that recreational bag limits should be increased, so that, when they're catching more than one fish at a time, they're not discarding, and so they suggested one fish per person per day, and two comments noted that there is an increased need for recreational oversight, suggesting the council establish that recreational permit, and so you guys kind of discussed that a little bit earlier, and even in this discussion, going back to that rec permit. With this action, the same thing as the last one, and just consider whether or not you want the action included, and, if so, what is the range of options that you would like the IPT to analyze.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you. All right. What is the pleasure of the committee on modifying the recreational season? It looks like people are still looking at the information. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you scroll down to where it talks about the length of the season? When I look at this, at the predicted season length, and you've got just Wave 1, which would be January and February, or -- So it would be May and June that that season would be open, and how does this go into -- If you look at the -- How does it work looking at the landings so far on the website, the quota monitoring, that shows --

I've got to put it in perspective, because there is a season in May or June, and how does that work, like given the past history of where them numbers have lasted, and I don't think they've ever closed on some of the years, looking at that, during them waves of the season opening, and some of the poundage, or amount of fish here, has been the same, and so I'm just curious, and how is that reflecting where, if I go on there and look on the quota monitoring page in the past, and I don't think there's been a whole bunch of closures, and I might be wrong, and I probably should go look at that.

MS. IBERLE: I believe that there was a recreational closure -- I would have to scroll back up, and I don't want to leave this table, but in 2014, and I would have to look at the ACL monitoring site, but I believe, since the ACL hasn't been updated, that those landings on the ACL monitoring site are still being shown in CHTS landings, because the current ACL is in CHTS units.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I forgot the old switchover.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Dewey, if you take a look at Table 6, PDF page 9, it shows the history and landings relative to the ACL, and we exceeded the ACL back in 2016, but it hasn't been exceeded since that time.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So what are we thinking here? It looks like the season would be short. Do we want to specify the season, although it seems like there are regional differences in the season and when people fish. Mel.

MR. BELL: That's what I was going to say, and I would just -- I would be concerned about picking something, and then it's going to be completely different for the southern part of the region, versus all the way up north, and so I don't know how you would pick something that would satisfy everybody, if you were going to pick a wave.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. What do we want to do here? Do we want to try to get additional input from the AP? What do we want to do? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: Just to piggyback on Mel's comment there, I think it's going to be really hard for us to pick a season which is going to appease everybody, but I think we have to try, to an extent, and so I really think we probably need some more AP feedback on this issue.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and do you have some suggestion for the AP, other than just selecting a season that would work across the region, and what would be your direction, or question, for them?

MR. ROLLER: I mean, to try to figure out -- To get some input -- This is not a fishery that I am intimately familiar with, and so I would like to hear from them, given that it's a really slim range of options, what might be the best solution, and I don't really know where I'm going with that, but we're going to have to figure out something, from some of the fishermen who are really familiar with the fishery, as to what really, really short season is going to work out the best.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we're trying to get some items typed up there. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just want everyone to keep in mind that this is only one meeting ahead of the short-term snapper -- This short-term response to -- Sorry. I forget what we're calling it, but you know what I'm trying to say, right, and I'm not even going to get myself -- That is going to have implications on this, and vice versa, and I see all of these train tracks coming together in a way that I'm not so sure we know how we're going to navigate it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Good point, which is why we might need some information from the AP on all of these things. All right, and so it seems like we're going to gather some more information from the AP, and that might be all we need at this time on this action.

MS. IBERLE: All right.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Remind me of the timing of this action. December, right? So, if we wait for the AP, does that give staff sufficient time to develop options for June, or beginning in June,

for the September meeting, or would it be better to go ahead and start some options now and then get AP input on some of those options?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra is coming up here.

MS. BROUWER: Thanks for that, Andy. The IPT can develop the range of options. We may not have preliminary analyses for you. Typically, when we've gone to the AP with a range of options for trip limits or seasons or whatnot, they also want to see preliminary analyses, so they can give you guys better feedback, and we definitely aren't going to have enough time to put together analyses for the AP, and they're meeting at the end of April, or mid-April, and so that is kind of where we are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: With that, I think it would help to maybe give the IPT a little direction, and I think we're all in agreement that the recreational sector's preference, although it will vary geographically, is to have some sort of summer fishing season, and that's kind of how we arrived at the current season.

Given the analysis so far, it looks like it might have to be shortened from four months to two months, and so I think it's at least worth looking at maybe a Wave 3 season and a Wave 4 season, May/June or July/August, and then trying to keep in mind also the comments that we've talked about in terms of the uncertainty, and I know the IPT has looked at 2015 through 2019, and there's a lot of variability in that data, and so I think, to inform the council's decision, we probably need to look at ways of analyzing this that take into account that variability, but also maybe our most recent time series that are more stable, for whatever reason, and so I would just suggest that you look at maybe different ways of analyzing it, because I think you might arrive at different outcomes, based on that information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I think we captured that, both of those things. Anything else on this, before we leave this action? All right.

MS. IBERLE: All right. The final action for snowy is to modify the snowy grouper recreational accountability measures, and I know there was a little bit of confusion yesterday about the accountability measures and whether not we were talking about commercial and recreational. At this point, for snowy, this is just considering the recreational accountability measures.

Modifications to the recreational accountability measures could be considered to separate the commercial and recreational accountability measure triggers and establish a viable accountability measure for the recreational sector, and then I'm going to use Table 16 to go over your options, and so Option 1 is no action.

Currently, snowy has an in-season closure, or an in-season accountability measure. If rec landings reach, or are projected to reach, the ACL, then the current recreational season closes, and then there's a post-season accountability measure that's triggered only when the recreational landings exceed the rec ACL, the total ACL is exceeded, and the stock is overfished, and so all three of those triggers need to be in effect for the post-season AM to be triggered, and so the ACL for the following year would be reduced by the overage.

Option 2 is that NMFS will annually announce the recreational fishing season start and end date, and then Option 3 is that kind of uncoupling option that is the preferred for red porgy, and so it uncouples those three triggers for the post-season accountability measure to only be the rec landings exceeding the ACL is what would trigger the post-season accountability measure, and then the in-season would be removed.

We had one spoken comment pertaining to accountability measures, and that commenter stressed the importance of recreational accountability measures for the snowy grouper fishery, and so, for this action, we're just looking for you guys to review these actions, or these options, and then modify it as you see fit, and I will hand it back over.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Allie. What do we want to do here on accountability measures? Okay. There is a commercial accountability measure, and it just looks like what the recreational accountability measure looks like, apparently, that's in Option 1, the no action. Basically, these would be getting rid of the in-season accountability measures, which we know is going to be very difficult for this fishery, and focusing on these post-season accountability measures, and so do we need to add anything here? All right. I don't see any hands. I am going to assume we're good with these two options.

MS. IBERLE: I think that's it for me, unless you guys have anything else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Anything else on snowy? All right. Thank you, Allie. I think we're going to go into blueline and golden next. All right, everybody. We're going to get going here, and so, once again, we're about to work on Amendment 52, which is golden tilefish and blueline, but we're going to start with a fishery overview on blueline, and Chip is going to get into that for us.

DR. COLLIER: Just a reminder, and a little bit of warning for this, and blueline tilefish is a little bit different than most of the species that we've built these overviews for. Blueline tilefish, their last assessment was based on data that used CHTS units, and I don't have access to that back conversion for the recreational sector, and so the information that I provided here is based on FES units, and that's not how the species is currently being managed, and so take the numbers with a grain of salt, but it gives you an idea of how things are changing over time relative to each other.

The other thing is blueline tilefish have kind of a split assessment, and it's split around Cape Hatteras. South of Cape Hatteras, the assessment used a surplus production model, and then, north of Cape Hatteras, it's a data-limited approach, and so just keep those in mind, and so it's going to be looking a little bit different than most of the species that we have these for.

On this landings page, we have all the information that's included in there, and so you guys, if you're interested in looking at a single piece, you can read through it, real quick, to find what you're looking for. We have the history of management, and, basically, this goes through a paper that was put together by staff, and it includes all the management measures that have been done for the snapper grouper fishery, and this is just limited to actions that focus on blueline tilefish for all species in the complex.

We also have the fishery performance report that was done in April of 2019 for this species, and it was basically created for the stock assessment, or for the last -- This was done after the last stock assessment, to give you guys guidance in the development of management measures.

Going into the graphs, similar to what we have for other ones, we have the assessment output, and the top graph looks at fishing mortality over time, and you can see that the species -- This is just for the south of Cape Hatteras stock, and there's an indication that overfishing was not occurring, and there was a little blip where F was above the sustainable harvest levels, towards the end of the time series, but we use a geometric mean of the last three years, and it was not overfishing. It's not overfished, and you can see that the biomass is above the $BMSY$, and so the population is in fairly good condition, and this, once again, is for the south of Cape Hatteras stock.

When we're looking at indices of abundance that were used for the species, you can see the information, and it goes through 1980 all the way up to about 2006, I believe, for the most recent one. Unfortunately, we do not have an index of abundance for this species beyond 2010. As has been talked about, we are working on a new survey that hopefully will be providing guidance in the future, and we can get that incorporated into management.

Projections, this is just the landings relative to the ABC . Here, we have landings in blue and the ABC in red. For this entire time series, you can see that the landings have been above the ABC , and, in 2020, we were actually above the OFL .

Comparing between recreational and commercial, we have the combined for both sectors, and we have the allocation as it is currently developed for this species, and it's 49.93 for the recreational and 50.07 for the commercial. You can see, for both sectors, it's generally been over the ACL , and, in 2020, it was substantially over in the recreational sector. Back in 2015, it was substantially over for the commercial sector, and that was under a much different management regime, and it was also due to a change in management at that time as well, and that's why that high overage occurred.

Looking at the landings by sector, you can see, for the most part, prior to 2015, it was about 50/50, or it was dominated more by the commercial, and then there's a lot more blue here in 2020, with that really high landings estimate from the recreational sector, and you can look at this by season, geographic, however you would like to look at it, and then, if you want to look at each sector independently, we do have additional information that is provided to you guys, and you can look at how it's caught by trip limits, and so the number of pounds by trip, and the number of trips that actually catch that poundage, looking at the commercial in two different ways, and then you can also look at your recreational data, and it has the time series of recreational data.

This top graph is actually incorrect, and this is biomass, in blue, for the recreational landings, and then, if you look at the discards, those are in numbers of fish, and I will get that corrected shortly. All the rest is in numbers of fish, and you can see how it changes seasonally as regulations have been established, and you can see it was kind of a year-long fishery, with the exception of the first two waves, prior to 2010, and then you see it kind of concentrate into just the two-month period in the more recent time blocks.

Then, if you -- We also have sizes of recreational fish, and then we also have catch per angler. When we're thinking about $MRIP$, they look at catch per angler, and the catch is done by anglers, and so that's why this is provided here, and you can see how many fish are generally caught. If you look at the regulation for this, it's one fish per vessel, and -- Sorry. I was thinking snowy grouper. That is not how this is. Sorry. I apologize, and this is three fish per person.

Then there's always questions about some of the life history, and I will point out that one of the issues with blueline tilefish was there is discrepancy in some of the ages, and so take this length-at-age with a grain of salt. They are working on updating the length-at-age for blueline tilefish, and so that's going to be changing in the upcoming assessment.

The length-at-weight is also provided here, and we have length in inches converted to pounds of fish, if you're interested in that, and then you can also look at the maturity for this species. The final graph that's on there is generally put in there because we have so many hermaphroditic species, and the ratio of male to female will change over sizes, and that is not occurring for blueline tilefish.

That's all the background information in the fishery overview, and we generally try to provide this to you guys for all species, when you're thinking about taking management actions, and so it's going to be at this webpage, if you want to just save it, and we also have it for gag, golden tilefish, and I'm thinking of all the species that -- I think we have it for five or six species now, and so we're going to be sending all those links out to you guys shortly. Are there any questions?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Is it possible, in the future, to include heatmaps of where the fish are caught at, because, given the presentation here, you've talked about -- Is all this here from south of Cape Hatteras that's in this equation here?

DR. COLLIER: The landings information is not from south of -- It's for the entire stock managed by the South Atlantic Council, and the stock assessment information is just for south of Cape Hatteras.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Hopefully, in the future, to give people perspective of where the fish are caught at and the distribution, and where the fish is prosecuted at, it might be good to show some type of heatmap, or big bubbles, or something of that aspect, just to help folks understand it, please.

DR. COLLIER: Yes, we can work on that, and it's probably going to be easiest to do it at the landing location, as opposed the area fished.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Any more questions? All right. Thank you, Chip. All right. I think we're going to jump back into the document, or are you first going to go over the scoping comments?

MR. PUGLIESE: I am going to, since they're pretty consolidated, touch on the scoping comments in the beginning, and it's actually included in the frontend of the decision document, because it's pretty well focused, and so I planned on walking through those to start with, and so what we have before you is the decision document for golden tilefish and blueline, with catch level adjustments and allocations for golden and modifications to the recreational management for blueline tilefish.

We held the scoping sessions and have online information provided, and just touching on -- I broke out the golden tilefish comments and the blueline separately, and I will touch on those and then go into the actions and alternatives or options within this document, and so, with regard to golden tilefish, a number of commenters provided comments that supported changing the commercial longline season, to spread out the catch and not necessarily flood the market. Also, commenters

noted that fishing in January was during some of the roughest time and caused a rush on catch, as well as potentially forcing fishing in some of the rougher periods of time.

In addition, some commenters -- Generally, commenters supported the increase in the golden tilefish allowable catch limit, and commenters also supported retaining the current allocations for golden tilefish at 97 percent commercial and 3 percent recreational.

Multiple commenters supported the golden tilefish longline sector getting together and actually discussing how to better manage it, because they viewed as almost a derby fishery at this time, and to look at increasing the economic value, professionalize the fishery, and address some of the previously-mentioned safety issues in the fishery. In addition, there is support to consider a golden tilefish -- Possibly a hook-and-line endorsement, since the catch is being caught quicker each year, and, if you look at the tables in the back, the closures under there for the commercial fishery over the last four years look like they are progressing. One commenter also noted changing the start of the season is -- It may benefit some, but it also -- It's going to be variable between fishermen.

Commenters supported increasing the commercial ACL, considering, in South Carolina, and in Cape Canaveral, there seems to be a fairly healthy mix of fish, and so you're either catching larges, jumbos, smalls, mediums, and basically a mixed group. Also, off of South Carolina, there was, again, support, because they were catching basically the trip limit every time out.

Now, one commenter provided some specific recommendations that the current formulas to calculate the allocations and implement the conversions at the same time the quota is updated, based on the MRIP-FES. Also, that they automate the conversions and the allocations for the MRIP-CHTS currency to the MRIP-FES during the process to update the quotas, based on the MRIP-FES, so that the status quo, in terms of who catches, was maintained and that catch levels are updated.

If the council wants to look at the allocation review that's been discussed in the past and the process that's being developed, in the decision tree process, they would have time later to actually carefully consider then, subsequently, how to reallocate. Also, to look at ways to improve the recreational data and reduce dead discards, and, finally, there was a comment on better estimates for the recreational catch, systems specifically for accounting for deepwater species.

With regard to blueline tilefish, one commenter provided a number of comments to manage blueline tilefish to avoid closures, so that regulatory discards are kept at a minimum, to reduce the rec bag limit or the season, to constrain the harvest of blueline tilefish. Catch the ACL, so that it doesn't get a chance for the fish -- To fish the scientific uncertainty placed by the SSC.

Also, there was concern that SERO demonstrate where the species occur together, all the discussion about co-occurring species, and the point was that, just because they were fishing in a specific area and catching blueline, and then snowy, that it didn't necessarily mean that they were catching them at the same time.

In addition, look at all available recreational landings, for-hire, the e-logbook, since 2016 and help guide the reduction in bag limit and/or the season, since the blueline ACL was exceeded five of the last six years, and, moving into harvesting, that buffer between ABC and OFL. In addition, there was a note that the SERO Regional Administrator had the authority and means to constrain catch now, because the council's action -- Prior to the council's action taking place, since it won't

be implemented until 2023, considering blueline tilefish had exceeded the OFL in three years, since 2016, and potentially it hurt the fishermen north of Cape Hatteras, where there was no bycatch.

In addition, one commenter supported the limitation to prevent recreational ACL overages, better tracking of the recreational fishery, and the market needs to have a reliable source of blueline tilefish, which is more affordable than grouper and one of the few fish that you can depend on during the summertime.

One commenter recommended that a very limited recreational blueline tilefish season be established, that accountability measures to take into account all deepwater species being managed, to address that as well as discards, and a number of comments were provided, noting the recreational blueline tilefish overages in recent years were unacceptable, and the fishery needs to be held to the ACL to maintain a healthy stock.

There was a comment noting that Florida already changed their recreational blueline tilefish regulations in state waters, to be consistent with federal waters, which should address the overages that might have been attributed to what is coming out of Florida, and, finally, a commenter recommended determining what is driving trends in the fisheries and changes in the way that fish are being caught and geographic shifts and what fish might be showing up in different places than they have in the past, and those were the comments provided. Links to the information were provided in the document. Any comments on that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Are there questions or comments? All right. I am going to turn it back to Roger to take us through the purpose and need statements.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. We have a draft purpose and need, and that was modified to capture the fact that we've moved forward to a dual amendment addressing both golden and blueline tilefish, and so the proposed purpose now is the purpose is to revise the acceptable biological catch, annual optimum yield, total annual catch limit, and sector allocations for golden tilefish based on the most recent stock assessment. Additionally, the purpose is to consider modifications to the management measures and accountability measures for golden tilefish and blueline tilefish, and the need would be -- The need is to achieve optimum yield, while balancing biological, social, and economic impacts.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any discussion on the draft purpose and need? All right. Back to you, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That moves us into the body of the document, and, from that point, we highlight the ABC and OFL material that was provided by the SSC report back in May, which moves us on into the actual options for the proposed actions. The first two actions we have are looking to get some guidance on what to review for analysis and potentially a preferred, and so Action 1 is to revise the golden tilefish ABC, total ACL, and annual OY.

This action addresses the SEDAR stock assessment 66 and establishment of the new ABC, and the council is reminded that it cannot set above the ABC recommendation, and so what we have is, first, no action, which the present ABC is 342,000 pounds gutted weight, and the current acceptable biological catch is inclusive of the recreational estimates from the MRIP-CHTS survey.

That moves us into the transition to Option 2, which is to revise the biological catch essentially to be the ACL would equal ABC, and the options past that would be a reduction down to 95 percent and 90 percent, and so those are provided as a suite of alternatives to consider and consider relative to the ABC and ACL. It would be good to be able to pick preferreds, so that the analysis can be done, and you do have a range, and the bottom line is you have an ABC that can range from 418,000 pounds, with an -- When you move past the present point, ABC equals ACL to if you -- All the way down to 90 percent, and that has a reduction down to 376,000 pounds.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. What's the pleasure of the committee here for selecting a preferred alternative, and is the range here acceptable to folks? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. You guys have heard this from me in the past, and I kept my mouth shut when we were talking about snowy grouper, but, in this one, the buffer between -- The potential for a buffer between ABC and ACL is supposed to address management uncertainty, right, and so we didn't have any discussion of that in the context of snowy grouper, and I know the council's general approach is setting ABC equal to ACL, but, given performance in this fishery, or at least in the recreational sector and the ability to constrain, or at least, with blueline tilefish, the ineffective constraints on harvest, the uncertainty associated with catch estimates, there seems to be fairly substantial management uncertainty associated with this, and I think you should address that in deciding whether or not to include a better between that, the ABC and the ACL. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I'm curious. In that management uncertainty, does that -- Is the uncertainty with both sectors or with one sector, in the gathering of the data for how that's prosecuted, and so I'm just curious about that.

MR. GRIMES: My comments were directed -- I have been focusing on the recreational sector, but that's a question for the Fisheries Service. I think, typically, for all of the snapper grouper species, there is less management uncertainty. I would say there is less management uncertainty associated with the commercial sector, because there are fewer vessels, and they're all permitted, and they're easy to identify, but maybe that's not correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Would that be something that the SSC would look at for management uncertainty, maybe in the future, or how does that -- I mean, I'm curious about management uncertainty, and I'm curious about how it applies.

MR. GRIMES: In the context of the National Standard Guidelines and ACL setting, management uncertainty is within the purview of the council. The SSC takes into account scientific uncertainty in setting ABC, and that guides the buffer between the OFL estimate and the ABC recommendation that comes from the SSC. Management uncertainty, again, in the context of the National Standard 1 Guidelines, is supposed to come in between the ABC recommendation provided by the SSC and the annual catch limit set by the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Is there discussion here? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: There is a huge buffer built in of 155,000 pounds, and you've got like twenty-one, or twenty-three, boats that are fishing in the commercial fishing, or at least in the longline industry, and it seems -- I don't think we need a buffer, at least for -- We may need a buffer for the recreational industry, but I don't think we need a buffer for the commercial industry, just because the recreational industry has a propensity to exceed their limit, and it doesn't mean that the commercial fishing industry should be penalized by having to have a buffer that is, in my opinion, totally unnecessary.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. This is the accounting for the overall management uncertainty when selecting the preferred alternative under Action 1, and, once again, we're talking about golden tilefish. Anyone? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I just wanted to kind of thank Dewey for bringing that up, and, as a fishery manager, I know that I can manage a commercial fishery that is monitored, and these folks back here take a look at it, and we can manage it all the way up to the end and then close it, and so I'm certain about that, but, you know, I'm not certain about the way the government counts recreational folks.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Are there suggestions? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: In terms of Laurilee's comments, this is the situation where this would be well set up for an annual catch target, and I know we've moved away from catch targets, or we're trying to move away from catch targets, but we set an ACL for the fishery as a whole and then, obviously, allocate that and then set a catch target lower, to account for management uncertainty in one sector relative to another, or both sectors, if we want to take that into account. I just note that that's something we're moving away from, but it seems like it's well suited, in this instance, for capturing uncertainty in management.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I would be very supportive to explore that option. We just went to scoping, and so we can still add it and see analysis on it, can we not?

MR. CARMICHAEL: The ACT, the target, is where you should do that, and one of the ways it's been talked about, and how it was initially talked about, was to factor in the MRIP precision and set a target for the recreational fishery based on that. The intent of the target would then be that you take the next step, and you create bag and size limits that were designed to hit the target, as opposed to being designed to hit the limit.

Your fishery would operate, and there would be the uncertainty, and your fishery may or may not come up to the limit in a particular year, and then, depending on whether or not it did, you may or may not have accountability measures that were put in place in case you went over the ACL, and so the whole idea is you can still catch the ACL, and, in fact, you can catch more than the ACL. As long as you don't catch more than the OFL, in the overall system, you haven't created overfishing, and you haven't caught more than the stock can sustain.

The ABC, it's okay to catch more than the ABC, and it doesn't damage the stock in the eyes of the assessment, and it's not creating problems until you're going over the overfishing level, and so you should be looking at your overall collective buffers and thinking about where your fishery is

going, and, if you are seeing that you're going over a sector's ACL, particularly to the extent that you're bumping up or exceeding the OFL, or the fishery overall, then you should definitely be concerned and think about where do you back off.

In a commercial fishery, the management uncertainty can be very simple to calculate, particularly if it's one that you're reporting and monitoring and you close the fishery when it's met, when the limit is met, because you can just look and say, well, how good did we do, and, when we closed the fishery, did we do it at a good time, so that we stayed below the limit, and maybe, on average, things go slow. If you had one, and you said, oh, we tend to go 10 percent over after we close it, then you would look at that and say, oh, my management uncertainty is like 10 percent. Maybe I would set my target at 90 percent of what I can take and hope that I close it and then hit it.

The recreational is always harder, because of that great uncertainty, and we discuss this all the time, and we can have an estimate that goes over in one year, but it wasn't really a -- If you have an issue where you're going over year after year after year, even in the recreational fishery, then, yes, you should most definitely be concerned, and so you could take something and set an ACT that's a little lower and then pick your bag and size limits to line up with that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in -- You know, not that I am arguing, or disagreeing, with John, but John said one thing, that it's okay to exceed the ACL, and we do that all the time, and, in the context of overfishing, yes, it does not result in overfishing, but exceeding the ACL, under the National Standard Guidelines, and under the statute, is generally to be avoided, and it results in accountability measures that are disruptive.

The mindset, and, I know, with this council in particular, and, well, maybe not this one in particular, but it's all about we don't want to have any forgone yield, and we've got to get that ACL, but your management should be set up, and the way the guidelines are written is to avoid exceeding the ACL. If you're doing it more than once in four years, there is a performance standard in the National Standard Guidelines that tells you to revisit your system and adjust it to avoid those overages. Just keep that in mind, and I think that's an important distinction in your mindset for this, that the limit is -- The goal is to avoid exceeding the limit. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I want to see if I can regurgitate what John said, but in more layman's terms. I think what I took away from your comment is that, instead of building the buffer into this ABC, we look at the precision in MRIP and figure out what sort of amount of uncertainty we have there, and then we build the buffer in, really with the management measures, to account for whatever the ABC is, minus what imprecision we're worried about, and am I saying that --

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, yes, with an ACT, and then think about the management uncertainty being how good have you been doing at hitting your mark. If you're hitting your mark spot-on, then you would say, well, we don't really need to make an extra adjustment for that. If you're not hitting your mark, then you might want to pick bags and seasons that are a little more conservative, and so they would be based on that ACT. You would set that ACT to reflect how well you're hitting your mark, and you can do that within each sector, and so the commercial seems to get

ratcheted down pretty well and has not say over, a three or five-year average, gone over, and then you would say, okay, we're doing a good job there.

The one and four is correct, right, and you don't want to go over your ACL. If you go it one time in four years, that's kind of okay. If you go over it two times in four years, then the Act says you need to look closer at this and think that maybe I'm not having the control on this fishery that I need to have, and you should probably look at the amount, too. If you went over by 1 percent, you might say no big deal, and that's the margin of error. If you go over by 50 percent, then you've got a problem.

I think you can do that, and you can look at the ACT, and we can look at how well this is estimated, and it's bluefin tilefish that's not going to be necessarily all that way estimated, particularly in part north of Hatteras, and it's going to be a bit of a challenge, but we can still do some calculations, probably, and give you some information.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me try to restate, and so what he's suggesting is, first of all, you would bring in the ACT here, and the sector that we're talking about with the uncertainty is the recreational side, and that's what we've been talking about around the table here, and so, even though, in the amberjack amendment, we're talking about removing all these ACTs, you would go in and put the ACT, because there is not necessarily a penalty for going over the ACT, although, if you continue to go over it each time, you probably would want to adjust management measures, but then you would pick management measures that would manage towards the ACT instead of towards the recreational portion of the ACL, when you have that big uncertainty, and does that help?

MS. MARHEFKA: Absolutely, and I think I had just thought, for a second, that you were trying to say that we were having an ACT without really having an ACT, but now I understand that we are putting -- **In the concept you just outlined, that that's how that would work, and so, with that said, I would make a motion that we have Option -- Whichever one where ABC, and, what's that, Option 2, as our preferred, and that is ABC equals OY, and then I think we would deal with ACTs later on, if I understand correctly.** I don't think we need a buffer, if we're going to deal with the management uncertainty later.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for all that. We're getting that motion on the board. **It would be to select Action 1, Option 2 as the preferred, or approve, whichever one you want there, Roger.** Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Mel. Shep, you had your hand up as we were talking about this.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just going to clarify that, yes, we're talking about removing it in greater amberjack, but we don't use the ACTs in the way we're discussing now, right, and, if we were, they would be employed, and we wouldn't be talking about removing them. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I am looking at Table 8 on page 15 of the document, and I was trying to get a feel for how many times the commercial went over their ACL, but I think maybe some of the information is saying that, in 2012 and 2013, we were under, and then, every year after that, we

hit it exactly right, and so I didn't know if there was some -- Like is there any information in the document that says how many like times we went over the quota?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just this table.

MR. CARMICHAEL: But this does show you how you can look at it across a period of years, and you could look at it over three years or five years, and you could look at how much you went over and decide, are you over in a way that you're jeopardizing the fact that you're not hitting your ACL, and are you potentially at risk of becoming overfishing because of it, and I think a good justification for this, versus the greater amberjack, is to say, you know, here you have discussed the history of exceeding the ACL.

To say why do you bring this in, and we've talked about snapper grouper being complex, and you should apply different tools when you have different circumstances, and, if you're having trouble controlling and constraining the fishery, you should look at a target and then use that to establish your limits.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy and then back to Chris.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am looking at our ACL monitoring page, and, for commercial, we've been, depending on the sector, anywhere from 10 percent under to 13 percent over, throughout the last five-year time period, and so, to me, that's right around hitting a bullseye, with some, obviously, error in the system, but certainly it points to kind of what Shep was saying, is that there is some management uncertainty, not just with the rec sector, but the commercial sector, in terms of quota monitoring through time lags, and so, I mean, this concept doesn't necessarily apply just to the one sector, but we just have more uncertainty, obviously, with the recreational sector.

Then the other point that I guess I would make is not only what Shep said about the one in four years, but this guards against triggering the accountability measures, and so it takes some of the management out of the hands of the Fisheries Service and us imposing different management measures, closures, because you're guarding against that uncertainty and hopefully able to reach your season lengths and management measures, as imposed by the council.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy, are you suggesting that then the preferred that we selected is not really accounting for the management uncertainty, based on what we just looked at for recreational and commercial?

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, what I heard is that there might be some further discussion of a catch target, and so that certainly is a way of accounting for that uncertainty, if you don't account for it between the ABC and the ACL.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. I just wanted to make sure I understood where you were going. Chris, you had your hand up?

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, the only other thing I think we could do, as managers, is -- I'm not a fan of trip limit step-downs, but that could be a tool we could use to not go over as bad.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Continuing the discussion here, what do people think about selecting Action 1, Option 2 as the preferred? This is, once again, golden tilefish. Mel.

MR. BELL: I am fine with it. I think what we're looking at doing then is building in any management uncertainty with another action and with using ACTs, as appropriate.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more discussion? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Can you put that option up on the screen?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Sure. All right. **Is there any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion is approved.** Back to you, Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That will move us on to Action 2, and this is to revise sector allocations and sector annual catch limits for golden tilefish, and sector allocations need to be revised to the updated total ACL and the changes in the MRIP-FES data. What we have is Option 1, which is to retain the current recreational sector and commercial sector allocations of 3 percent and 97 percent, respectively, of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish, and so, if you look at the -- We have Tables 2 through 4 that present the ABC equals ACL, 95, and 90 percent reduction, relative to the 97 and 3 percent allocations.

Option 2 then provides the allocation of 96.7 percent of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tilefish to the commercial sector and 3.3 percent of the revised total annual catch limit for golden tile to the recreational sector. Now, this is applying the new FES numbers into the previous allocation formula and ending up with what the most recent estimates are, and so what you have is, based on the original allocations, an ACL that results from a split between the commercial sector from a total of 405,460 pounds gutted weight for the commercial sector and 2,831 fish for the recreational sector to 364,914 pounds for the commercial and 2,548 for the recreational sector, in numbers of fish.

If you look at that relative to the updated estimates, based on the FES, you have 404,206 pounds of gutted weight fish for the commercial sector and 3,114 fish for the recreational sector. Now, this is the one that's based on the ABC equals ACL, and that would range to 363,785 pounds gutted weight for the commercial sector and 2,802 fish for the recreational sector, at the reduction down to 90 percent of ACL. The two options are where we are now and then applying the FES numbers to the same allocation formula.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Did I have hands up? All right. What do we want to do here? This is another one where we would need to select a preferred alternative. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A question. I have noticed, between Action 1 and Action 2, the units of measure would change from pounds whole weight to pounds gutted weight, and I just wanted to confirm that we're working in pounds gutted weight.

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and it should all be pounds gutted weight, because everything in golden tilefish is in gutted weight for the commercial fishery. All the tables show that, and the -- Yes, it should all be gutted weight, and where are you seeing the whole weight? I might have missed a thing, and it was a typo if it's in there. Is it in the discussion?

MR. STRELCHECK: The options in Action 1 all list OY and ACLs in whole weight.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Thank you. While Roger is looking for that, and I think we can probably just correct it and suffice it to make sure that we're aware of that mistake, but the one thing that I wanted to point out is that the commercial ACL is divided into the two gear sectors, 75 percent to longline and 25 percent to the hook-and-line, and part of what you guys would be doing in this amendment is also considering whether you want to retain those gear allocations as well as the sector allocations, and so I wanted to make sure that was on your radar. Part of the allocation trigger policy also indicates that you would be considering if you want any changes to gear allocations as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra, I didn't see an action in there to look at that breakdown, and would an action be added that would look into that?

MS. BROUWER: If you wanted to consider changing that, then yes, and that's why I bring it up, because we did know whether that was a desire of the council or if you want to just discuss it and decide that that's not something you want to consider at this time, but you've had that discussion on the record.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thanks, Myra. All right. What are the thoughts of the committee on first selecting a preferred here, and this is the split between rec and commercial, and do we also want to consider an action, because one doesn't exist in the document right now, to then further consider the commercial split between the longline and the hook-and-line portion of the fishery? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: **Just for the sake of discussion, I will make a motion that we select Option 2 as our preferred.** My rationale, I believe, is that that's consistent with our previous decisions for other species in the snapper grouper management unit, and that's the best I have right now.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think it's a little bit hard for me to see it as easily, the percentage breakdown, as it is in some of the other documents, and I can say that, but the motion is to select Action 2, Option 2 as the preferred. Is there a second to that motion? It's seconded by Chris. It's under discussion. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Someone has to talk. I mean, I support Option 2, and this is consistent with the conversation we just had on snowy grouper, and it updates, obviously, the time series using the most recent recreational landings statistics, obviously, as used in the stock assessment, and I support Option 2.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Andy. Any more discussion on this motion? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I think that the only reason -- You know, we could have done like we did with red porgy and leave it the same, but we're talking about just a little tiny bit of fish with the red porgy, and so that's why we didn't pick maybe that one, and so I think this is consistent, and I think it's the best option.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, one other thing, I guess just with the two alternatives, right, the narrow range of alternatives, to say something about why that is all we're

looking at, and, I mean, given that heavily commercial nature of this fishery and the lack of change from new numbers and all that, and we're not looking to make changes, it seems, to me, that it's reasonable to have a narrow range.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Shep, and so what Shep is talking about is we only have a couple of options here underneath the allocation action, and that could be because of the way that the nature of the fishery is on the commercial side, and so there's not a lot of changes in looking at these different options, and so I don't think we need additional options. All right. Any more discussion on this motion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **Seeing none, that motion carries.**

Then we have another decision point here, and what is the pleasure of the committee in looking at the further commercial split between hook-and-line and longline? Do we want to consider that? I see some people shaking their heads no, and it looks like no, and so then we've made a decision that we do not want to add an action to consider a further look at the percentages for the commercial. Andy and then Shep.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, if that's the recommendation of the council, we need to capture that in the document, but we need to provide some rationale as to why we're not considering it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Sounds good. Shep. All right. Same comment, and so what is our reason for not going back and considering the change in that split? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: It's working, and I think that it also gives a chance, with the hook-and-line fishery, to folks that don't have endorsements longlining in certain parts of the country, and it's working, and it don't need fixing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you, Dewey. Carolyn.

DR. BELCHER: I was just going to pose the question, to the commercial folks, of is there a shift between the two sectors? Are you seeing that the fishery is changing, in terms of where the landings are coming from, or that kind of thing? That would be, to me, the reason to look at a reallocation, is if there is some trend in the fishery, that they're moving from one mode of landing to the other.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Anybody? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I mean, I don't know if this really answers your question, but, when the longline quota is caught up, and they to take their spool off, and most of them generally go put their bandits on and keep fishing with the bandits, and so that is what I have seen.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I thought you could only fish for one thing with your endorsement, and so, if you're endorsed to go longlining, when the season closes, I don't think you're allowed to go take your spool off and put your bandit gear on and do that, and so, if it is -- I mean, I don't think that's allowed.

MR. CONKLIN: The only instance -- Let me correct, or elaborate, and they can move the permit off onto another boat and then go, which is a big pain in the butt, but it's -- I think we should just leave it how it is and just not worry about it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've had some discussion on that, and it seems like we're making a choice not to address the split between the commercial sectors, because it appears to be working. Do you want to go to the next action, Roger?

MR. PUGLIESE: That moves us to Action 3, which is to modify the golden tilefish commercial management measures, and the only thing that had been discussed previously was the issue of the beginning of the individual sector timing. What we have in place right now is the existing sector trip limits and the -- There is no difference in timing for the fishery, and what we did highlight were a number of things that were raised in the past with regard to the timing, suggesting various recommendations from the AP, and, ultimately, the council taking no action, back when they originally addressed some of this in Regulatory Amendment 28.

As I mentioned before, there was discussion and comments during the scoping session too about potentially looking at primarily the opening of the hook-and-line fishery potentially later in the season, to try to move that away from necessarily flooding the market, in combination. However, there was no motion made, during the more recent Snapper Grouper AP meeting, relative to this.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay.

MR. PUGLIESE: We have a power outage, and so we're not --

MR. BELL: We will break for lunch right now, and we're just fifteen minutes ahead, and then we'll just come back fifteen minutes early. Does that make sense? Good. All right. Thank you. That would be 1:15 instead of 1:30

(Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and we are going to get going again, and so we were in the middle of Action 3, which is the golden tilefish commercial management measures when the projectors went out, and so we didn't actually finish going through this action, and I think, Roger, you were still talking about the AP input and other things, and so I'm going to turn it back to you.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. Let's pick back up on that discussion. As I mentioned, the only discussion, at this point, was with regard to starts for the various sectors, and what I had included was that present and past input, and there was no motion from the AP on it, but there was suggestions about potentially having a fishing year for hook-and-line in the fall, possibly September and October, and, also, the idea is that the longline is focused in the spring, or the winter, and the hook-and-line actually occurs mostly in the fall.

In addition, we went back and double-checked on Regulatory Amendment 28, and the council's discussions and the AP deliberations that I mentioned before, and, ultimately, the council took no action. However, they highlighted a couple of things about the various actions of potentially doing it, and they looked at potentially a March 1 start date for hook-and-line, and it potentially could concur with the closure of longline. Also, the Florida fishermen, at that time, highlighted that they would prefer to begin in September and October, which I highlighted earlier, and that there was

discards of snowy and blueline that were actually identified as a concern with the fall opening though.

In addition, the AP has passed a motion that time, and they were actually looking at recommending the council consider an action that would split the hook-and-line component into two seasons, with a March 1 and September dates, and then, as I mentioned previously, the council considered that, and, because of the post-season accountability measures for the commercial sector, and it already includes a payback of overages of the commercial sector for total -- If the total ACL is exceeded, and, if the fishing years were different, it would be hard to know the total ACL was exceeded, and so the council decided, at that time, if they choose to do further adjustments in the season, they could consider that at a later date, but, at this time, that's where we are with this potential action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so this document is kind of early, and so there aren't particular actions in here, and we would have to decide that we want to change some of these management measures and start actions, and I guess I would look to Laurilee. Do you have interest in changing the start for the golden tilefish season?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes. In talking to some of the captains and the dealers, they would be potentially interested in a start date of mid-January. Not the beginning of February, but mid-January, and what that does is, after Christmas, there is no demand for fish, and so you start out fishing at a time when there is not much demand, and it would also -- It would move the ending of the season closer to Easter and the Lent season, and so it would potentially put them in a position to get more money for the fish at a time when there was more demand. They are opposed to going all the way to February 1, because, at least in our area, there literally is nothing for them to fish for except golden tilefish, at that time of the year, and they can't last a whole month without anything to fish for.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Thank you for that. Roger is working on typing that up, considering a different start date for the commercial season. Anybody else have any other suggestions of actions that they would like to see started here for modifications to the commercial management measures? Once again, this is golden.

MR. PUGLIESE: Laurilee, did you say January 15 or just mid-January? For evaluation, I think we can bring it forward, or did you want it as an actual action at this time?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a question for the committee. Do we want to go ahead and have staff start the action, or do we want them to do the evaluation and bring that back and then we decide whether to add the action or not? Go ahead and add the action, because we want to look at it? Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: I would say go ahead and add the action. I don't want to do anything to slow this train down.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay, and so I guess probably it would be best to make a motion to just do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so would you like to make that in the form of a motion?

MS. THOMPSON: Sure. Thank you. **I make a motion that we move the start date for the commercial golden tilefish season to January 15.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We're fixing that motion up on the board there, and so, Laurilee, a couple of things here. To me, the motion is really to add an action to modify the start date of the golden tilefish longline season, and then we would have some options under there for what we want them to analyze, and does that help?

MS. THOMPSON: Sure. Set it up however you think best.

MR. PUGLIESE: That's just specifically to the overall golden tile fishery, to the longline sector?

MS. THOMPSON: It would be for the longline, because I think the start date for hook-and-line has already been discussed, and I don't know whether that would move them back or forward or - - This is just strictly, I think, for the commercial longliners, and I do see a conflict though if the longline season extends well into March, and then you would have hook-and-line fish and longline fish at the same time coming in.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then -- All right, and so we're doing three things at once up here. **The motion is to add an action to modify the start date of the golden tilefish commercial season.** Is there a second to this motion? Second by Chris. All right. Then now what we would do is we would add some ranges, underneath here, that we want analyzed, and so it sounds like one of the things that you would like to see is a start date on January 15, and maybe the third week in January is another option, because you said you didn't want to go past February 1. Then I guess you would consider whether you wanted to do this for both longline and hook-and-line or just one, and so that would be an option as well, is what pieces of the commercial sector does this apply to, or does it apply to both. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: I was reading in the comments, and there are some other dates that some other people were looking at, and then I also read a comment that the endorsement holders would like to have a meeting with each other, and so we need to get those guys together and get them to figure out what they want to do, is what I'm -- So if, in here, we could make a note to call a meeting of the endorsement holders together, that sure would be helpful.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let's finish the motion, and then I'm going to come back to what Chris said, because I saw that in the document as well, and so, once again, the motion is to add an action to modify the fishing year of the golden tilefish commercial season and then, below that, you see direction to staff on the various ranges of items that they're going to look at for the analysis. We've got a second on this motion. Any more discussion on this motion? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just want to understand and be clear, in terms of the intent here, and so Laurilee had mentioned that there's a really a lack of demand in the first part of January, and so is that really the main reason that we're pushing this back, or are there other reasons?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I thought it had to do with the timing of Easter, was part of it, as well as the demand and the fact that there were other fisheries that were not open, and so there is not -- The demand is lacking, and it seemed like there were issues with bringing that amount of tilefish to the market when there's not a lot of demand for it, and the demand is actually happening later, and, by that time, the fishery might be closed, as it moves closer to Easter.

MS. THOMPSON: That's correct. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Any more discussion? **Any objection to this motion?** All right. **That motion carries.** Let's go back to what Chris brought up, and we've heard a couple of times, and I think we also heard it at the scoping meetings as well, about bringing the longline folks in the golden tilefish fishery together.

We don't have a special AP for them, and so I think that maybe it's also direction to staff that we would like to bring those longline endorsement holders together, and then we would have to look at this under timing and tasks, look at this when we look at priorities later in the week, to see if this is something we can get on the calendar and when we could get it on the calendar. Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: Procedurally, we would be able to bring them together without having to form an AP and check their backgrounds and all that?

MS. BROUWER: I think it would be similar to how we bring together the wreckfish shareholders, and so we would have to notice it and all that stuff, but we can do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Another thing I wanted to bring up, while we're in this management category, is the way that the longline fishery gets shut down every year while there is still fish available to be caught, and it creates a real hardship on the industry, because, for the last two years, the season was closed, and then it reopened a month later, and so what happens is, during that month, while they're doing whatever they're doing and waiting to reopen the season, their wire rots on their spools, and so anybody that wants to go out and participate and try to catch those few fish that are reopened has to spend \$5,000 on all new wire to put on the reel, and so, if there's a way that we could get -- If we're going to shut it down, and it be reopened within a week or so, that would be good, because, that way, they might not have to replace their wire, but I was just wondering if someone could explain to me why we do it that way, and why are we operating with this expanded landings estimate, and what is that, and why is -- Is that used in other fisheries, or only in the golden tilefish? I am new at this, and so what's that for?

MR. STRELCHECK: I will try to explain it and then have Clay jump in. We, obviously, get dealer reporting to monitor what's being landed, but there is also a lag time in late reporting, and so, if we expand the estimates, based on information from prior years, in terms of reporting trends, to determine when that catch limit may or may not be met, and so we have to project out, based on the information we have during the fishing year, as well as any expansions, based on reports that we haven't yet received, and so our intent is never to shut down the fishery prematurely and not allow the catch limit to be met, but we have late reporting and other challenges that limit our ability to actually predict exactly when to shut down the fishery, and that's why then it takes a period of time from when we announce the closure and then have to announce a reopening, with that data coming into the agency and then re-noticing the opening to reopen the fishery. I don't know, Clay, if you want to add anything else.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: There is already a 150,000-pound buffer for uncertainty. Wouldn't that be adequate to cover it, if we accidentally did go over the ACL? It does put a hardship on these particular guys.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and keep in mind though, based on federal regulations, the catch limit is what we're managing to, right, and so we don't want to go over the catch limit, and our intent, obviously, is not to exceed the catch limit, for the variety of reasons that Shep talked about earlier, right, and so the accuracy and precision, in terms of being able to actually dial in the landings and ensure that they match up to that catch limit is, in part, challenged by the fact of how timely the reporting is that we receive, right, and so it's not that necessarily we're being conservative, and we're utilizing the data that we have available that's coming into us, as well as projecting out what we think will be caught, but sometimes we hit the mark and sometimes we don't. Sometimes we're over, and sometimes we're not.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I think, if we used an ACT, in the sense that you set the target lower, so you had an additional buffer, then that would absorb some of what you're talking about, but the scientific uncertainty that is used for the buffer between ABC and OFL is a really different thing, because it's trying to account for the fact that actually the assessment could be possibly too optimistic, and so that's why you have a buffer for the scientific uncertainty.

MS. THOMPSON: Can't you raise the fine on the late dealers?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so any other suggested actions for changes to commercial measures? Tim.

MR. GRINER: It's not really a change to commercial measures, but I do have a question that kind of maybe I'm a little confused on, or maybe I don't understand exactly, and so, earlier, we had a discussion about, once the longline season is over, that that vessel cannot participate in the hook-and-line fishery, and is that really the case, because I don't think that's how it's prosecuted, in reality, and why would that be?

If you have a snapper grouper permit, why would you not be able to go fish for snapper grouper? I am just not sure that I understand the reasoning behind a longline vessel with a snapper grouper permit not being able to fish for anything other than their endorsement. I mean, I don't think that's the way that black sea bass pot endorsements are done, and so I don't know who the question is for, and maybe Shep, and I don't know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let Kerry go. She had her hand up.

MS. MARHEFKA: I have the wording right in front of me. I went back in time a second ago, from Amendment 18B, and we established a trip limit of 500 pounds gross weight for the golden tilefish component of the snapper grouper fishery for commercial fishermen who do not receive a longline endorsement. Vessels with the golden tilefish longline endorsements are not eligible to fish under this trip limit with other gear, i.e., hook-and-line.

There were -- I haven't had a chance to read through all the rationale in the document, and hopefully Myra has a better memory, and, actually, I wasn't around, I think, for this, but it is clear,

from this amendment, that the council, at the time, did look at alternatives that did not have that restriction in it, and so there has to be a record somewhere of why they decided to do that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra.

MS. BROUWER: In addition, the council included an action in Amendment 35, I think it was, to clarify how that was put together and why, and so the situation that Chris mentioned earlier, where fishermen are having to switch permits to other vessels to be able to fish different gear for that species, is what is currently happening.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: Tim, just to be clear, there is -- I can't remember how many endorsement, longline endorsement, holders there are, but, when their quota is -- When they have harvested their quota, then, if they have an endorsement on that vessel, they cannot fish under the hook-and-line quota. They can fish for other snapper grouper species, but they can't fish for golden tilefish under the hook-and-line quota, or they can't fish for or retain, and so there's a quota. The golden longline commercial quota is allocated between the hook-and-line and the longline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Tim.

MR. GRINER: I am just struggling to understand the rationale behind that, and it just doesn't really seem to make sense that, if you happen to be snowy grouper fishing, or whatever fishing you were doing, you would have to throw back a golden tile, even though the longline season is over, and I'm just curious what the real rationale is, and I understand that it was in an amendment, but why?

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: So you don't have to throw back a snowy grouper if the snowy grouper is open, right, and, if you have a snapper grouper permit, and you have a longline endorsement to that permit, and the longline quota has been harvested, if you have a vessel with that longline endorsement, you can't harvest golden tilefish under the hook-and-line. You can harvest anything else that's open.

MR. GRINER: Right, and I understand that, and so, if you had that endorsement for the longline, and after the longline season was over and you went snowy grouper fishing, and you caught a golden tile, you would have to throw it back.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: That is correct.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I don't have an endorsement, but I suspect the council, through one of their amendments, gave a certain amount of folks an endorsement to longline fish, period, and then they split it up to 25 percent, to give the folks that didn't receive the endorsement, to give them a chance to go hook-and-lining and catch 500 pounds or something. I mean, that's kind of how I see it works.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Monica.

MS. SMIT-BRUNELLO: We can get that information from that amendment and bring it back. If you all wanted to change that, I guess that is something that you could do, but we can get that information, and I believe it was a fairness and equity kind of argument, but we can definitely get that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I'm going to ask again about are there other commercial golden tilefish management measures that we want to modify. All right. I'm going to turn it back to Roger.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. The next actions that were on the table address the accountability measures, and the first, Action 4, is to modify the golden tilefish commercial accountability measures, and what you have is a table that shows -- Presently, you have in-season accountability measures that the in-season have component closures upon reaching the projected quota, and then it also does have the post-season AMs that provide, when the golden tilefish is estimated to reach the ACL, and the golden tilefish stock is overfished, that would trigger the reduction of the commercial ACL in the following year. That's what is in place right now.

I know this was brought up and added, but there wasn't really some specifics, because this is different than blueline tilefish, because it does have some of these provisions already in place to address accountability. Once I put this down, I was trying to determine exactly what needed to be modified, and that's up to the council, if you need to go beyond that at this point, and that's where we are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and so I will look around the room. Do we need this action to modify the golden tilefish commercial accountability measures? Do we want this to stay in here? It looks like folks are saying no, that we don't need this action. Roger is capturing that. All right. Back to Roger to take us into the next action.

MR. PUGLIESE: That moves us to the recreational accountability measures, and, in the recreational in-season AMs, if the rec landings are determined by -- Estimated by NMFS to reach, or are projected to reach, the recreational ACL, regardless of whether the stock is overfished, that the closure of the recreational sector would occur, and now this is different -- Again, this is different than blueline, because you already have -- It's not tied directly to the overfished status, and then the post-season AMs would kick in if -- Now, that would kick in if you had an overfished population and the combined ACLs were exceeded, and then you would have a reduction in the subsequent fishing year in the recreational fishery, and so, again, this is kind of in the same situation that we were with the commercial, and you had put in more, in terms of the accountability measures, for the recreational sector for golden tilefish, and the consideration is, is this also needed?

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. I am looking to Andy. Do we need this action for modifying recreational accountability measures?

MR. STRELCHECK: I would say no. I think the one hesitancy I have is we have been fairly regularly closing the fishery because of accountability measures, and so it kind of gets back to what I talked about earlier, is that the seasonal management has really been left in the hands of the Fisheries Service to close the fishery once we determine whether or not the catch limit has been met.

We aren't able to constrain the catch perfectly, because there's a lot of uncertainty in the catch estimates, and so, if we wanted to change the accountability measures, it seems like it would be appropriate then to be looking at alternative recreational management measures, if we went down that route, but, if we're not considering changes to recreational management measures, I would recommend that we get rid of this action.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Well, I guess I would also throw out there, are we trying to consider an ACT? If that's something that we're going to consider, and then subsequently consider recreational management measures, then, yes, we could come back to this accountability measure action, but, since we don't have an action to establish the ACT, is this something that we want to do? If we are going to establish the ACT, we would need to tie some management measures to that, take some actions, and try to really constrain the catch to the ACT. There wouldn't be a penalty for going over it, like there would be the ACL, but the reason why, in the amberjack amendment, we are removing all the ACTs is because we're not using them that way, like we talked about this morning, and so do we want to consider an ACT for golden tilefish? Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I don't know, and it feels like days ago that we talked about that, two hours ago, and so I forgot if we had actually done that, but, just to revisit it, that was the rationale, or at least my rationale, for not having a buffer in the total ABC, is that we were going to take into account management uncertainty, where, in this particular fishery, it happens to lie with the recreational numbers, the little bit of uncertainty we have, and we were going to then have an ACT to account for that, and that's where we were going to get our management uncertainty buffer. With that being said, I don't know how to do the wording, but let's -- Someone else is going to come up with a number, and I don't have to come up with a number, do I?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I think that you would be making a motion to add an action to establish an ACT for the golden tilefish recreational folks.

MS. MARHEFKA: **So moved.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, Kerry. How about that? **Add an action to establish a recreational ACT for golden tilefish.** Okay. Do we have a second? It's seconded by Mel. We had a lot of discussion on this this morning. All right. Go ahead, Myra.

MS. BROUWER: Okay, and so, just for your consideration, the way that we have -- That this council has specified ACTs in the past was using a formula that was one minus the average of the percent standard error for the previous five years or half of the recreational ACL, whichever one was greater. For this species, your PSEs are going to be really high, because it's a rare-event species, and the recreational ACL is already really low, and it's on the order of like 3,100 fish, I think it is, currently, and so I just putting that out there.

The other options that I remember analyzing for recreational ACTs was just stepping it down from the recreational ACL by like 20 percent, or 15 percent, and so that would be another option that wouldn't involve utilizing PSEs that are really high.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am concerned about just knocking that thing in half, and so it seems like we need to consider maybe, and I'm looking at Kerry, the percentages, the percent difference from the recreational ACL, and staff could come up with that. All right, and so that's what we've just got on the board, is direction to staff to include options for recreational ACT, to equal a percentage

of the recreational ACL. Any idea of the percentages? Like up to 20 percent, up to 15 percent, or any ideas, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: In my mind, it's not -- I am not in any way trying to ratchet down the recreational ACL a lot, and so let me be very clear about that, but it's just providing that little bit of buffer, and I wish to go back and look to see where the uncertainty truly lies and somehow tie that into a number, and I hate to just arbitrarily pick a number. In my mind, it would be something like 5 or 10 percent. 20 percent seems kind of almost punitive, and that's not my intent.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We captured that. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think we need to go back and look at our historical performance and what proportion of the ACL we've exceeded, and I think use that as a guidepost, and there's going to be some years where we were much closer to the ACL, maybe even under it, and others where we exceeded it by a large amount, with some variability between, and so accounting for that I think is important.

Then, in terms of the punitive comment, I mean, this is the kind of interesting thing about ACTs, because, if there is management error, and we're late at closing the fishery, or reacting from a management standpoint, if we're accounted sufficiently for the management error, we're going to not hit the ACT, but we hopefully will hit the ACL and be close to the ACL, which is what we wanted to accomplish in the first place, right, versus now we're trying to hit the ACL, and we're going above the ACL consistently.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I guess I would throw out there, and maybe this is a question, is but don't we need to take some sort of action to like modify recreational measures, so that we would now be managing towards the ACT, as opposed to the ACL? Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Yes, and you can also build that into your accountability measure though, right, because then where you're aiming to close the harvest when you hit the ACT, with that buffer, knowing that you usually miss, and so it can be either done through seasonal restrictions or through your accountability measures themselves.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so I'm looking around the table, and maybe we just need to then keep the recreational AM action and add an option in there to manage to the ACT, as opposed to the ACL. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I just have a question. Ten years down the road, when it's time to reallocate, and you have an ACL number, and the recreational component -- It looks like the recreational component hasn't hit its ACL, because they were being managed -- We were purposefully not allowing them to hit their ACL, and that's -- I don't want that to be punitive either, and is that accounted for? I have never dealt with ACTs before, and so I just don't want to have any unintended consequences, because it is not to then, further down the line, turn around and go, well, you didn't catch your ACL, and so you don't need the fish. Well, we didn't allow that to happen, and so I just wanted to make sure that wouldn't happen either.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will let John come up here and talk about that.

MR. CARMICHAEL: I think, going back to the discussion about blueline, as opposed to greater amberjack, and the reason for having it in one and not the other, is do you even need an ACT on golden tilefish? Is there a problem? Do you even have estimates from MRIP, with 80 percent PSE, that tell you anything about this stock? A lot of years, you don't even have fish reported, and this seems to be one of the ultimate rare-event species. Sometimes they hit them. If they hit them, and a sampler sees it, in a cell that has a pretty high expansion, then you're going to see a lot of fish, and otherwise you're not.

I think this is one that trying to do something like this with the MRIP data is kind of folly, because the data just aren't there, and I don't know that there's a need for an ACT. This sort of seems like we're maybe band-wagoning a little bit, and it's like, oh, we want to -- We have problems in blueline tilefish, and you've talked about those problems for three or four meetings, and that may be a way to solve that problem, but I just don't think you have any proven problem here on the golden tilefish situation.

We have struggled with ACTs because the MRIP data does not give you that level of precision. We spent a year on a recreational reporting group because the MRIP data doesn't give us adequate precision. Until we get data that's actually useful, and we feel like we have something, I don't think we're doing anything but sort of putting something out there that's probably punitive and doesn't accomplish anything and just makes more people mad at us.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so, technically, we haven't voted on the motion, and we just made a motion and started giving direction to staff, and so we could withdraw it, but I saw Tom's hand go up.

MR. ROLLER: I mean, I was trying to articulate my thoughts about that, and I think John did it very, very well, because, you know, we have 3,100 fish, and so let's say we put in an ACT which is 20 percent lower, and, if you look at our historic overages, how are we going to accomplish that under MRIP? We're just going to go over anyway, and I just -- I don't see it. I mean, I think this conversation would be better saved for something like blueline, where we actually have a considerable ACL, and so I would support the withdrawal of the motion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Would you like to withdraw the motion?

MS. MARHEFKA: **Sure. Yes.**

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. The seconder was Mel, and it technically belongs to the committee, but this would be easier if we just withdrew it. All right. Okay. I am going to go back to the accountability measure for recreational action on golden tile. Does it stay in there? I am going back to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I think that we have the authority that we need, and, based on John's comments, the challenge is just trying to figure out when to close the fishery, given the variability in the landings estimates.

MS. BROUWER: The one thing that is different from what you've chosen to do with red porgy, for example, and I think snowy as well, is that the post-season AM currently is tied to the overfished status, and so, unless golden tile was overfished, if there was an overage, then there

would be no post-season AM, if that language remains, and so that would be something that the council may want to consider changing.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, but, to that point, if I'm reading it correctly, because we have the in-season management authority to close, it would essentially provide us that same authority, and so they're kind of redundant with one another, in my opinion, and so it would be, I think, a payback or something where that would be more influential to maintain, but we don't have a payback.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Maybe we come back to this after we have the blueline discussion. Okay.

MR. PUGLIESE: This moves us into Action 6, and it's to modify blueline tilefish recreational management measures, and, after the presentation by SERO at the last meeting, and the clarification that, if catch exceeds ACL for a given stock or stock complex more than once in the last four years, that the council needs to reevaluate the ACLs and AMs to adjust -- To improve performance.

What is brought forward are three options, or four options, at this time. Presently, you have a three-fish bag limit, and you have a season. The Option 2 is actually to reduce the recreational bag limit, and so you have three alternatives, and that would be two and one, of course, and Option 3 is to potentially disallow the retention of the recreational bag limit of blueline by captain and crew, which is allowed at this time, and to modify, under Option 4, to modify the length of the recreational season. The present season for the recreational fishery is May 1 to August 31.

I had included some discussion within the document that did highlight the rules that -- The allowance for the captain and crew came from the -- In 2014, they amended to allow that provision, and also the fact that, during development of the visioning amendment, the council had talked -- This gets to the whole issue of trying to do aggregate deepwater species, and the issue that was raised that the reason to create an aggregate at that time comprised only of those species would be -- The implementing regulations for these species have similar habitats and life histories. However, the fishermen's access from different areas -- This gets back to that whole regional differences, and it's influenced by distance from fishing grounds and weather. Management measures such as recreational seasons were identified as difficult to implement at the same level region-wide, and so no action was taken at that time, and so that's where we are, for discussion.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Do we want to modify the blueline tilefish recreational management measures? Aren't we in a conundrum here, because of the accountability measures? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, I think we've got to at least put some options out there and analyze them, and we'll see what it results in, and I am more in favor of looking at the benefits of a change in the bag limit and looking at disallowing the captain and crew, and maybe leave the season as long as it can be, to address these regional differences, and at least giving folks an opportunity to get on the water, and I don't know that we can get enough benefit from bag limit and captain and crew disallowance, but maybe we need to analyze a different season, just to see if we have to do all that in combination, to get some desired end result, and so I would say we probably need to look at going from three and to analyze one and two per person. Then, obviously, analyze Option 3, and then maybe the season, and we can take out the May/June wave, and I don't know, and I

guess a July/August, either separate from the May/June wave and then the July/August wave and just see what the results of all that are.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Let me see if I can repeat that, and so, technically, I think we have the options themselves in there, and what this is doing is adding some specifics underneath those options, and so, for the recreational bag limit, a suggestion of three, two, and one. We're talking about keeping in Option 3 and analyzing that, and so not allowing the captain and crew to have a bag limit, and then the length of the recreational season, and it looks like we're talking about looking at -- So help me here, Spud, and we're talking about looking at a wave, basically, or are you saying remove one month per wave? Help me understand.

MR. WOODWARD: I guess my understanding is it's kind of hard to analyze part of a wave, and so I think, to make it doable, it's look at a May/June two-month season and then look at a July/August season and see what the effect is.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Thanks for that. That helps. Dewey.

MR. STRELCHECK: Is it possible, when you look at these waves, to split it up for analysis, because you might see, through the analysis, that three months works for you, if you need it, and it could be, versus just the two months, if you're looking at it. I mean, I believe there are ways to look at MRIP that you can tell what's happening during that period of time, or through it, and it might take a little digging, but we might need to think outside the box for this season, because, if you look at, through the quota monitoring, the majority of the fish, sometimes, is in July and August, and so you might need part of June, and I'm just saying you might need to think outside the box and look at it by month or something, if that's possible through MRIP.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: I mean, I certainly don't disagree with that, and I think whatever can be analyzed, but it's always been my understanding that, the more you parse it down, you start losing resolution, and so, I mean, I guess that's up to staff and if they can work with the folks and, whatever is feasible, bring it back to us, but then you run into problems, on the backend, of tracking it, when you're looking at accounting for the catch and the way they estimate it, based on waves, and so that's just something to be cognizant of.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: The majority of the catch comes out of two ports in North Carolina, and so I'm not -- That's just the way it is, per se, and it comes out of there, out of two ports in North Carolina, and so I am just looking at -- When you possibly look at it, or analyze it, just keep that in mind, that the majority of the fish comes out of two inlets.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was going to talk about this when we got to the accountability measures, and so Shep has clarified the Regional Administrator authority for closing the fishery in-season, and so, based on what Dewey just said, and he's exactly right, that we tend to see lower landings in June, or May/June, and then higher landings in July/August.

I think it would be appropriate to look at a three-month season, probably May through July and June through August, as options. Based on what we saw last year, my expectation is we will close the fishery within about a three-month period, if not slightly less than that, this coming season, and so we're finalizing that, and we'll be announcing it in the next month or two.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. We've got all that on there. Anything else? Anything else we need to analyze here? Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: This is a question, and it may not be doable, or too much, but would you want to look at the seasons just north of Hatteras? Is that too crazy? Since that seems to be where the issue is, and so I just --

MS. MCCAWLEY: So we're not even going to the whole regs for the whole state, and you would just look at one portion of a -- I am just trying to think about the -- Like my brain is spinning with like the National Standards and everything else, and I don't know. Would you not have to consider the --

MS. MURPHEY: All of North Carolina then, and would that -- Anyway, I'm just trying to think of other ways, but, if that's really not doable, or if it goes against a National Standard, then don't, but I'm just sort of thinking if that's where the issue has been.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Let me just try to restate it, so that we can capture it up here, and so it would be considering the regionality for the season specifically?

MS. MURPHEY: Yes, the season specifically, but, again, if that's just too not doable, don't do it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Mel.

MR. BELL: I would just think, once you start paring it down, and it may be that the bulk of the landings are in one area, but, once you start paring it down, then the MRIP gets weaker, and then your PSEs are -- Your already not-so-good PSEs are going to be worse PSEs, but I don't know, if it's all literally coming out of two ports, but I think that's the danger in diminishing the area you're looking at.

MS. MURPHEY: That's fine. I'm just throwing that out as a suggestion, but, if I give stupid suggestions, let me know.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Hold on. Shep and then Dewey.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I was just going to ask, and, I mean, I understand the goal just to be a means of reducing overall recreational harvest, and you're not trying to estimate recreational harvest coming only from -- I mean, we would -- We would have to develop some estimate, for purposes of analyzing it in the NEPA purposes in the FMP amendment, but you would see -- You would realize some reduction to it, regardless of the difficulty, or imprecision, in forecasting what reduction would come from it.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I will modify it even better for you, and it's coming out of one county, because the way MRIP works is it puts -- Even though below Cape Hatteras would be Hatteras Inlet, it gets grouped together, for convenience, for our State of North Carolina, because Dare County includes Hatteras, and so, therefore, it's grouped together, when you do MRIP, and it comes out of there. I mean, the bulk of these landings, for twenty years, except for one or two snafus, has always been north of Cape Hatteras.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I actually think this is a pretty good suggestion at least to look at. We do post-stratify MRIP landings for black sea bass, and so it's not unheard of at that Cape Hatteras line, but we can look at it and see if it's feasible or not and what it does in terms of the variability of the catch estimates and sample sizes, and we could bring that back, and, if the statistical advice is that it's not practical, then we can advise on that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Are there more hands? Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I agree with the direction of this conversation and the suite of options that we're considering looking at, and this is kind of an open-ended question. Regarding the disallowing the retention of the bag limit by captain and crew, do we have the data to properly analyze that? I only offer this with the rationale that, as we start parsing out some fish that you can retain them by captain and crew and you can't, I just think it adds a little bit of confusion within the complex, and so I was just curious as to what we can adequately look at there.

MS. BROUWER: Thinking back, we used to have -- For vermilion, I believe, there was a restriction on the bag limit retention for captain and crew, and I don't know if we have the data for blue line, but it's been done before, and so I will just put that out there, and I guess, again, we would take a look at it and bring back to you guys whatever it is we think we can do and tell you if we can't.

MR. ROLLER: Okay. That's great. I mean, I'm not opposed to it, but I was just making sure that we weren't doing excessive work. Thank you for that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. We've got a good list of options here that staff is going to bring back analysis on. Anything else here for recreational? Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I was just wondering if you could go back to that one with the captain and crew, and, I mean, if I'm a recreational fisherman, and I'm running this boat, and I've got a bunch of people on my boat, my friends, and I am the captain and crew, or would this be particularly just for for-hire? Do you need to spell that out?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's right, and I don't know that -- I mean, we've talked about this in other fisheries, and I don't know that it needs to be spelled out. Okay. I think we're good to move on to the recreational accountability measure.

MR. PUGLIESE: Okay. That moves us to Action 7, which will be modify blue line tilefish recreational accountability measures, and, as mentioned, the issue before about exceeding the ACL over a number of years has moved us forward to having this discussion, and, as stated previously, the way that blue line is set up for recreational, it is not tied to the overfished status, and so, in order

to move forward, you have to exceed the catch limit and exceed the total ACL as well as the blueline tilefish being overfished, which it is not at this time.

You have the option that provides the Administrator to be able to identify the fishing season, as deemed appropriate, and then, also, if recreational landings exceed the recreational annual -- To reduce the length of the following year's recreational fishing season by the amount necessary to prevent the recreational ACL from exceeding -- From being exceeded the following year, regardless of stock status. That was it, three.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Dewey.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: In reading these different options, is this all tied -- I am trying to read it. Would this be tied to -- You've got to exceed your OFLs, and then you've got to have the stock to be deemed overfished, and so, I mean --

MS. MCCAWLEY: Only in the status quo. Let me try to help with where I think you're going, and so only in the status quo is it tied to the stock status. In the new options, it's not tying it to that, and so, in other words, if you went over, then the recreational AM would kick in.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, and so, no matter what happens, and it don't matter what the stock is going on or anything like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Only in the status quo option.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: Okay, and are we presently -- Are we presently -- In 2020, there was overfishing, based on the stuff, and has a letter been sent for that, and the council has received it?

MR. PUGLIESE: Yes, and we received that in January.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: So you received that two months ago?

MS. BROUWER: Sorry, Dewey, and the letter -- My recollection is it came in within the last three weeks or so, and that was the overfishing determination, based on landings in 2020 exceeding the OFL, and I guess what my understanding is that we need to do here is fix the in-season and post-season AMs. The in-season doesn't get triggered, because the season is so short. By the time the landings come in, there is not enough time to close in-season, because it's just four months. The post-season AM, which would correct for overages, is also not being triggered, because the post-season AM is tied to stock status.

It's not clear whether the stock status, the overfished, has to be through an assessment, and so I guess that's what we're trying to fix, and so I just wanted to make sure that I kind of clarified where we are, and so what we're doing here -- My understanding of what you would want to do is remove the in-season closure, because it doesn't work with such as short season, and that's the same thing you did with red porgy, is you removed the in-season closure and untied the post-season AM from the stock status.

MR. HEMILRIGHT: I just was making sure that it wasn't tied to some stock status determination and it did it based on its merits of, if you overfished your ACL, something was going to happen, and not having it tied to some other caveat, because this is -- Since 2016, we've had -- 2016 was

the OFL year that didn't get a letter, and 2017 I believe got a pass, because of a stock assessment year, and then we're in 2020, and so I was just making sure, and it is, as you received it here, and so that suffices. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Up until a couple of weeks ago, the way that Myra just described it was my understanding and interpretation of the accountability measures, and so the way Myra described it for the post-season accountability measure is correct, that that is tied to overfished status, right, and so that, obviously, prevents essentially accountability measures from being implemented when it's not overfished.

In terms of the in-season, my previous thought was that I did not have the authority to close in-season, because you had to rely on landings data coming in and couldn't then project a closure, but Shep and others have looked at this more carefully, and it does clearly state that, if the recreational landings reach or are projected reach, and so we can project the season, and we can close in-season, and so that's why I mentioned earlier that we're going to take steps this year to do that for blueline tilefish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. With all that being said -- I'm sorry. Shep.

MR. GRIMES: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would just note one thing, and so the language in the no action alternative in this document is inaccurate, and it doesn't reflect -- That language about reach or projected to reach is for an in-season accountability measure, right, and then, if you exceed it, you have the post-season, and only the post-season is tied to overfished, and so, if we're going to look at all the accountability measures, we need to be clear on it, and I know that -- Let's say, for Dolphin Wahoo 10, for instance, we had a series of accountability measures, and we focused it down to just post-season accountability measures and included that in our action heading and everything, and that's all I would add.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We're debating that over here, and so staff can go back and look at it, but it looks like it's -- Myra says it's not right, but we'll get it fixed up, whatever the no action is. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I think part of what is causing some confusion is if you look at the way it's just laid out for Action 5 for golden tilefish, and, in that table, it's very clear that you can see both, and I was very -- I was going back and forth and going, I think we're doing the same thing in both of these, but they are physically laid out different in the document, and so I think it would be really good -- The way it's laid out for golden tilefish clearly shows what happens in-season and what happens post-season, and we're going to go back to golden tilefish, right, and we didn't handle that one, right? Okay, because I want to hit on this tying it to stock status.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and we're taking some notes on all those things. Then where that leaves us is Option 2 and Option 3 -- Are they worded correctly, or do we need to reword them or add another option here? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: Thank you, Jessica, and I just wanted to make sure that I'm clear on what Shep said, and so the title of Action 7 is going to be changed to Modify Post-Season Blueline Recreational Accountability Measures or what, because the two options are post-season accountability measures, correct? I mean, they only deal with post-season, or you've got two

options there to deal with post-season accountability measures, as I read it, and I think I understand it, and both say will annually announce the recreational season start and end dates, and so you're doing that for the next year, based on what happened the year before, and then Option 3 is, if they exceed the ACL, then you're going to act on the following year's season, in response to what happened that year, and so both of them are post-season accountability measures, correct? Okay.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Good questions. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: I guess I'm confused, because I just heard him say, at least for this year, that he's going to do in-season, and he can do in-season, and so I thought we were going to have -- That Action 7 would look like the one for golden tile and lay out both what we can do in-season and post-season, because of his newfound authority of being able to -- His new magical power of being able to do an in-season closure. Did I misunderstand that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I don't know, but we went to the table, and so this is that table that you're talking about that's under golden, but it's not under blueline, and so, Andy, do you understand Kerry's question? Does that make sense? Spud.

MR. WOODWARD: If you substituted blueline tilefish for golden tilefish in this table, would that be representative of status quo for blueline tilefish?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Myra says yes.

MR. WOODWARD: Then I would suggest that we cut-and-paste this and drop it under Action 7 and change it to blueline tilefish and move on.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Roger is on it. Okay. Kerry, does that help?

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, but that would be Option 1, status quo, and, for me, then Option 2 would be that, but take away the tying to the status.

MS. BROUWER: Just to clarify, it sounds like you don't need to change in-season accountability measures for either species, and so you're focused on just tweaking the post-season, and it sounds like you want them to be the same for both tilefishes, and so I think, if we get that direction, we can fix things and bring that to you in a more understandable and clear presentation for June.

MS. MCCAWLEY: And a nice table. All right. Let me ask Myra another question, while Roger is typing over here, and so then do we need to not go back and talk about golden right now, until we get the correct tables and everything in the document and go back and revisit golden tilefish when we come back the next time? Do you see what I'm saying? What do you want to do, Kerry?

MS. MARHEFKA: I mean, as long as staff understands that -- My intent, when we visited it, was to add -- Right now, there's just one option, and it's status quo, I think, and my intent was to suggest a second option, which is all those words minus tying it to the status.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. For golden.

MS. MARHEFKA: Yes, and the implication is that then, yes, that also matches blueline.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so then I guess additional direction to staff is that, for golden, you would -- Okay. I think we captured that. Trish.

MS. MURPHEY: I've got a question for Andy, and did I hear you right, and did you say that you can do in-season closures, based off the -- Because I thought the data was so -- The timeline was so short that it would be closed before you could figure out to project it out, and so did I just misunderstand you, or did you actually say you could do in-season closures in blue line?

MR. STRELCHECK: The way that the accountability is written is that, if recreational landings reach or are projected to reach, and so the key is the projections, and so we can use landings data from prior years or information in-season that comes in to project the length of the season and close it when we expect that it would be reached.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right, and I think we're done with the golden and blue line conversation. Next up is the presentation on the 2022 red snapper recreational season.

DR. LARKIN: I was hoping to talk in the morning, and I was think I was much more alert then, but, anyway, I will try to make this fast, but, to give everyone an update on the South Atlantic red snapper 2022 recreational season update, a quick background, and we had SEDAR 24 in 2010 and SEDAR 41 in 2016. They both determined that the South Atlantic red snapper stock is overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Amendment 28 in 2013 set the recreational season to only be open on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, and it begins on the second Friday in July. The recreational season prediction must be longer than three days, or there will be no season, and then next was Amendment 43, and that implemented a new annual catch limit with a recreational ACL of 29,626 fish. Then Regulatory Amendment 33 removed the requirement that the red snapper season must be three days or longer, and so, essentially, it crossed out that Amendment 28 that I mentioned earlier. You could have a season, and it doesn't have to be three days anymore, and it could be shorter than three days.

We'll talk about the data that we use to make the prediction every year, and it comes from state surveys, and states have their own carcass programs. We have MRIP, and I know that everyone is familiar with that, and then, for the headboat mode landings, it comes from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

What recent landings are available to predict the 2022 July landings? Well, the recreational season begins the second Friday in July of each year, if there is a recreational season that is allowed, and, looking at that July data, we do have July data of the recreational season being open in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Before 2019, you would have to go all the way back to 2014, but you can see the seasons that we've had have been very short seasons in July, and so 2019 was a five-day season, and 2020 was a four-day season, and 2021 was a three-day season, and you can kind of see a trend there, and those are the dates there, if you're interested.

What landings are we using in July, because there is different datasets to look at, and, really, this came from the guidance from an ad hoc group that was developed for SEDAR 73, and we break up the data by different modes, by charter, by private, by headboat, and, for headboat, we always use the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and so that's consistent throughout, but, basically, it contains a real quick method of which one you choose depends on, one, is there any MRIP landings in that wave, which was that July wave, and no other landings, and then you use MRIP, or, if there

was no MRIP in that wave in that state for that mode, for example charter, and, if there was no MRIP, then you would go to a state survey, or even a carcass program.

Really, you kind of choose -- Now, if there is both, then you dig into the surveys and find if there is a statistical sampling design and intercepts and all that, but one thing I want to point out, which I want everyone to know, and so, really, that Florida survey really dominates, and so the landings every year -- Definitely over 90 percent of the landings come from that Florida survey, which, to give you a quick background, I think it's an excellent, well-done survey, and it's really focused in on that short red snapper season, and it's not for the whole wave. They really focus on ports, and they get a lot of intercepts, and they really go all out in that survey, and they can talk to it better than I can.

Anyway, that really dominates the landings, but there are other landings that come in for MRIP in other states, and South Carolina surveys, and Georgia surveys, and there are carcass programs that I will go into in a minute, but this is kind of to show you what was used in each state, in each mode, in 2019.

Then I'll break down what was used for the 2020 landings. I will give you an example in charter, and, in charter in North Carolina, there was no MRIP in 2020 in that mode, in that July wave, and so that's why we used the carcass program, because there was no MRIP. Just keep in mind that these seasons are getting shorter and shorter, and so there certainly is a chance, in some of these states, to not intercept people harvesting red snapper.

If there was no MRIP, for example, in charter in 2020 in North Carolina, then we use the carcass program, and we know, at a minimum, that there was some red snapper harvested there, but, again, I want to point out that the Florida survey really dominates the landings, and it really kind of dwarfs the landings from the other states, in terms of red snapper harvest every year in the South Atlantic.

Then you go into the 2021, and there's some details there. In 2021, we did have some MRIP landings in North Carolina there, for charter and private, and then you can see that we grabbed from the carcass programs in South Carolina in 2021, as well as charter mode for Georgia, and then we had some MRIP landings for private in 2021, and, again, the consistent thing is that Florida survey is used year after year after year, and so that's really an excellent survey designed specifically for the red snapper mini-season, and that's been used again and again, and also headboat, again, is just from the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

What are the landings, and so this kind of breaks it down by year, by state, and so you've got 2019, 2020, and 2021, and there's landings up in the top part of this table. In the bottom-half, just keep in mind that the denominator changes, and so, in 2021, we had a five-day season, and so those top landings are divided by five. The bottom-half is the fish caught per day. In 2020, we had a four-day season, and so it's the top landings divided by four, and then, in 2021, we had a three-day season, and so those top landings are divided by three, and so that's the difference between the top, and it's just the landings in numbers of fish that we have for that mini-season, and then the bottom is divided by the number of days that that mini-season was open during that year.

Then I graphed this in the next slide, and this shows you some trends there, and so, on the X-axis, you have the year, 2019, 2020, and 2021, and the Y-axis on the left is the red snapper harvested per day, and then the season length is over on the Y-axis to the right, and so you can see, as that

green line is going down over time, the season length is getting shorter, but yet the harvest per day is going up, and I'm just kind of pointing out the details that we're seeing with the data so far.

We still want to make sure that we have all the 2021 MRIP landings, because, for example with Wave 6, we're still organizing that, and I don't think there will be much harvest, but there could be some, and so, really, we're trying to finalize those 2021 landings for all modes, and this presentation is focused for all waves, and that wave that had July in it, but we are planning to announce that the red snapper season for 2022 be determined at the end of May, and I think that's it. Sorry if I'm bumbling a little bit, and I had a long day of focusing on other stuff, but, anyway, I will be happy to answer any questions.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you for that presentation. Any questions about this presentation?
Judy.

MS. HELMEY: Well, I would just like to go on the record saying that we appreciate the three days that we get, but, unfortunately, off the coast of Georgia, the weather is generally bad during this time, and so, if you'll see how many fish we turned in, and, Florida, of course, is closer to the fish, and I wish there was some way that they could -- Which I know there's not, but I still want to go on record asking, and, if the weather is bad, can we have another day, I guess, and it's kind of bad. Last year, we had the bad weather, very bad weather, and so maybe they should give us a little bit more time to catch a few more fish.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Judy. Tom.

MR. ROLLER: I am just going to share Judy's frustration. I think, in the last three years, I had one good weather day that I was able to get out in North Carolina.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any questions?

DR. LARKIN: I will respond, and the landings are super high, and so, if you guys are complaining about bad weather, and you're getting super high landings, I would hate to see what you would catch if you had good weather, but, really, Florida is the dominant one there, and so I can't speak for Georgia. I did look at the weather in Florida, and I'm actually kind of digging it up, real quick here, as we look, and I think Florida did have relatively calm seas during their mini-season, and so I can't really speak to Georgia, and I just looked around the coast of Florida.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Laurilee.

MS. THOMPSON: Would you weather be any better if it got switched to June?

MR. ROLLER: Probably not. I mean, July and June are usually pretty windy.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Judy.

MS. HELMEY: I concur. It probably wouldn't make any difference. It's like the weather knows when red snapper season is open.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. Any more questions or comments on this item? All right. Thank you, Mike.

DR. LARKIN: Sure. Thank you.

MS. MCCAWLEY: All right. The next item is the updates on snapper grouper holistic management, the red snapper count, and greater amberjack count projections, and I don't know who wants to start here.

MS. BROUWER: I will give you a very quick update on the South Atlantic red snapper research project, and this is sort of the sister project in the South Atlantic to the Great Red Snapper Count that took place in the Gulf, and so the steering committee met in February to discuss a proposal that was submitted to expand this project, and so this second phase of the project is going to add more sampling and produce, still, these independent estimates of red snapper abundance for two-year-old and older fish in the South Atlantic that can then inform the upcoming stock assessment, and so the project is expanding, and the proposal is still under review, in my understanding, but, currently, the PI, Dr. Will Patterson, did share some highlights of the progress to-date, and so I will just quickly read to you from his update.

So far, there's been a total of 2,045 trap camera stations that have been occupied in the Southeast Reef Fish Survey from North Carolina to northeast Florida for the video analysis that's been ongoing, and there's been a total of 264 ROV surveys conducted from Cape Hatteras, North Carolina through the Keys. The video analysis of the ROV samples has been completed for what's been done to-date.

There has been over 2,000 -- About 17 percent of the red snapper that's been captured in these ROV videos that have been measured with the stereo cameras, and the range for those measurements, thus far, is from seventy-five to 861 millimeters. There has been, also, over 5,000 fin clips that have been sampled from red snapper in 2021, and 80 percent of the 2021 otolith samples have been sectioned and aged.

Then there has been -- There is a lot of specifics on the genetic sampling and processing, but, honestly, I don't -- It's very technical, and so I'm just going to say that there's been significant progress on the genetic sampling and the processing of all those samples, and they had a collaborator workshop that was hosted by NCSU, NOAA Fisheries, NOS, and the University of Florida in late November of this past year, and they discussed trap camera and ROV fish count data, covariates, analyses, and model estimates and model timelines.

They have done a lot of progress in formatting the data and completing exploratory analyses, and then they've also done a lot of surveys from North Carolina through Florida, and they've been sending them to fishermen, to request assistance in identifying areas of hardbottom, to figure out and characterize some of these areas that we don't have a lot of information on to complement this estimate of red snapper relative abundance. I am happy to pass along any questions you all may have to Dr. Patterson. I guess one more thing that I will add is he is scheduled to give a presentation, I believe, to the SSC at their upcoming April meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Myra. Any questions? All right.

DR. COLLIER: All right, and so I'll give an update on the amberjack project. It's a little bit behind the red snapper, and, basically, they've got all their contracts in place with the PIs, and so the research is going to start. Some of the research was supposed to start in 2021. However, due

to those funding issues, it's going to be pushed back into 2022, and it's hopefully not going to result in an extension, but it might result in one, depending on how the sampling goes, and so it's getting ready to ramp up, and we're going to start getting information on greater amberjack coming in, and they are going to be having a meeting, I think in the upcoming months, of all the PIs, to make sure everybody is on the same page, and so we'll keep you updated after that presentation. Similar to red snapper, we should be having a presentation at the spring SSC meeting, to update everyone on the greater amberjack project, as well.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Chip, and thank you, Myra. Any questions for Chip? All right. Then we're going to move on to the list of topics for the Snapper Grouper AP meeting, and we'll see this list again in the committee report, but we're going to see what we think of the existing list, and Mike is going to walk us through that.

All right. There is the list there on the screen of all the things that they're going to try to tackle at their meeting in April. Even though it says webinar, that will be an in-person meeting, and so they're going to work on some fishery performance reports, and they're going to look at the -- I don't know what to call that, but the analysis for that framework action that we can't say the name of, and we need to put a number on that thing, so we can just say it's number -- There we go. It's 35.

It looks like they're also going to look at the recreational permit and reporting, greater amberjack, wreckfish, snowy grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, gag grouper, as well as updates, as you can see, from citizen science and SEDAR and climate change scenario planning, a reef fish fellowship, and it looks like they're also going to elect a chair and a vice chair. Then they'll have a commercial electronic logbook discussion, and I feel like we've added some things to their list this week.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: In looking at -- When this list was first made, before this meeting, several of these amendments, those that are listed right here, were really just going to be more of updates to the committee, but it seems like, especially for gag grouper, and I think I heard for the tilefish amendment, and snowy, that there have been some more substantial discussions that have been requested of the AP, and so that would move them out of the updates portion and kind of give them their own bullets, and that makes for a pretty full agenda.

I know some of the discussions that have been a bit further down, like the commercial electronic logbook discussion, has kind of been carried over from meeting to meeting, and I'm not sure about the prioritization that folks want to have, and, additionally, the SERFS update has been another thing that's kind of been carried over from one meeting to the next and delayed for prioritization purposes, and so the one plug that I will put in is that we have a black sea bass stock assessment that is starting up fairly soon, and we need to get that fishery performance report done ahead of that, and so that needs to be prioritized, but, other than that, I would look and see if there any direction for priorities to fill the two days that we have scheduled for this meeting.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay. Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: We need to know what they're going to say about all of those things, all of the amendments we're working on right now, and we really do need their input. Is there a way for something like the black sea bass fishery performance report that ahead of time they get a -- I mean, obviously, I know that, whatever they get in the briefing book, and I can't remember, and

it's been a while since I looked at it, but almost like a questionnaire, and they can fill it out and bring it and then maybe -- They're given an opportunity to elaborate if they so choose, but we don't spend a ton of time on it.

I hesitate to say it, because now we are using it for management, and so I'm almost talking out of both sides of my mouth, but they could be talking -- They're going to take at least half-a-day on Reg Amendment 35, at least.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I agree with that, and also the updates on SEDAR and climate change and those things, and do they really need to get those updates, because we just asked them to take a deeper look into some of these other items.

DR. SCHMIDTKE: Related to the fishery performance report, I hesitate to necessarily say that they can put in that work ahead of time, because these are fishermen that are working their day-to-day jobs, along with that, and to have an expectation, especially without asking them prior, of them to potentially kind of get work done for the meeting, before the meeting -- I'm not sure that everybody would be able to get that done, with the schedules that they have.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Kerry.

MS. MARHEFKA: Well then I don't know if we can afford to do this, and that's certainly not my place to say, but I feel like what we would need to do is, you know, get through as much of this as we can and have to, at this meeting of theirs -- We meet in June, and then do we move their October meeting, their normal October meeting, in between June and September, because some of these things we're doing are moving -- The framework is going to move along fast, and what concerns me the most is the interplay between these things, and they're going to anticipate things that we haven't even thought of yet.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, I like that idea of moving it up, and so the next meeting up. We also -- John said possibly an extra meeting, via webinar, for updates. Can you all think about some of those ideas? Okay. All right. I think that looks good. All right. I think we've been through all the topics for the AP. Is there any other business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? Chris.

MR. CONKLIN: The only other business I had was I would like to look at an option of allowing the golden tilefish endorsement holders some sort of a bycatch-type limit of golden tile, so they're not wasting the resource while they're fishing for other species.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so let me try to restate it another way, and so is this what you're saying? Are you saying allowing the golden tile longline people to have a bycatch of golden tile during the hook-and-line portion of the fishery, and is that what you're saying?

MR. CONKLIN: That is exactly what I'm saying.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Okay, and so we'll throw that back in the golden tilefish amendment.

MR. CONKLIN: Do I need to like give a range of alternatives or anything? I was thinking like 250 pounds or 200 pounds, something like that.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was going to say that 250 doesn't sound like a range, and so 200, 250, and I'm just --

MR. CONKLIN: 249 to 250.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Got it. Okay. We've got it. Is there any other Other Business to come before the Snapper Grouper Committee? All right. I don't see any other business, and I'm going to pass it back to you, Mr. Chair.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on March 10, 2022.)

Certified By: _____ Date: _____

Transcribed By
Amanda Thomas
April 18, 2022

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2022 COMMITTEE MEMBERS continued

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(THUR, 3/10/2022)

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