GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Tremont House  Galveston, Texas

OCTOBER 22, 2019

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PAGE 44: Motion to move Action 1 to Considered but Rejected. Action 1 is Establish Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing Zones and Quotas. The motion carried on page 45.

PAGE 46: Motion to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. Action 3 is Modify the Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing Year. The motion carried on page 47.

PAGE 48: Motion to add an action to consider a split quota between seasons for recreational management of greater amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico based on NMFS projections designed to facilitate access to the stock in spring and fall. The motion carried on page 54.

PAGE 54: Motion to move Action 4 to Considered but Rejected. Action 4 is modification of the greater amberjack recreational fixed closed season. The motion failed on page 57.

PAGE 102: Motion to ask the SSC to review red grouper projections based on the allocation time series from Reef Fish Amendment 30B, 1986 to 2005, and the best available landings used as inputs in the new stock assessment (40.52 percent recreational/59.48 percent commercial) and direct staff to start work on a plan amendment to update the red grouper allocation and establish catch levels based on the new assessment. The motion carried on page 102.

PAGE 103: Motion to ask the Science Center to conduct interim analyses of red grouper annually starting in 2020. The motion carried on page 103.

PAGE 115: Motion to ask staff to begin a framework action to reevaluate the trolling provisions in Madison Swanson and Steamboat Lumps. The motion carried on page 117.
The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Tremont House, Galveston, Texas, Tuesday morning, October 22, 2019, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN MARTHA GUYAS: We have some new members, and so, for those who are not aware, everyone is a voting council member is a member of the Reef Fish Committee, and so get excited, because that’s almost everyone around the table.

Our first item is Adoption of the Agenda, and it is Tab B-1. Are there any additions or suggestions for change to this agenda? All right. Is there any opposition to adopting the agenda as written? Seeing none, we will move forward with the agenda as written. The next item on our list is Approval of the August 2019 Minutes. Any changes to the minutes? All right. Let’s do a motion to approve the minutes then.

MR. DALE DIAZ: So moved.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I have a motion. I need a second.

MR. PHIL DYSKOW: Second.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Seconded by Mr. Dyskow. Thank you very much. Any opposition to that motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Our first item of -- We’ll cover the Action Guide as we move through, if that’s all right, just to be a little bit more efficient, and so our first real item here is the Review of Reef Fish and CMP Landings, but I think Leann mentioned to me that she wanted to ask a question before we get to this item. Leann.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: Sue, before you -- I’m assuming you’re going to take us through those. Before you do, can you give us a rundown on how the landings are coming in, FES versus MRIP, and how they are presented here and if there’s any calculations that we’re doing, so I know what I’m looking at, before we get into it.

MS. SUSAN GERHART: Sure. You are talking specifically to the recreational landings and how we receive those, and we receive those from the Science Center. They start, obviously, with the MRIP program, who collects those and sends them forward on a wave basis, which is every two months. They come to the Science
Center, and there are some adjustments that are made to those landings, having to do with fish weights and things like that, and I think Dr. Porch has talked to that previously, as other people from the Science Center have, and so I’m not going to dwell on that, because I don’t know the details.

From our office, we receive -- My understanding is we receive several lists of landings, and we receive FES, which is how they are received, and that’s the survey that’s ongoing, is the Fishing Effort Survey. For those species where we have ACLs in other units, being either APAIS MRIP, CHTS, or there are some that are still in MRFSS landings, and those are converted at the Science Center to all the different units, and so we get four lists, I believe, of landings for the species in the different units, and then we use the appropriate list for the appropriate species, depending on what the ACL is.

If you want to know more detail about what happens to get to that point, that would be more appropriate for someone from the Science Center.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Go ahead, Leann.

REVIEW OF REEF FISH AND CMP LANDINGS

MS. BOSARGE: That tells me what I need to know, and so, right now, the survey that’s out there, they’re coming in in FES, recreationally, and the Science Center is converting that back to MRIP, for what we have in front of us right here, for all these different landings for the recreational sector, and so we’re looking at FES converted back to MRIP, and that’s what I was wondering.

MS. GERHART: Just to clarify that FES, CHTS, APAIS, those are all MRIP. It’s just different updates to the MRIP program, and so just to be clear about that. We sometimes use MRIP versus FES, and they’re all MRIP.

For the landings, what you see there, we have the commercial landings first, and these are the two species of interest that are not in the IFQ program. As you know, we closed greater amberjack quite early. We had a spawning season closure, and we opened for nine days in June and then closed again.

Gray triggerfish is still open at this time, and we are watching that closely, to make sure that we won’t have to close it before the end of the year, but that is still a possibility.
The recreational landings we have through Wave 3, and that’s through the end of June for 2019, and the first table you see is for amberjack and this is for the 2018-2019 season, and that is completed as of the end of July of 2019, and so the landings that you see there are not complete, because we don’t have July landings yet, but, what we have so far, you see that we closed, obviously, before the May season came along, and there are some landings in the months that were closed, and that’s why I said it’s not complete yet, but those are just landings that we receive through the survey, and, if there’s illegal fishing going on, that’s not the responsibility of the port agents to take care of that, and so they just report what’s reported to them and what they find.

As you can see, and everyone is well aware that we had a fall season in the end of 2018, but we did not have a May season this past year. That did reopen, again, on August 1, but we don’t have any landings for that yet for this year.

For the rest of the recreational landings, again, landings through June, the few landings you see in July and August are from the LA Creel survey, and, of those, we had a closure for gray triggerfish in May, and, of course, the red snapper season was June 1 through August 2 this year.

We do have red grouper landings that are around 50 percent through the end of June, and, since that doesn’t include really the peak of the landings, I don’t believe, we may be looking at a closure before the end of the year, but we don’t know that yet.

The bottom table, our red snapper private angler landings from the states, and these are supplied to us from the states under the EFPs that they are under for 2018 and 2019, and one update to this is we did just get landings from Florida, and, through the end of July, I believe, they were at 64 percent, and they have done a reopening for weekends in October.

On the next page, we have the stock landings, and these are selected species for which there is no allocation, and so there’s just one ACL for the whole stock, and these four species have exceeded their ACL in the last year, and so we’re keeping an eye on them closely, and we don’t expect for any of those to close, except perhaps lane snapper, and lane snapper landings are down this year, relative to previous years though, and so we may or may not have a closure for that at the beginning of December, at the earliest.
Then, if we go on to the next page, we have CMP landings, since you don’t have a Mackerel Committee meeting this session, and I’m showing you those here. The 2018-2019 fishing season, for most of the zones, ended at the end of June this year, with the exception of the Northern Zone, which ended on September 30, and so, as you can see for the 2019-2020 fishing season, we do not have a lot of landings, with the exception of the Western Zone is at 63 percent.

You may or may not recall that, in previous years past, before we did some of the changes, that the Western Zone would close in August or September some time, and so they are staying open longer than they have in the past, and we expect that there may be a closure before the end of the year, and certainly before the end of the fishing year, but we’re still keeping an eye on that, and they’re only at 63 percent right now.

For the previous year, the 2018-2019, it’s still preliminary, and we’re still closing out that season, again, because they just ended not too long ago. You will see, for the hook-and-line sector, that they were just below their ACL. The Southern Zone went a bit over, but the Northern Zone was under, and so the total ACL was not exceeded, and we did have closures for all of the zones at different times of the year. We didn’t close the Northern Zone, and that’s what I meant to say. It was closed, but now it’s open again.

Anyway, the southern gillnet did exceed their ACL, and they will have a payback this year, and they open the Tuesday following the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, which I think is the 21st next year, in 2020, and it’s somewhere around there, and so they will have a payback of their ACL for that overage that they have, that 7.7 percent overage.

For recreational for king mackerel, they are also on the July through June fishing year, and so we are not complete there yet, and we don’t have any landings for this season yet, but they are well below their ACL, as is typical for this sector.

Then, finally, we have the stock ACLs for Spanish mackerel and cobia. Again, no allocations here, and so one ACL for both sectors. On these, you can see that we have very low landings in both, and that, again, is fairly typical, for those stocks to have those fairly low landings at this time, and that’s all, and I will take any questions if you have them.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.
MS. BOSARGE: Sue, since you brought up red grouper and a possible closure, I looked up last year’s landings, which would be in this same currency, the MRIP, and, last year at this point, the landings were 494,000 pounds. This year, at this point, it’s 499,000 pounds, and so it looks like we’re right on track.

Now, the waves are a little different, and we caught a little less this year in the May/June wave, and we caught a little more this year in the early months, in the January/February, but it looks like we’re right on track, and, if we keep on that track, we’ll be over 100,000 pounds under the ACL, or the ACT, in this case, and so I just wondered where you’re projecting the closure.

MS. GERHART: Recall that the council changed the ACL for red grouper for this year, to be precautionary, and so the ACL for this year is a million pounds, and it may be right on track to hit right at that one-million pounds, but I was just saying that we’re watching this one, and that doesn’t mean that we’re going to necessarily close it.

MS. BOSARGE: Last year, they landed 790,000 pounds, and we’re tracking right on that right now, and so, if we stay on that track, even with the lower quota, they will still be under it.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Are there other questions for Sue? Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: It’s not for Sue this time. You’re off the hot seat. On the landings, the private angler landings, state by state, I appreciate the different closures, and that kind of helps me understand it a little bit, about when they were closing, but I really would like to get started, probably in January, on the presentations that we would get from each state, kind of giving us an update on their red snapper season for the previous year, and just tell us that --

Because I see closures, and I know Texas, I think, state waters are still open, and I would like to know how you ended up managing it and what you saw, any changes that you made from the previous year, any changes in the data collection, species you may have added or things you may have tweaked or questions you -- That would be interesting, and I really would like those updates, and it’s not something that I want to go dig out every state’s bulletin to find it, and so I would appreciate it if we could get that at this table from each state, maybe in January, once they have a good handle on their past year’s season.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay. Hearing that, it sounds like, if it’s going to be every state giving a presentation, that might take a little bit of time, which I’m not saying is bad, but it might be good to get a motion from the committee to set that up for January.

MS. BOSARGE: All right. Well, I’ll try and throw a motion out there. To request that the council receive an update from each state at our January meeting on that state’s 2019 red snapper private angler management. That kind of leaves it wide open, and you can talk to us about what areas you closed or left open and how many days your data collection -- Anything that you find would be good information for the council.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right, and so we’ve got a motion on the board to request that the council receive an update from each state at our January 2020 council meeting on that state’s 2019 red snapper private angler management. Is there a second to this motion? It’s seconded by Chris. Any discussion on this? Lieutenant Zanowicz.

LT. MARK ZANOWICZ: Thank you. I think it would be helpful to include in this presentation what states are planning to do for the upcoming season, in terms of bag limits, size limits, and the season structure.

Obviously, for the Coast Guard, we’re going to be enforcing, possibly, those five different regulations, and so it would definitely be helpful to know, looking ahead, and that kind of ties into what we were talking about earlier with regard to the Fish Rules and incorporating all the different areas as well, and so any information we can get, in terms of the different state regulations for red snapper that we’re going to be enforcing in federal waters will be helpful, and so I think this is a good avenue for that.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Noted. Susan.

MS. SUSAN BOGGS: I just wanted to ask Leann a question. Do you want to be specific to January 2020, or do you want to, I guess, make a motion each time you are looking to see this information? I mean, is this the only time you want to see it, or is this something that --

MS. BOSARGE: Of course not. I want to see it yearly, but, for now, that’s what I am -- It was in the document, and I think, once we get into a routine, we’ll probably get these updates the same way Sue gives us updates, but, for now, I will make the
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay, and so we could maybe update this motion to include any 2020 plans, I guess, if states have that at that time. Depending on the processes within a state, they may not have their seasons finalized yet, but I think that’s doable. I don’t know if we need to include that in the motion, or we can just kind of note that. We’ll just include that in the report. Okay. Any other discussion on this? Any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Anything else related to the landings report from Sue? Chris.

MR. SCHIEBLE: I can give you a quick update. We’re still open, actually. This weekend was our last weekend, and our landings total so far is 770,745 pounds, not much more than what’s on the list, but we’re also having a veterans special season for the remainder of the quota to be fished, if they fish it, but it’s a special season just for veteran anglers.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Great. Thanks, Chris. Okay. With that, let’s move on to our next item, which is Draft Amendment 36B. Ava is going to give us a quick introduction to what we’re going to talk about today, and then it sounds like we’ll get into the document.

DRAFT AMENDMENT 36B: MODIFICATIONS TO COMMERCIAL IFQ PROGRAMS AND PRESENTATIONS

DR. AVA LASSETTER: Perfect. Great. Thank you. If you take a look at the action guide, basically, I’m going to catch everybody up on where we’re at, what happened at the last meeting, and thus where we are now, and then we will go through the document. We do have one recommendation from the Reef Fish AP, which we will share with you as well.

We can go ahead and move to the document, and then I will kind of give a little background. The document is at Tab B, Number 5a, and so, at your last council meeting, the August council meeting, you passed a couple of motions. One of them stated to begin a standalone document with the actions at that time that were 1.1 and 1.2.

The document, you can see up here on the screen -- This is that standalone document with those two actions, and we are calling this Amendment 36B, and so it’s the same as the last meeting, Amendment 36B. We took the other actions that were not part of the standalone document, and those are now in 36C.
One of your other motions from the last meeting asked us to begin looking into non-NOAA quota banks, and we have begun looking into that, and we’ve had an initial meeting, and we’re also dialoguing with the North Pacific Council staff, because they’re exploring some of these ideas, but this is very preliminary. This is going to be a very novel-type of approach.

We are expecting, planning, to bring you a presentation on this in January. If we can have something more than a presentation, we will do so, but we’re thinking to outline for you what are your possible approaches for going forward with that type of a non-NOAA quota bank approach.

With that said, 36B now is very focused on just those two actions, and so we can take a look at the table of contents first, and then we’ll go to the purpose and need and then through the actions, and so, if we take a look at the table of contents real quick, we can see that now this document only has an Action 1 and an Action 2.

Action 1 is the requirement for a permit, to require shareholders, shareholder accounts, to have a reef fish permit, and then Action 2 is a support action for that. It addresses what would happen with accounts that are unable to get one of those reef fish permits.

Also, we added an appendix here, Appendix D, and we have provided copies of the control dates that were requested by the council in the respective time periods, 2011 to -- I think it was the very end of 2014, and those are referenced in the document, and so those are there for you as well, but we’ll come back to those.

Moving on into the document, let’s take a look -- First, we provided you a figure on page 3, and we’ll just take a look at what we’re looking at here. On page 3, we have Figure 1.1.1, and you have a lot of information and one figure, but what this is showing you is the numbers of accounts and the amount of shares -- Really, this is the amount of shares in accounts that are either associated with a permit, and those are all those top lines, or not associated with a permit, and those are the bottom lines.

The longest two lines are red snapper, and, of course, there is three years longer history with the red snapper program, and then you can see the grouper-tilefish lines as well. Since these are the total amount of shares that are in each of these accounts, as the number, or, as the amount of shares that are
not associated with a permit increases, as a result, the amount of accounts with shares without a permit are going to decrease. Basically, they are going to merge to each other.

What’s also kind of interesting is that we haven’t seen much change in this over the last three years, 2015 to 2017, and so that’s just kind of some background for what you’re looking at, in terms of accounts with and without a permit. Now, within each of these groups, you have the idea of related accounts, and some of these accounts, many of these accounts -- Just because one account does not have a permit, entities behind that account may be associated with a different account that does have a permit, and so there is a little more background information behind these that does make it a little more complicated.

Let’s turn on to the next page, and the very top is the purpose and need statement, and so this is very different from your previous 36B amendment, when you had all of the different actions, the quota bank and everything in it. At that time, that purpose statement included a reference to several of the motions that you have passed over the last couple of years addressing your new goals and objectives or intentions with this document.

Now, because this document is only focused on these two actions, this purpose statement has really been focused to reflect some of the statements and the discussion the council had at the last meeting and that supports specifically the actions in this document.

Thus, the purpose of this action is to limit IFQ share ownership by shareholders without a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit and promote share ownership by fishermen landing reef fish within the red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs.

This action considers placing limitations on shareholder accounts that are not associated with a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit, and then here is our definition. A shareholder account is considered to be associated with a permit if the exact same entities are listed on both the shareholder account and permit.

Let’s talk a little bit more about accounts. If we scroll down, we’re on the top of page 7, and we have a section that you can read, of course, at your leisure, but the gist of this is the outlining the structure of this online system, and so, within the IFQ online system, you have three types of accounts. You
have shareholder accounts, a vessel account, and dealer accounts.

Then you have removed from consideration looking at dealer permits, and so we’re not going to worry about the dealer accounts right now, and the two kinds of accounts that would be relevant here would be the shareholder accounts and vessel accounts.

A shareholder account refers to accounts that may or may not have shares, and that may seem a little confusing in the terminology, but the idea is that this is a participant’s primary account. If they have shares, shares are kept there, but that account could also be used by somebody who doesn’t have shares, but must still have that account in order to have a vessel account that is thus associated with that shareholder account, and so, even when we say shareholder account, keep in mind that shareholder accounts may not have shares. They may have allocation only, and they are used then for moving the fish and being able to land.

Here, what we’re really going to be talking about are shareholder accounts. A vessel account is at the vessel account level that the commercial reef fish permit is associated, currently, and so we’re really going to keep in mind that shareholder accounts, and that’s what we’re going to be talking about requiring to have a permit, and then, currently, those vessel accounts are sub-accounts, are support accounts, and those are used by the fishermen to put their allocation and to land fish.

Let’s move on and move to page 9, and we have our beginning first action. Action 1 is permit requirement, at the top of page 9, and so you have a range of alternatives, and you have seen these before, and we have tightened up the language somewhat, so that they are consistent with the structure of the program, and so we’ll go through them.

First of all, always your Alternative 1 is your no action. In this case, it would not establish any new requirements to obtain or to maintain individual fishing quota shares. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would require some or all accounts to be associated with a permit.

Alternative 2 would be the most restrictive, and it would apply to all accounts. Thus, in order to obtain, and obtain means transferring shares into a shareholder account, or to maintain, to keep your shares, meaning holding the existing shares in a
shareholder account. Alternative 2 would require all shareholder accounts to be associated with a valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit.

Then there’s our definition again, that a shareholder account is considered to be associated with a permit if the permit has the exact same entities listed on both the shareholder account and permit, and keeping in mind too that each shareholder account is composed of a unique set of entities, and so you can’t have multiple shareholder accounts that are with the same exact group of entities. Each one is unique.

Alternative 3 would allow some accounts to be grandfathered in and not be required to have a reef fish permit. Thus, for Alternative 3, in order to obtain or maintain, keep one’s shares, all shareholder accounts established as of January 1, 2015 would be required to be associated with that valid or renewable commercial reef fish permit, and there is our definition, again.

This date, if you remember, corresponds with the control date that ended the first five years of the grouper-tilefish program, and so this would essentially -- Anybody that was participating as a shareholder, having a shareholder account, but no longer had maintained their permit to that date, would be grandfathered in and would be allowed to continue with their account without a permit. Again, we have provided copies of those control dates in the appendix, if we need to reference them.

Then, finally, Alternative 4 would essentially grandfather every shareholder account in until this amendment is implemented. Thus, in order to obtain, get more shares, or keep one’s shares, shareholder accounts established after implementation of this amendment would be required to be associated with a commercial reef fish permit, and I will pause there for one moment. I think this is the appropriate moment to bring up the Reef Fish AP motion, because they actually recommended an additional alternative, and, if we could call that up real quick, that would be great.

The AP did discuss this action, and there was both support and opposition for requiring all shareholder accounts to have a permit, and, thus, the AP decided that, if the council intends to require a permit, it was suggested to implement the requirement going forward, and so, similar to your Alternative 4, which would grandfather people in, but with an earlier date, and so the AP’s motion was to recommend that the council establish a control date from today forward, and that was the
date of the meeting, that anyone who buys shares is required to obtain a reef fish permit.

My interpretation of that is that it would be similar to the Alternative 4, but, instead of allowing it to be shareholder accounts established following implementation of this amendment, it would be from a date as of now, or even from the time of the Reef Fish AP. That was the Reef Fish AP’s recommendation, and we’ve gone over the alternatives, and I am going to pause there for a moment, for questions and discussion.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Thanks, Dr. Lasseter. I have a technical question. When you were going through the types of accounts, you said there is a shareholder account and a vessel account, and so I’m thinking through this, and I’m trying to think of it as -- So, if we require a permit to own shares, retain shares, maintain shares, for the man that is actively fishing on the water, and he owns his boat, and he’s the captain, and he is a shareholder, and he owns some shares of that fishery, he has a shareholder account and a vessel account, and the permit is currently -- Because he’s going to have a permit, if he’s actively fishing.

His permit is associated with the vessel account, and so, if we were to implement this, there will be somewhat of a consolidation of his accounts, because his shareholder account would have to have the permit, and so he’s going to go down from two accounts, a shareholder and a vessel, to one account that has the permit, has the ownership of the shares, and has the allocation in it, and is that how that would work?

DR. LASSETER: Very close, and so I guess the process would be a person, even if they know they have a vessel and a permit, the first step would be to open that shareholder account, whether or not you’re going to have shares and whether or not you’ve put the shares first. You would open that shareholder account first.

Now, you know you have a permit. When you open that account, you would provide that information as well, but you perhaps have not opened and established the vessel account yet, and so, the way this is worded, you wouldn’t necessarily need to already have that vessel account. NMFS is going to ensure that, as long as that permit has the same name, the same entities, as on the shareholder account, that shareholder account would be considered to be associated with a permit.
In the case of this individual with a permit, they would not need to do anything. Their permit is linked with that vessel account, but NMFS did not want us to relate that directly to the vessel account, and my understanding is because some individuals are a little delayed in establishing that vessel account part, and it’s like an extra piece of the puzzle, but you get that shareholder account first, and, as long as the entities are the same on the permit and the shareholder account, that permit then would satisfy your requirement, whether or not you have opened the vessel account, which does raise the question of you would need the vessel account in order to be able to fish any shares, yes.

MS. BOSARGE: So that permit will satisfy both your shareholder account and your vessel account?

DR. LASSETER: That is correct, yes.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Phil.

MR. DYSKOW: Thank you, Madam Chair. Ava, could you clarify, in as simple terms as possible, the difference between Alternative 4 and the AP recommendation, please?

DR. LASSETER: Yes, of course. Alternative 4 would allow people to continue to essentially be grandfathered in until we completely finish this amendment and it is implemented, the final rule publishes, and so, right now, Alternative 4 would allow, potentially more people to be grandfathered in than what the AP is recommending. The AP is recommending to go ahead and set a date that is essentially between Alternative 3 and Alternative 4, and so if you set it now.

As of this point forward, or, if you pick their point, which was a couple of weeks ago, accounts already established from these dates would essentially be grandfathered in. Any new accounts would need to be required with a permit, and so the AP recommendation is a little more conservative than Alternative 4. The date is between Alternatives 3 and 4.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I am going to say one thing kind of related to that, and then I will get to you, Dale. If you remember back to that graph that Ava showed us, those data only go through 2017, but I would note that, basically, since 2015, the permits have kind of been flatlined, and there doesn’t look like there’s been a lot -- Not the permits, but accounts that don’t have a permit, I guess.
It really may not make that much of a difference if you do the Reef Fish AP’s thing or Alternative 3 or 4, if that line extends further out and just holding steady for 2018 and 2019, but we don’t know, I guess.

**DR. LASSETER:** I do want to qualify that this is explained a little bit more in the text on page 2, in describing that figure. The amount of shares held in accounts with and without a permit has remained the same, has remained stable, from 2015 to 2017. However, the number of accounts has changed, and we would assume that means that people are using the structure of accounts for their business purposes, to separate assets and whatnot, and total volume, amount of shares, associated with and without a permit has remained stable over those years, but the number of accounts has changed, and so we think that that’s how people are using the system, and so I did want to qualify that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy.

**DR. ROY CRABTREE:** If an account is grandfathered in, and let’s say it’s a corporate account, which a lot of these are, that account will remain grandfathered in as long as that corporation exists, and so, potentially, a hundred years from now, there would be a grandfathered-in account that could have been sold from person to person, but it would remain grandfathered in, and is that correct?

**DR. LASSETER:** That is one issue that I did want to bring up, if the council is comfortable with that, if they’re aware of that feature of accounts. However, whenever -- If you have a corporation, if an account is held in the name of a corporation, NMFS requires the ownership, to know the individual ownership and percent ownership behind that account, and there is some requirement that, if any changes are made to that, you must notify NMFS of those changes, of the people behind the shareholder account, behind the corporation holding the --

**DR. CRABTREE:** So that’s something we would need to address in here, how we intended that to work. What happens with a grandfathered-in account that’s owned by an individual, and that individual passes away, and the account becomes part of the estate, that then goes to one of his children? Is that account still grandfathered in, or does it become no longer grandfathered, and that child would then have to have a reef fish permit or lose it all?

**DR. LASSETER:** These are all the issues that are ready for us to
discuss, and, however you would like us to address and handle that, we will need to incorporate that into the document, but, yes, these are some questions that we had for you.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay. Then, if we did, for example, what the AP is suggesting a set a control date of whatever day it was, and we said you had to have a permit by that date, and then, six months later, we get to a final rule that requires that, then all the people who didn’t have a permit by that date would immediately lose their permit, even if they bought a permit after that date, because they didn’t have it on the date, and would they lose their permit? Not the permit, but would they lose their shares?

DR. LASSETER: If I understand you correctly, there is a time, the next action, which we haven’t quite gotten to yet, is the action that provides a time period for people to obtain their permit. If you’re unable to do so, then you would be forced to divest of your shares, and NMFS would retain the shares.

DR. CRABTREE: So, even though we say a control date, that you had to have a permit by that date, we’re not really meaning that, because we’re going to allow them some period of time to acquire a permit after that date?

DR. LASSETER: I think they’re slightly separate things. There are accounts that had been opened before or after a date that would be required to have one. They wouldn’t be required to have had one by that date.

DR. CRABTREE: So you lose the being grandfathered in, but you have a period of time to buy a permit and not lose your accounts, and is that right?

DR. LASSETER: Correct. Depending on what side of the date you were on, you would be required or not required to have a permit. If you would be required, if you fall into the category that you will be required, you will have to go and get one, yes, and the next action provides the process and timeline by which that must be accomplished.

DR. CRABTREE: Okay, and then, if I’m someone who has a permit, and I have a vessel, but I have six different accounts, for whatever reason, I would have to change how I’m handling all that, because now -- Because I have one vessel, I would only be able to have one account, and is that right?

DR. LASSETER: So one permit must be associated with a
shareholder account, and you can only -- They have to have the same entities, the same names, behind them, but, with shareholder accounts, you cannot have multiple shareholder accounts in the same name. It could be maybe the same individual behind it, but they would be different LLCs, and so, yes, if an individual has only one permit and multiple accounts, we would expect that those individuals would work on consolidating their accounts, and so that would also make the number of accounts in the figure, just looking at those with and without a permit -- We would expect a lot of change in that.

DR. CRABTREE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Phil and then Kevin.

MR. DYSKOW: Thank you, Madam Chair. When Leann brought up the idea of separating this out from the rest of what was 36B, I thought that was a super idea, because I thought it would make things simpler, but, as we can see, it’s still very complicated.

I am really encouraged by the fact that we have a way forward, even though we have much discussion and many issues to wrestle through, I guess, and there are two points that I would like to comment on, whichever one of these alternatives we eventually select, if we can actually accomplish that.

As I interpret all of these, the IFQ, potentially, can exist into perpetuity, and is that really the intent of what we wanted to do initially and what we want to do now? Should there be a timeframe associated with this, or should it be for the lifetime of the current IFQ holder? I am familiar, a little bit, with federal leases, and, in a very contentious area, they may have a lease, a land lease, whereby the lease can be transferred to an heir, a son or daughter or whatever, one time, and then it expires, and it cannot be renewed beyond that point.

We need to put an endpoint to this, or, generations from now, we may have people living in Cheboygan, Wisconsin that have never fished in their lives controlling a significant part of the IFQ for the Gulf of Mexico, and just envision downrange where this could end up. I would encourage us to consider a finite timeframe, realizing that there is businesses and families involved in this, and so there should be some flexibility in this as much as possible, but we need to have a point where this ends. It can’t go into perpetuity.

We have another hand up, and so let me finish this up, but the other concern I have is let’s say we all agree on any of these
alternatives, and I have a reef permit, and I have been awarded IFQ, but I don’t fish that IFQ, and I simply lease it. If I do that annually for year after year after year, am I really a reef fisherman? Am I really part of this industry, or am I just an outside investor?

Maybe we can include some words in the document to close that loophole, whereby, if I haven’t actively fished a portion of my IFQ for three years -- In other words, all I do is lease it to other fishermen, and maybe I lose all or a portion of it. Does that make any sense?

The two suggestions that I have is the one that I just articulated and the previous one, where we have some sort of a finite end to this IFQ, whereby that fisherman perhaps needs to reapply or there’s an endgame somewhere, so it doesn’t go on into perpetuity.

**DR. LASSETER:** I wanted to just make sure that I’m clarifying some terminology. When you say finite end to IFQ, are you meaning that shares don’t remain with -- Do you mean the end of the program, or do you mean shares wouldn’t remain with the same individuals in perpetuity and that there would be some kind of redistribution of shares?

**MR. DYSKOW:** Yes. This all made perfect sense when I wrote it down, but I think you’re going to have to wordsmith it to have it make sense.

**DR. LASSETER:** Okay.

**MR. DYSKOW:** I called it at the time, when we discussed the duration of shares, adaptive redistribution, and what that means I have no idea, other than we’re looking for an endgame.

**DR. LASSETER:** Okay, and so a couple of words about that as well, because I believe that was from a couple of years ago, and the council did pass a motion, and it is one of the potential alternatives and one of those sub-actions of the quota bank, where you wanted to explore the idea of cyclical redistribution of shares similar to what was being considered in Amendment 41. Amendment 41 was considering the IFQ program for the charter/for-hire. That came out of a discussion, and I believe that Jessica Stephen was involved in looking at these potential cycles, and so there is that concept, as a potential alternative, in 36C.

To bring that into this document, I was thinking of a connection
with something Dr. Crabtree said, but I have that note down from
you, and then the other one is -- I think that both of these are
for further discussion for the council, if you're interested in
adding some of these provisions to the document, that we could
do so.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I had Kevin’s hand, and then I’m sure a few
hands shot up based on that discussion. Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Thank you. That’s kind of why we went with this
shifting or changing or modification of this document. We had
it in previous documents, some of those very concerns you
brought up, and they are much more difficult to get a consensus
on, or have some discussion about that, but, anyway, related to
my question that I had of the vessel accounts and the
shareholder accounts and the linkage of those two, currently, as
it stands, there can only be one permit in a vessel account and
then one vessel account -- A minimum of one vessel account
associated with a shareholder account, if they’re going to
actually fish off of those shares within a shareholder account,
correct, and you can’t have a half a vessel in one account and
half of that vessel, half a permit, in another account. Okay.
I just wanted to be clear. Thank you.

DR. LASSETER: You can have multiple vessels. One shareholder
could have multiple vessel accounts though, yes.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: The motion that you had on the board that came out
of the Reef Fish AP about a control date from today forward, the
Reef Fish AP is a diverse group, and it has commercial reef fish
fishermen, and it has for-hire, charter/headboat, and it has
recreational, and I see it says there was both support and
opposition for requiring shareholders to have a permit.

I was wondering if you could refresh our memory -- The actual
IFQ AP, which is all commercial guys, what did they have to say
on that requiring a permit? You don’t have to pull it up right
now, but just at some point to refresh our memory, and it would
be nice to have those comments along with the comments from the
more diverse group.

DR. LASSETER: I could call them up quickly. We do have the IFQ
AP’s summary in the appendix, and, just to share also
information on the Reef Fish AP, the support and opposition,
that motion that passed was the substitute motion. The initial
motion was recommending Alternative 2, and then a substitute
motion was made that recommended this control date for the day
of the meeting, and so, if we look at the table of contents real
quick, the advisory panel meeting summaries are Appendix E, and
so it would be the very end of Appendix E, would be the most
recent one. It’s page 38, we believe.

Page 39, around the middle of page 39, the IFQ AP recommended to
the council that Action 1, Alternative 1 be the preferred and to
not establish requirements to obtain or maintain shares.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I am going to continue with my list, but I see
both of you all. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Just coming to Phil’s comment, if you go back and
read the minutes of the meetings when we originally designed the
IFQ program, and I encourage all of you to do that, we did have
discussions, when we were talking about sunsetting the permit
requirement, explicitly about out-of-state people who don’t have
permits being able to buy up shares, and clearly the council’s
desire was to allow that to happen, because that’s what we did.
Whether you agree with it or not, we did have those discussions.

I guess where I’m having a hard time -- Yes, we have people who
own shares, and you can call them investors or whatever, but we
have a long tradition in the Gulf of Mexico of people who own
fishing vessels. I have known people who have owned as many as
fifteen different fishing vessels that have permits, and they
hire crews to fish the vessels and work for crew shares.

It seems to me that we have a long tradition in the Gulf of
having people who invest money in the fishing business, and they
don’t go out on the boats, and they don’t fish, and they may not
even live here. They may be a doctor or a dentist somewhere,
but they have invested in the fishing business, and they
essentially pay a crew to go out and fish, and they get part of
the profits.

It's just not clear to me how that is fundamentally different
than someone who buys IFQ shares and in that way is part of a
fishing business. They all, in effect, provide capital and
funding for other people to go out and catch fish, and I just
have a hard time distinguishing between how a doctor who lives
in Detroit and owns a fleet of fishing boats down here and
permits is fundamentally different than someone who lives
somewhere else and invests in red snapper shares and is in the
fishery that way.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Chris.
MR. SCHIEBLE: I concur with Mr. Dyskow’s comments, and I think, looking at these options here, other than Alternative 1, out of the other four that remain, with the new one that we added, it seems like Alternative 4 would be the least restrictive, but we may have to modify or tackle the inheritability question somehow in there, with the perpetuity, as he was describing.

It seems like, if you handle the inheritability part of it, that would solve the problem, because it wouldn’t affect the shareholders we have currently, but it would force, or at least require, a permit to be on that at that point, when it would change hands in the future. I just don’t know how to do that, as far as the verbiage.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Madam Chairman. My question is for Ava. As far as the Reef Fish AP, what was the rationale for their motion? I’m assuming it’s about something to do with maybe stability of permits or to let us give some information to people, so they can make decisions, but I wanted to hear from you what their rationale was.

DR. LASSETER: As I remember it, it was a discussion of fairness, what was between the initial alternative -- The initially-proposed alternative, Alternative 2, to require everybody, was the argument of your commercial fishermen that you need to have a permit. If you’re involved in this program, you need to have a permit.

A subsequent discussion, what led to the substitute motion, was, yes, we want this to be in the fishery, but the council has opened this up, and we’ve all been practicing using the program in these ways for years now, and people have invested, because legally they were allowed to, and now you’re going to try and change it. That was the rationale for, okay, going forward -- We can see you wanting to make a change going forward, but, hey, leave the people that have been here already alone, if I can paraphrase that, and we do also have both the motion maker and the substitute motion maker here.

MR. DIAZ: That’s a big concern of mine, is fairness, because I do know that a lot of people have borrowed money to buy shares, and there are some alternatives here that could leave those people in a bad financial spot, and I am very concerned about that. Thank you, Ava.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I am going to continue to work down my list. I have got Leann and then Susan and then Tom.

MS. BOSARGE: Ava, I am wondering -- We are looking at possible dates. If we were to require a permit, when, at what point, back in time, everybody in the future, and so, on page 2 of the document, if you can scroll to page 2 of the document, and it’s paper page 2, and I don’t know what PDF page it is, but it says -- There is some control dates listed at the top of that page, and what is the significance of those control dates, and are those dates that we should have in our options? I don’t understand.

It gives me a little bit of information. It says, however, at the request of the council, NMFS published a control date in the Federal Register notifying red snapper IFQ program participants that the requirements for participation may be modified in the future, and the control date is November 30, 2011.

Then it says that a comparable control date was published in the Federal Register notifying the grouper-tilefish IFQ program participants that participation requirements may be modified in the future, and that control date is December 8, 2014. What is the significance of those control dates?

DR. LASSETER: Good question. Thank you. For the initial five years of each of these programs, only existing shareholders -- You needed a permit to get into the program. After five years, the program is open to anybody, any U.S. citizen or permanent resident could open an account and participate.

At the time of that five-year point after each of the programs, the council was hearing from commercial fishermen who were asking please don’t open this up to the public, and we would like this to stay within the fishery. The council, at that time, and I think we were going through our first five-year review on red snapper, if I remember, and the council did not take action, and was not developing one of these amendments right then, but they did decide that, okay, let’s put a control date in place for each one of these, because we may be coming back and revisiting these in the future. That is what each one of those are.

Now, you also had a separate alternative for each one of these dates, to grandfather people in for each respective program, and, at our meeting a few meetings ago, you did remove the date for red snapper, and so, currently, that Alternative 3 that would grandfather people in that had a shareholder account
before 2015, they’re the second control date there. Again, both of the control dates are in Appendix D, if you would like to take a look at what they look like as well, and they have been provided there.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Is it to that point, Mara? Go ahead.

MS. MARA LEVY: Just to note that the discussion is telling you when it published in the Federal Register, and those dates are not the control dates. For both of these, the control dates, as shown in the appendix, are January 1 of the following year, and so January 1, 2012 and January 1, 2015. That’s the date that that notice established as the control date.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay. Tom.

DR. TOM FRAZER: I just wanted to circle back to the AP motion, the Reef Fish AP motion, and I know that Captain Walker is in the audience, and I don’t want to put you on the spot, but if you would come up for just a minute.

It’s important, I think, for the council to recognize or understand fully the motivation behind the motion, and my understanding is that you were the maker of that substitute motion, and so, if you can give us your perspective, it would be helpful.

MR. ED WALKER: I think Ava pretty much summed it up, but we were very much mixed on the issue in the room. Some of the guys said they don’t even really think we need it at all, and, if we are going to have it, they seemed to prefer it to be grandfather everybody in that’s already there and utilize it going forward, but, like I said, there was a fair amount of discussion, and the motion passed, but it passed with four opposed, and so we were pretty mixed on it. Opinions were kind of across-the-board on this one. Like I said, it passed, but it wasn’t unanimous, and there wasn’t any huge support from the AP for it, but I would say that the issue was give the most lenient of the options. Right now, I think that’s why we recommended one even a little bit more lenient.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Susan, did you want to ask a question?

MS. BOGGS: Well, I listened to the AP meeting, and I thought it was a commercial fisherman that actually made this motion, and am I incorrect?

DR. FRAZER: I think I spoke in error. Excuse me. I think Ed
is the Chairman of the AP, and so I apologize for that.

DR. LASSETER: I can add that the maker of the initial motion and the substitute motion were both commercial fishermen, and I have seen both of them in the audience, and I apologize for the confusion.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks, Ed.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Working down my list, John Sanchez.

MR. JOHN SANCHEZ: Thank you. As we all know, there is some fishermen that qualified originally, during the qualifying years, and were allocated shares, and now they’re retired. They were elderly, and they are retired, and I would hate to see us hurt somebody like that, that was a legitimate historical fisherman and now is leasing some shares to supplement his income.

In my mind, he’s a legitimate commercial fisherman, and, if we go back to the genesis of all of this, the industry really didn’t want shares to be leasing and all of this to be happening. They wanted it to go to the fishermen that actually were watermen on the water working and fishing, but these types of discussions created these situations, and here we are now again trying to put the toothpaste back in the tube.

We’re going to hurt somebody if we do things without being mindful of what we’re doing, and then we talk about perpetuity. I would like to see an industry in perpetuity, and so I don’t know why we’re having these discussions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I think I have reached the end of the list. Is there anybody else that wants to discuss this Action 1? There’s been a lot of discussion about things we could do, but, of course, the way to actually accomplish those things would be through motions, and I’m just putting that out there. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I have been thinking about something since the last meeting. When we originally created the program, you had to have a share in order to -- I mean, you had to have a permit in order to own shares, and there was a timestamp on that. After five years, that would expire, and other people could get into it, and, at the beginning of the program, when we started, the commercial fishermen were not in favor of that expiration and allowing outside participants, but what did we do originally with leasing? Did we have to have a permit in order to lease as well?
DR. LASSETER: When we were talking about leasing, you’re talking about the allocation, and, in order to land allocation, you do have to have a commercial reef fish permit, a vessel account and a reef fish permit.

MS. BOSARGE: Right, but you don’t necessarily have to have a permit to lease. There can be a middleman, right? You can have a shareholder, and, if we put this in place, the shareholder would have to have a permit, or some of them may be grandfathered, but let’s just say that you’ve got to have a permit, but we’re not addressing leasing. My question is, when we first implemented the program, before the five years was up, what were our restrictions on leasing? Did you have to have a permit in order to lease as well?

DR. LASSETER: In the first five years, no, you didn’t. You could be transferring allocation. I do want to take a step back. In those first five years, you had to have had a permit to have received those initial shares, and you had to have a permit to obtain more shares, but, even during those first five years, shareholders may not have maintained their permit, and so, even if those initial five years, you did have some accounts that were no longer associated with a permit, they sold it or they didn’t renew it, and those accounts were not allowed to get additional shares, but they could keep their shares, and so, even within those first five years, you did have some of this public participation, in terms of people not having permits, and you’re right that there is no restriction, and this action, as currently written, is not going to restrict allocation brokers, people that would just be moving allocation around. This is specific to shares.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: John and then Roy.

MR. SANCHEZ: We always -- Whatever we do, there is unintended consequences, but some of them are pretty foreseeable. If we require people that we disenfranchise to have to go out and buy a permit to not be disenfranchised, I promise you that I can guess what’s going to happen to the cost of the permits.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I’m told the price of permits has already gone up substantially. If we did select one of the options that grandfathered people in, would the folks grandfathered in be allowed to accumulate or acquire additional shares, or are they capped at the number of shares they have at the grandfathering
date, somehow?

**DR. LASSETER:** That is another question that we have to decide, that the council has to decide.

**DR. CRABTREE:** Well, I think, the way it’s written now though, they would be able to acquire more shares, and so this is part of all of the complexities, I guess, that come into this.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** I guess two things. one is to Dr. Crabtree’s point. I would assume that they would be able to acquire shares up to the cap, essentially, for each shareholder account, correct? I mean, if they’re already at that cap, then, yes, they can’t get any more, but, if they’re below that, then they could, and so it depends on who it is.

Going back and listening to some of the comments and such, and talking about fairness and equity and how this program started and the purpose and need of the program and how the council has changed and waffled on this issue over the years, based on certain perceived needs and wishes and desires and plans, I go back to how are those shares originally doled and on what premise?

The premise was that they were caught by fishermen who were engaged in fishing caught under a permit, and so all we’re trying to do, in my mind, is to get back to that original situation. I mean, Roy, you brought about the capital needs and requirements of somebody just buying a permit and a boat and having someone hired to go out and do that, and it was eligible, and it was allowed, but now we’re in a system where that’s not the case, and we’re talking about resource and gifting of the resource now permanently to an individual who may never have been engaged in fishing in the Gulf of Mexico commercially.

That is kind of where I’m getting at, is we’re taking that potential of revenue and the potential for that individual to try to bolster their business, and to make an income for themselves and make an investment for themselves, and it’s to try to make a little bit more of a fair and level playing field, in my mind.

I think this is -- Obviously, there are some big issues that are wrapped up in this document, but it’s the other issues that are still remaining that were left out that were part of 36B that will address some of those other issues, as you try to look
long-term at trying to make this a viable program for the fishermen.

Not only for the fish, but for the fishermen as well, and so, as we go each year, and time passes, as we sit back in the Monday-morning quarterback chair, it becomes more comfortable, and we can see the lay of the land as to how the fishery would function under certain scenarios and such, and so that’s kind of where I’m leaning to, and, Ava, I appreciate the work you’ve done to try to modify the document and such, and I look forward to maybe some motions here to try to address some of these action items. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I think your premise is not correct. We set this program up, and, some of the people who got the initial allocations, I don’t know that they ever set foot on a boat. They didn’t have to, and all they had to do was be a permit holder and they got shares.

There were a lot of people who had multiple shares and paid people to fish on them, and we knew that, and so it’s just not the case that we set this up so that people who fished got the -- We never set it up just so that fishermen -- If, by fishermen, you mean a guy who goes out on the boat and pulls fish in, we knowingly did not set it up that way.

Now, there are regions, I think Alaska being one, where they have tried to put a requirement that the shareholder be onboard the vessel, and I don’t think it has worked very well, but that’s not how we set it up, and we set it up so that, as soon as you got your shares, you could have gotten rid of your permit and remained a shareholder.

Then, coming to the grandfather issue, to me, when you grandfather someone in, you’re allowing them to do what they’ve already done, but not allow them, necessarily, to do other things, and so it does seem to me more like, if you grandfather someone in, they can keep what they have, but I am not sure that allowing them to expand and acquire more shares necessarily makes sense, but this fishery was never one where you had to be the guy on the boat, and it was never set up for just owner-operators, because that’s just not the way the fishing business in the Gulf operates.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.
MS. BOSARGE: Roy, in my mind though, the people that you’re talking about are still vested in the fishing industry. That man that owns some boats and had a captain and crew, and so I come from a commercial fishing family, and I will tell you that we’re not that easy to deal with, commercial fishermen, and so we’re quirky.

DR. CRABTREE: Can I respond to that point?

MS. BOSARGE: No, you cannot. That man was dealing with commercial fishermen on a daily basis. If he had a permit and owned a boat, he was dealing with the headache of having them both. That’s maintenance and upkeep, and it’s a pain in the rear, but you do it because you love it, and so he was in the industry. He was in constant contact with fishermen, and he was down there, and he was dealing with boats and fishermen.

What we have now is a little different, and I’m not saying it’s good or it’s bad, but, some of the people that we have in there now, they are just bankers, and they are not dealing with fishermen, except to say, okay, I’ve got this quota at this rate and do you want to buy it. They are moneymen, and that is the business of being a banker.

If you go back to this type of system, where you at least require a permit to be an owner of shares, then the banker is going to have to have a little more interaction with the fishermen. He’s going to have to get a permit, which, to me, if you have got $100,000 or $200,000 in shares, going and getting a $20,000, or $25,000, permit to maintain your investment doesn’t seem like that big of a deal, especially when you’re earning a way higher rate of return than you can get at a bank, but, to get the permit, he’s going to have to put it on a boat, and so now, if doesn’t want to buy a boat -- You have to have a boat attached to the permit. If he doesn’t want to go out and buy a boat, he’s going to have to come up with a contract with a fisherman, to somehow lease his permit.

This is going to tie the owner of the shares, the right to catch the fish, closer to the fishermen, in my mind, if you go down this route. Are there loopholes? Yes, there are, but I just don’t want to see that get too far removed.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Well, if I could, I guess my problem with that is I think you’re parsing things pretty fine to say a dentist who owns a fishing vessel is in the fishing business, but someone who owns shares is not.
In either case, if you own shares, you can’t make any money without dealing with fishermen, and you could lease a fishing vessel and have some captain that you trust and know well who runs it for you and takes care of virtually everything, but, in any instance of this, to make any money on it, you’re going to have to deal with fishermen, and so I just have a very difficult time seeing the distinction there.

Then I would urge you to go read your own purpose and need. If you read the purpose and the need, it’s really difficult to tell why are we doing this, why is this a problem, and why is this improving anything, and I think you’re right that the guy who owns several hundred thousand dollars’ worth of shares will find some way to maintain those shares, and so what we’re doing is we’re coming in -- The bureaucracy is going to come in and make him jump through a bunch of hoops, because of some, in my view, misguided notion that it changes things, and we’re essentially introducing economic inefficiencies into the system, which infuriates people, and is, to me, an example of overreach in government, and I just have a very difficult time in believing that doing this is going to fundamentally change the way the fishery looks ten years from now.

I think fishermen will find ways to work around this, and life will go on as usual, except it will have introduced some economic inefficiencies and some bureaucratic hurdles into the fishery.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. I am going recognize Troy, and then we’re going to take a break, and then we can come back to this discussion, and I think I had some other hands over here.

MR. TROY WILLIAMSON: Roy, my question is to you. You were around when this program was started, and I wasn’t. Initially, were the folks who were awarded the access to the fishery -- Were they all individuals, or were they -- Were there companies involved in this? Additionally, this idea of perpetuity of transferring this access to fish, did that just come about as an unintended consequence? What has happened here?

DR. CRABTREE: In the initial eligibility, if you held what was then a red snapper license, but, if you were a permit holder, and you had landings that you showed through your logbooks, then you were eligible to receive shares. You could have been a corporation, and I don’t know what percentage of the original permits were held by corporations and what were held by individuals, but it was to the permit, and so some permits -- Some individuals have multiple permits, and they may have been
corporate permits, and they may have been individuals, and some
didn’t.

Then I think there was a historical captain provision or
something maybe in some of these things, but I don’t remember
the details of that, and I have forgotten the second part of
your question. We set it up so that, to be eligible initially,
you had to have a permit, and that’s how you got your shares,
but we didn’t require people, once they got their shares, to
maintain their permits, and we didn’t put any restrictions on
who they lease their allocation to, with the exception that the
boat that’s actually fishing them and catching the fish had to
have the permit, so that they would have the reporting
requirements and VMS requirements and all of those kinds of
things.

MR. WILLIAMSON: The second part of my question concerned this
concept of in perpetuity. Was that something that was
contemplated when this program started?

DR. CRABTREE: I think we did talk about various sorts of
things, but, in the end, we didn’t put any sunset or any
provision that people would lose their shares.

MR. WILLIAMSON: So there is no provision in this for
transferring indefinitely this access. Not the resource.
You’re not transferring the resource when you pass it on in your
will. All you’re passing on is access rights.

DR. CRABTREE: We knowingly set this up to allow access rights,
shares, to be sold and transferred and passed on.

DR. FRAZER: I am going to come to Martha’s rescue.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I’m floating away up here, people.

DR. FRAZER: We are going to take a fifteen-minute break. Thank
you.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay. So, we’re a little bit behind, but
that’s okay. We’re having some good discussion, and so here’s
what we’re going to do from here on out. If there are any
motions or burning discussions on Action 1, we will dispense
with those now, and we will hold off on Action 2 for the time
being, because we have many more important agenda items to get
through. If, at the end of the day, we still have time, we’ll
come back to Action 2, but, otherwise, we’re going to move on. So, that said, anything else on Action 1? Okay. Let’s talk amberjack then. Dr. Hollensead is coming up for this one.

**DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION TO MODIFY GREATER AMBERJACK RECREATIONAL MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

**DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Really quickly, with the action guide, just to orient everyone, we’re going to be looking at the revised draft for the recreational measures for Gulf greater amberjack. The document has changed a little bit, with some additions of a new action since the last time, and so, before I get into the document, I’m first going to give a quick presentation, just as to how the document has changed and potentially what road the council decides to go down and what sort of things they may have to think about.

Again, just a quick little background, there is three things to remember about greater amberjack before I get into the presentation. Number one is that it is considered overfished with implemented accountability measures, where, if the ACL is exceeded, the ACL and ACT will then be reduced by that overage in the following year, and that’s just something to keep in mind.

The second thing is that, based on public testimony we’ve heard, harvest is regionally dependent, and so, very broadly, in south Florida, they are interested in harvesting fishing in the wintertime, January and February. In the Panhandle of Florida and Alabama, they are interested in harvesting specifically in the month of May, and, in the western Gulf, Texas and Louisiana, they’re more interested in harvesting during fall, and so that’s another consideration to sort of have to think about.

Then, third, there’s been lots of recent management measures for the recreational fishery for greater amberjack. Most recently, the change, as Ms. Gerhart pointed out, starting the fishing year on August 1. For the 2018-2019 season, that resulted in exceeding the ACT during the fall, and, therefore, there was no spring May 2019 opening for harvest.

Based on public testimony from that, in June, the council made a motion to develop the draft framework to look at recreational greater amberjack measures in the Gulf, with the goal of sort of improving the access to the fishery during that time, across the Gulf, specifically looking at modifying the fishing year bag limits and current season structure.
A copy of that draft was presented to the council in August, and, upon review of that draft, the council decided to also include an additional action to look at potential zone management for greater amberjack, and so that’s where we are today, and so, because zone management is -- Sort of the other management measures would be sort of dependent upon the decision made by choosing zone management, Action 1, and that became Action 1, and so that’s what is different in the document from the last time the council saw it.

Action 2 would then be those bag limits as well as an additional alternative accounting for a motion that was made to look at possession limits, and so, on multiday trips, you would only still be able to retain one daily bag limit of greater amberjack, and so that’s also been included into the document.

Action 3 is now that fishing year, and Action 4 is sort of looking at those fixed closed seasons, with another alternative added, a fifth alternative, also looking at another possibility for those fixed seasons, has been added.

Before generating the report and writing it specifically one way or the other, without some input from the council, it was decided by the IPT to sort of keep things generally broad, and so this framework is going to be sort of put up, as it’s written right now, as sort of a skeletal element with which the council -- It’s nothing set in stone, and so I guess I want to say that. Here’s something that perhaps the council can consider, but certainly, if they decide to go a different avenue, we can write the framework to reflect that.

As it’s written right now, if Action 1 is chosen, yes, we’re interested in pursuing some sort of zone management. Currently, Actions 2 and 3, and so the bag limits and the fishing year, would be Gulf-wide, regardless of zone management. If that changes, the document could be rewritten to reflect that, and so just be aware. These actions can be combined, in general.

This is a little bit of a beast, and so we’re going to take it one bite at a time, and so I’ve created sort of this decision tree framework, just to help orient everybody as to what it is that we’re going to have to sit down and decide, moving through this document, zone management being that first Action 1, and so the first question would be is the council interested in pursuing zone management for greater amberjack, yes or no.

If the answer is no, for example, then we would have those Gulf-wide management approaches, and so this would be very similar
looking to the document that was brought back in August, and so just sort of a throwback to that.

If, however, the council decides that, yes, we’re interested in considering some zone management, the next determination would have to be, well, what would be the allocation between zones, and so that’s just something to have to think about. In terms of the document, can other actions be selected along with that zone management? If the answer is yes, for bag limits by zone, fishing year by zone, and bag limits and fishing year by zone, depending on -- Like I said, it gets complicated very quickly, but just to illustrate that those could be written within sort of the zone framework.

In terms of amending that fishing season or that fixed closed period within zone, perhaps it could be implemented as a zone action, but I would just want to point out to the council that potentially we could run into the same problem that we are currently having. For example, if one zone exceeds the ACL before the other zone is open, or reaches their quota, they may be closed prematurely, or in-season, rather, and so, potentially, you could have the same problem that we already have, and so sort of just drawing lines -- That would have to be something to think about.

As I had mentioned earlier, in the past ten years, a lot has changed with the regulations for recreational greater amberjack, and it’s a little easier to visualize it here than to just go through it, and so we’ve got calendar date on the bottom, and we’ve got year on the side. Each of those black dots represents a day when the fishery was open for harvest for that year, and yellow indicates the day when that harvest was closed.

Then the text along each of those yearly bars gives you an idea of what happened in terms of recreational management changes, either for that year, and so like moving up to 2009 to 2019, we had a size limit change, and 2010 was an environmental disaster. In 2011, we began the June and July fixed closures. There was a size limit reduction, again, in 2016, and then, of course, most recently, the fishing year being changed to August 1, and so, as you can see, there’s a lot of changes that have happened for recreational management for greater amberjack.

Confounding things a little bit further is there’s just not a whole lot of data for greater amberjack, and so I introduced some of this zone management, and I just want to reiterate that it’s not as if new data has come across to the IPT’s attention in the past two months, and we are still working with the same
little data that we had before, and we’re now -- Potentially
trying to partition that further into zones would make that a
little difficult.

However, we do know that it seems like sort of the traditional
management tools that we’re looking at right now hasn’t achieved
the management objectives of sort of improving access across the
Gulf in the time of year in which those regions are interested
in fishing, and so perhaps zone management is worth looking at.

Very briefly, what is zone management? This would be a division
of the Gulf based on some spatial delineation that can be
determined, and it’s been used before for king mackerel.
Granted, that was for commercial, and, generally, that fishery
doesn’t exceed its quota, and so it’s a little bit different,
and then, of course, most recently, state allocation with red
snapper. Again, that’s a little different from greater
amberjack, in that most of the Gulf, no matter where you are, is
interested in harvesting red snapper at sort of the same time,
and so it’s a little different than what we’ve got for greater
amberjack.

Just like any management tool, zone management has pros and cons
associated with it, and so, here on this slide, I’ve got sort of
a little thought diagram with which to illustrate that. We’ve
got improved access, and so access for folks around the regions,
and it’s season length on the side, and it’s status quo in zones
on the top.

Right now, with status quo, we don’t really seem to have that
improved access that we’re looking for. One side of the Gulf
seems to be shut down before the other can get started, for
example, and zones may be a way to address that, looking at
something with a little more precision, perhaps.

In terms of season length, the status quo could work, looking at
bag limits and things. Based on our analysis that we have just
generally so far, that might mean bag limits of one fish per six
anglers or something like that, but it could be achieved,
theoretically.

Season length, in terms of zones, potentially, theoretically,
you could actually have a negative effect, in that, if you
manage for a region to be harvesting greater amberjack when it
is most efficient, you might actually reduce the season length,
if that sort of makes sense, and so, theoretically, that’s
potentially something that could happen.
Some other considerations, if zone management is something the council is interested in pursuing, there’s a few questions that have to be answered. First and foremost, how many zones should there be, and, in terms of drawing those lines, it’s really got to be something that’s enforceable, something that’s easy for folks on the water to understand when they’re out there, and perhaps it would have to include some provisions for moving in between those zones and those sorts of things.

Data collection and monitoring for those zones should be at the appropriate timeliness and spatial scale, and that might be difficult to do, if you’re looking at perhaps monitoring in-season things in terms of weeks, and the data comes into you in terms of months, for example.

To achieve those management goals of seasonality across the Gulf, and that’s why we’re here, and so hopefully zone management would -- Whatever is implemented would do something like that.

Then what should the allocation look like between zones? If you decide how you want to draw your zones, how do you want to divide up the pie? Are you interested in looking at landings or daily catch rates? If so, from what time period? Then, of course, these are just landings data, and they are not going to capture all of the things associated with socioeconomic need, and so, for example, if another fishery is open, perhaps fishermen may gravitate towards the fishery and not greater amberjack, or whatever the case might be, and so that’s not going to be encapsulated in these data, and so that’s something that needs to come from industry to help us understand.

Potentially any zone-specific payback provisions. Again, the most recent landings data is confounded by multiple factors, and so that makes it difficult to try to understand that. Again, we’ve talked about perhaps different bag limits or start of fishing years within the zones. Again, like I mentioned before, that gets complicated very quickly, but potentially that’s a route we could go down.

One thing I would like to stress to the group is, if possible, if the group can come to a consensus, and everybody sort of agree, that this is the route we’ve decided to go down, and this is what we decided to implement, and is comfortable with keeping that on the books for a while as something that would be really beneficial for the analysts to be able to come forward with more robust data with which to help inform future management decisions, and so just something to -- A lot of things,
actually, to keep in mind.

What I’m going to do is I’m going to kind of dive into what we have currently in the document. Again, this is not set in stone, and this is sort of a tee-off point that the IPT has brought forward for everyone just to consider, what zone management may look like, in terms of in the document.

You would have an Alternative 1, which would be your no action alternative, and so you wouldn’t have any spatial delineations within the Gulf. It would be just as it is. Alternative 2 would have a spatial delineation along the Mississippi-Alabama border, for example, and it would just divide the Gulf in two, and so you would have Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi comprising the western zone and Alabama and Florida comprising the eastern zone.

In terms of what potentially allocation may look like, these are historical landings data, and so this is from 1992 to 2008, and so this is before a lot of those contemporary management changes had been put into place, and then you’ve got percent landings on the side there, and so all those bars are going to add up to 100.

When you break out between the east and the west, the east being those black bars and the west being the yellow, in general, about 80 percent of those historic landings have come from the east, and so Alabama and Florida. That is annual landings, and so, if you look at within-year harvest, traditionally, again that same time period from 1992 to 2008, generally, again, about 80 percent of the harvest during those MRIP waves occurs in the eastern Gulf. That’s just something to keep in mind.

Potentially, in the document, we also have an Alternative 3 that would further break apart that sort of eastern zone into a northern and southern, and that line would be drawn along the Florida Dixie County-Levy County line, and that’s currently a designation for MRIP sampling as well, and so, sampling along those zones, you would have the associated MRIP data with which to monitor those landings for those zones, for example.

In terms of looking at those landings, again, here is a plot with the same time period and percent landings, and the west isn’t further divided, and so those yellow bars are going to stay the same as they were in the previous graph, but now we have further partitioned out the south and north, and so the Panhandle and Alabama and then south Florida, central south
Florida, and, in general, about 66 percent of the harvest comes from that northern Panhandle-Alabama area for that time period.

Looking at it within year, again, over the MRIP waves, we see that again, and we also do see that little uptick in that May/June period, when the Panhandle is fishing for greater amberjack at that time period, and so, again, this is just an example, and it’s nothing set in stone. This would just be, for example, how the document might be laid out and some of the things to consider in terms of informing allocation, for example.

I will just sort of leave this. This figure is in the document, along with a little table with pros and cons for each approach, just for consideration as well, but I might leave this with you here, and then I did give a version of this presentation to the Reef Fish AP, and they were able to comment on it, and they made some motions. Captain Walker -- I asked if he was okay with being in the hot seat at the break, and he told me that he was, and so I think it would be interesting for the council just to hear what the Reef Fish AP’s input was on this, if that’s okay.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Come on up, Ed.

MR. ED WALKER: For amberjack, the advisory panel actually liked the idea, the concept, of zone management. They stopped short of recommending it as a preferred at this time, but it was pretty well received, I think, as a concept. They did, as it says here on your document -- They were in favor of keeping the current direction that amberjack is now for some time, to provide some consistency, because there’s been so many changes so rapid fire here that the panel felt like let’s kind of leave it as-is for a little while and let it ride and let the fishermen adjust to it while looking at the possible zone management, and so they suggested -- I don’t know if there was a timeframe, but keep the current management for some time, I guess is what we said, while considering zone management during that time.

The AP did recommend that, if there were to be zones, we like the two-zone structure, east and west zone, and I think there’s already a line on the map of what would be a potential two-zone system. I think that’s about it. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Can you talk about why a two-zone versus three-zone?

MR. WALKER: I think the map of the three zones that we looked
at -- It looked kind of complicated, and it just seemed like -- I may be speaking for myself here, rather than the panel, but it seemed to just be a simpler solution just having an east and west, all of Florida on one side and the western Gulf on the other.

I know that there is this give-and-take back and forth between the fishermen in the western Gulf and over on the eastern Gulf on which side benefits from when the season is open, and there has always been this back-and-forth. If it’s open over here, these guys catch more of it.

If it’s open over here, these catch it, and there’s this back-and-forth, and I think that’s why the panel said that, in that situation before, in the commercial king mackerel, one was blowing out the quota, and the guys on the other side of the zone were not getting much, and that was the case in my region. We were almost eliminated from the fishery for fifteen years, because it was always being caught somewhere else, and that’s been somewhat solved with a zone management system, and so, if it’s a back-and-forth on who benefits the most, based on the season, we thought it be interesting to look at, potentially, a zone system that way.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Are there other questions for Ed, since he’s up there, and then we’ll back up to the presentation and question on that? Okay. Thank you. All right. Are there questions about the presentation? Ed.

MR. ED SWINDELL: Why is it that we just have data through 2008? Don’t we have more recent data than 2008?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: We do, and it’s in the document. The most recent data, those landings and things, will be in the actual document. The purpose of the presentation was just to give a sort of background of this is data where there wasn’t a lot of management measures, and this is what it sort of looked like when those weren’t in place, and so the idea being that you would have some historical reference without all of those management measures in place.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Anything else on the presentation? If not, should we go into the document itself?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: We can. We can start with the first action. It would be nice, I think, for the IPT to have a little feedback from the committee, and so think about that thought diagram, that sort of tree, and is zone management something the
committee is interested in pursuing or not? I think that would be a good place to start.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Susan.

MS. BOGGS: I don’t mind starting the conversation. I understand the concept of the zones, but I don’t think that solves the problem for what we’re facing with the Northern Zone, which is Alabama, Destin, and Panama City Beach. Those are the ones who have been the most vocal about the seasons. You’ve got Panama City Beach saying that we want May, and you’ve got Destin and Alabama saying that we want the fall, and so, in my opinion, the zones don’t solve the problem.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Chris.

MR. SCHIEBLE: I am more in favor of the zones also, but I would like to hear some comment, like Susan’s, regarding the three-zone split for Florida and Alabama and the impacts that would have, versus just the simple east-west split. We would be in favor of the simple east-west split, from the Louisiana standpoint, but I would like to hear some other comment.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: The practical difficulty that I see with the zones is because you have this time lag in the data collection, and you wouldn’t know if one zone went over until they were probably closed, and then it would have to come out of somewhere else, and I worry that it might create a kind of derby atmosphere with everyone, and I am not sure how to fix that, at the moment, other than setting the sub-quotas for each zone quite low, so that the chances of running over were low.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Roy, what you’re saying is, if one zone opened early, and they really blew the quota, it could affect whether the next zone even got to fish at all.

DR. CRABTREE: It could affect the last zone, which is sort of the dilemma we have now with the seasons. We could set seasonal sub-quotas. The trouble is, by the time we get the data, it’s already past.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Other thoughts? I guess, to your comment, Chris, or your question, we have, in Florida, heard that people on the Peninsula tend to fish at different times than the
northern Gulf, but certainly what Susan raised is an issue as well, and like it’s very -- Even within the Panhandle, there are some diverse views about when the prime time to fish would be, which, obviously, this would not necessarily address, and so I do put that out there, but all the points that have come around the table are valid at this point. Mara.

MS. LEVY: Well, I mean, I understand the zone concept, although it gets very complicated very fast, and, I mean, with respect to this document and what you want to do, it’s a threshold question, because, if we’re going to march down the zone management path, there are many more decision points, and so, to develop this document any further, you’re kind of going to need to make a decision yea or nay on that.

I mean, one option is, if, really, we’re still looking at wanting access in the fall and in May, is to sub-divide the current quota between those two seasons and then ask NMFS to project a closure date in advance.

Now, with the understanding that any projection is going to be extremely uncertain, given the data issues, that you don’t have a lot of fishing in those different times, and so, at least for the first number of years, you may not get exactly what you’re looking for, but, in that way, the fall wouldn’t just run until it was done and then you find out, after the fact, that the fall harvested all of the quota, potentially. I mean, it could still happen, but at least, if you’re projecting, you’re making a guess.

The other way to do that is with the actions that are already in there and shorten the fall season, shorten the May season, and just let them run, and so I guess, at this point, I think you really need to think hard about whether to go down this zone management thing or try to focus on the things you can do with the split seasons.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Bob.

DR. BOB SHIPP: I agree with Mara. I think the zone thing is just replete with complications, and we have had it with king mackerel, and it has worked some and not others, but I think what Mara suggested is the ultimate solution, and that is let NMFS project when the season would close in the fall and in May, and let’s see how it turns out. The more complicated it gets, the less likely we are to succeed, I think.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Mara.
MS. LEVY: The idea of splitting the quota means that you’re going to have to decide what season gets what amount of quota, and that would allow the projection. The other option that doesn’t require that upfront decision is shortening the fall, and potentially shortening the May, season and see how that works out, and so one is going to require an express allocation decision, and the other one would require adjusting what the season lengths are now.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I think that this is scheduled for an assessment in 2020, and I think this is a fishery that is seventy-something percent recreational, and so potentially the use of the FES survey data could have a large impact on this, and then I believe there’s been some other data — I think Benny Gallaway collected some estimates of abundance off of rigs and things, and so there’s potential for some changes in the assessment coming not too far down the road.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay, and so we’ve got a couple of decision points here. The first one is zones or no zones, and so I think the cleanest way to collectively make that decision would be through a motion. Then, if the committee is interested in entertaining this split quota idea, that is not in our document, and maybe we should go through what we have first in the document, but think about that. If we would want to entertain that, we would need a motion to add that to the document, and so I will just put that out there so that people can gather their thoughts. Do we want to walk through the document before we start making motions, or are you guys ready to talk about the zones more now? Susan.

MS. BOGGS: I am ready. I am going to make a motion to select Alternative 1, no action, do not establish recreational fishing zones. I can give some rationale if I get a second.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: It’s seconded by Dr. Shipp.

MS. BOGGS: My rationale comes straight from the Reef Fish AP. Given the frequent modifications to greater amberjack recreational management in the last ten years, they argue that keeping some consistency in management would produce more robust data, which could be used to better inform future stock assessments.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Is there any more discussion on
this? Sue.

MS. GERHART: Just a recommendation. This is basically an options paper right now, and, if you don’t want to do this, probably the better way would just be to put it to Considered but Rejected, rather than choosing no action. That would be easier on staff, actually. Thank you.

MS. BOGGS: I would like to modify my motion to -- Action 1, Establish Greater Amberjack Recreational Fishing Zone Quotas, to Considered but Rejected.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right, and so our new motion here is to move Action 1 to Considered by Rejected, and, again, this is the first time we’re really seeing this, but I think, as Sue mentioned, if we deal with this now, it’s going to be a lot easier to structure this document down the road, and it’s going to be easier for everybody, probably. All right. Is there other discussion on this? All right. Is there any opposition to this motion? The motion carries.

We will walk through the document, but just knowing that, at least for the time being, the zones are off the table, and so keep that in mind.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Okay. Yes, that’s fine. As the other actions are written, they were going to be Gulf-wide anyway, and so then this is not too different from what was presented in August, but it’s got a couple of new alternatives in it for consideration.

Action 2 is bag limit, and there was a motion made to include another alternative, and so that’s now in this document. It’s to allow one daily bag limit on multiday trips, for example, to change that, and that was the only thing that was sort of new.

Since there are so few multiday trips, the predicted reduction was very small for that consideration, and it would only be about a 2.7 percent reduction, because there’s just not very many multiday trips. There’s not very many multiday trips in general, and then there’s not very many multiday trips where they also harvest greater amberjack.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Questions or comments on Action 2? Ava.

DR. LASSETER: I apologize, but I do have some LETC recommendations. This is the one action that they looked at. They did not -- I did introduce the zone action to them, but, because you had not even looked at that yet, the council, they
did not discuss that action, and it was just kind of a heads-up.

The did discuss the bag limit action, and it was kind of an interesting discussion, first in terms of who would they cite and fine, should somebody be in violation, and that led to the feeling that it was a little more complicated to enforce this type of a bag limit, but it was enforceable, but they just thought that it was not ideal.

They did inquire if a vessel limit, rather than a fractional bag limit, could be a better way to reduce the bag limit, and I felt that that was something that this group had already discussed and considered, and, ultimately, they did pass a motion.

They felt that it is possible, but confusing, to enforce fractional bag limits. The LETC recommends Alternative 1 and that fractional bag limits not be adopted unless the council feels the fractional bag limit would substantially increase angler opportunity. That essentially means that we don’t like it so much, and it’s going to be tough, but, if you’re having reasons that you really need to go forward with this, we understand, and we will enforce it. Thank you.


MR. DIAZ: I just -- When I read through this, I think I could support fractional bag limits if there was something really substantial to gain, but, when I read the Table 2.2.2, if you did one fish per two anglers, the reduction is 9.5 percent, and that’s a pretty small reduction. Anyway, I just wanted to go on the record and say that, based on the low amount of reduction that you get for such a drastic measure, I would not be in support of it at this time.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Moving down to Action 3, and my apologies for the typo. It’s on there twice, but, if you look at the first alternative and the second alternative versions, the no action would be not to modify the current August start for the fishing year, and Alternative 2 would be to return to the calendar year of January 1 through December 31.


MR. SCHIEBLE: I guess, using the same philosophy that we have in Action 1, if we’re not really in the position to be trying to make management changes under the current regime, until we maybe do get a stock assessment, and we at least see how the course of
action plays out with the changes that we have made, I would like to make a motion that we also consider but reject this. It doesn’t make sense.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right, and so let’s get that motion on the board. While that’s happening, is there a second to this motion? Seconded by Susan. The motion is to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. Is there any discussion on this motion? Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Then Action 4 is the modification to the fixed closed seasons. There is an additional Alternative 5 that was input to the document, which would have the closure be from October 1 to April 30 and May 21 to June 30, and so it would be open May 1 to May 20 and then open July 1 to September 30, and so that was also considered in the tables below. Table 2.4.1 sort of illustrates what that might look like, depending on -- I guess, if we’re going to just be looking at that top part of the table, 2.4.1. Just that top half is what we would be looking at.

To sort of get an idea, the white squares would be open for harvest, and the black is when it would be closed, and that gray sort of shaded area for May means sort of a partial harvest for the beginning of May, and so that’s what it would look like.

Then there’s a series of tables for each one of these alternatives, and then, depending on the different bag limits that would go through for your consideration. I believe, in the same time, the last time we showed this document, generally, the only time you would have predicted a complete open season is in the period when, I believe, August would be added to that sort of summer closure. That is the only combination that generated sort of a full year of harvest.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Are there questions on this action and the tables that Dr. Hollensead has here? Paul.

DR. PAUL MICKLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to comment that I really am glad that this has made the agenda. It seems like, when amberjack comes up, we’re always on the other side of the Gulf, and so I just look forward to some comments on the seasonality here, or with Action 4. That’s all I have for now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Chris.
MR. SCHIEBLE: I guess just an observation. Looking at the landings data that we received earlier, most of the state snapper seasons are closed by the time we get to October. If anything, they’re open for maybe one or two weekends in there to finish out the quota, and it would seem to make sense that, if we are fishing for snapper at the same time, we would have less discards, probably, during snapper season than we would outside of the snapper season, and maybe I’m wrong with that, but it’s just an observation.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Thank you, Chris, for bringing that up. That’s one of those socioeconomic things. When I went through the presentation, looking at landings, that’s one of those intangibles that is not captured, necessarily, in just looking at greater amberjack, and it’s really good to get input from folks, looking forward, and I would reiterate that.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Anything else on Action 4 for the time being? That is the last action that is in this document now. If the committee wants to do split quotas or something like that, we would need a motion to add actions along those lines. I will just pause there for a minute, in case anybody wants to do that. Bob.

DR. SHIPP: I don’t have the verbiage, but I think the sense of the committee, which is the whole council, is that we explore the split season idea the way that Mara described it, and so, if staff can generate some verbiage to that effect, I would certainly make that motion. Do you want me to try?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Sure. It will be a team effort, but we’ll help.

DR. SHIPP: Okay. I move that, for the recreational management of amberjack in the Gulf of Mexico that we consider a split season based on projections by the National Marine Fisheries Service designed to guarantee access to the stocks from both east and west portions of the Gulf.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Phil, are you going to help us here?

MR. DYSKOW: Dr. Shipp, I would second your motion if we would substitute “designed to maximize”, as opposed to “guarantee”, or “facilitate access”, and how about “facilitate”, because I don’t think there are any guarantees in this.

DR. SHIPP: I am not sure that I will accept that. No, that’s fine with me, Mr. Dyskow.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Sue, bail us out here.

MS. GERHART: Just a little clarification. We already have split seasons, and so I think what you mean is a split quota between seasons, and is that correct?

DR. SHIPP: You’re right, and so, yes, let’s change that to quota.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: You already have access in the east and the west. Both people in the east and the west fish in the fall season and the spring season. This is just really about preferences as to when people would prefer to fish, but it’s not like in the fall season no one from the eastern Gulf is fishing, because they are.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Just as a reminder, when we developed the split season document, the council considered sort of 60/40 and 70/30, and I believe, using the decision tool at the time, the season that we had was approximately the 70/30 range, and that was close to it.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I am trying to think how to -- Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Instead of access for the east and the west, should it be access for the spring and the fall?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I think yes, but I’m looking at Dr. Shipp.

DR. SHIPP: I think Dale is correct that it is a fall and spring issue. It goes back to what Roy mentioned as well.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: So it would be based on NMFS projections designed to facilitate access to the stock in spring and fall. Okay. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: But it’s not a split quota between the east and the west, right? It’s a split quota between the fall and the spring, and so I think the east-west needs to -- If I’m understanding it.

DR. SHIPP: I think that’s correct. I mean, this is what you go through when you start from scratch, and so maybe we’ll get it
refined here, but I think everybody knows the intent, and, if we
can verbalize it to address the intent, I think that’s the way
to go.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right, and so let me read this motion one
more time, and then I see you, Ed, with your hand up. For
recreational management of greater amberjack in the Gulf of
Mexico, consider a split quota between seasons in the Gulf of
Mexico based on NMFS projections designed to facilitate access
to the stock in spring and fall. I think I need a second to
this motion still.

MR. DYSKOW: I seconded it.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Never mind. Phil seconded it. Okay. Ed, go
ahead.

MR. SWINDELL: I guess I’m sitting here looking to -- I thought
we were working with Action 4, and this has nothing to do with
Action 4, and is that correct?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: This is potentially to add a new action. If
you have something on Action 4, we can back up to that, but
let’s dispense with this motion first, since this motion is now
on the table. Mara.

MS. LEVY: Right, and so, even though it doesn’t say it, and I
don’t think we need to change it, I read this as add a new
action to the current document that looks at allocating the
quota between the fall and spring seasons.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I think that’s where we’re at at this point,
and I think staff understands that, and so, even though the
words may not be perfect, this is hopefully where we all are, or
at least we understand what that means. Okay. Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Then, as further clarification to that, will staff
bring back kind of a range of options that would start August 1
to whenever days that would be, a September 1 start in the fall,
and then, likewise, an April 1 start, and a May start, to see
how many days that would be, and is that what staff is going to
be doing?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: Dr. Froeschke can bail me out if I misinterpret
this, but I believe it would be starting with August 1 and then
a range of 70/30 sort of split out, but that’s, I believe, when
it would start, and that’s what the analysis would entail.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Are there any other questions or discussion on this motion? Ed.

MR. SWINDELL: Well, since we’re going to consider a split quota, what quotas are we considering?

DR. HOLLENSEAD: We could return with a range. I don’t know if, potentially, the committee wants to give any direction on that, but I think it would sort of depend on what the data says, and then sort of give ranges from there, and I think that would be appropriate, but I’m certainly willing to look at any direction that the committee is interested in looking at, for sure.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Tom.

DR. FRAZER: John, do you have any thoughts on this?

DR. FROESCHKE: The last time we did this, we looked at 60/40 and 70/30. I think the historical data that we used at that time -- If I recall, it was around 65 percent of the landings were in the fall and 35 in the spring, and so that’s the way the season -- I think the season was originally done that way because you have the longer season in the fall, which was supposed to catch the majority of it.

If we were to do it again, we could update it, but, if you were to use this most current season, which all of the harvest was in the fall, because there wasn’t a May season, that wouldn’t really be a fair comparison.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: This is one that would be really sensitive to using the FES data, because the FES data is all in the eastern Gulf, and so presumably the eastern Gulf catches are actually -- I would guess they’re going to turn out to be quite a bit higher, but the western Gulf catches, because it’s Texas Parks and Wildlife and LA Creel, likely wouldn’t change.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Is there anything else on this motion? Susan.

MS. BOGGS: Well, we’ve been having discussions that we have a stock assessment coming next year, and is this not a little premature, because, when we get new stock assessments -- I mean, will we have to start over again? I guess it would just shift the numbers, but I am just wondering if this is just a little premature.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: So what is the timeline for the next amberjack assessment?

DR. CLAY PORCH: I think, right now, it’s scheduled to be available to the council in September of 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS: I believe it’s scheduled for early 2021. Ryan, can you check?

MR. RYAN RINDONE: It begins in 2020, and it will be delivered in mid-2021. Then the SSC will have to review it, and then it will come in front of you guys, et cetera, et cetera.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I have Leann and then Dr. Shipp.

MS. BOSARGE: Sort of related, but not, if we’re talking about the stock assessment, and, Dr. Crabtree, it piggybacks on what you just said about FES in the eastern Gulf, and so are we working on a calculation that will convert, I guess, LA Creel to FES or convert FES to LA Creel, and the same thing for the Texas landings? I would assume, when you put it in the stock assessment, it’s all got to be in the same currency, and so are we working on that?

DR. CRABTREE: I think Richard Cody would be the best one to answer that.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Come on up, Richard.

DR. RICHARD CODY: We have received a calibration from Louisiana, and it’s under review right now, and the consultants have basically finished their review of it, and so it should be available by then.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Go ahead, Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: But nothing in the works for Texas landings?

DR. CODY: No.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Is it to that point, Leann? Okay. Then go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: So, to that point, at some point, are we determining what’s the best science available, or are we just
going to have FES numbers over here, and we’re going to have state survey numbers over here, and which one are we converting everything to? What are we trying to go to? This is going to be the same thing when you get into red snapper. Are we going to try to convert all the states into FES, or have we decided that theirs is the best science available and we need to go to those, since that’s what we’re managing in?

DR. CRABTREE: At the moment, LA Creel is the only estimate of catches available in Louisiana, and so it’s certainly the best catch estimates available. I think it’s open as to whether -- You know, we have different surveys that are giving us different estimates, and, so far, the focus has been on statistical review of both the FES and the state surveys, to make sure they are statistically valid, and then to understand how they calibrate with each other, so you can reconstruct the historical timeline, and then I believe there are plans, down the road, to hold workshops with the states to explore why we may be seeing some of the difference in the magnitude of the estimates, and, if we could figure out whether there is a bias somewhere in all of this, we would certainly take steps to correct that, but that’s, I think, down the road. Is that fair enough, Richard?

DR. CODY: I think that’s accurate. One thing I would add is that, for the state surveys, at least for red snapper anyway, the idea was to go to -- We presented an options paper, a white paper, of which standard we would use going forward for the assessments, and, right now, we’re in a position where we have the management -- We have the state surveys available to make management decisions, but they’re not at a point where you can use them in a stock assessment, because we don’t have the calibrations ready. The idea is to have those ready fairly soon, but those were the options that were laid out in the white paper that we presented earlier this year.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: One last, but we are getting dangerously into tomorrow’s SEDAR agenda item, and so --

MS. BOSARGE: Well, I would just -- I really hope, for amberjack specifically, that we can have those calibrations before we get into the stock assessment, so that hopefully the stock assessment will be translatable into the units that we’re actually managing in.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin, real quick.

MR. ANSON: We can cover this tomorrow, if, Richard, you’re planning to be here tomorrow as well, but my question would be
relative to the timeline for when it would be available, the
consultant review of those ratios of the red snapper numbers
particularly, but we can deal with that -- If that’s going to be
brought up tomorrow, we can do that. Thank you.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Regarding greater amberjack, I
think, in the terms of reference -- The SSC discussed this, and
we brought it up, and it is an item in the terms of reference, I
believe, to look at.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Okay. Any other questions for Richard relative
to greater amberjack and this motion? Great. Perfect. Thanks,
Richard. Okay. Back to the motion. I had Dr. Shipp on my
list.

DR. SHIPP: It seems to me that this is still a viable method to
pursue, regardless of the change in numbers and the various
results of the stock assessment. We’re still going to have to
deal with the problems between the east and west, and so I
continue to support the motion.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Anything else on this motion? If
not, we’re going to vote. Is there any opposition to this
motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. Ed.

MR. SWINDELL: When I go to Action 4, and I would like to make a
motion to consider but rejected Action 4.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right, and so I think we’ve got Ed’s motion
on the board, which is to move Action 4 to Considered but
Rejected. Action 4 is the modification of the greater amberjack
recreational fixed closed season, and I’m not going to read all
of those options or the alternatives there, but, essentially,
it’s just changing some of those dates around. If there’s a
second to this motion -- Seconded by Susan. Any discussion from
the committee? Otherwise, I’m going to ask Dr. Hollensead to
talk for a second.

MR. SWINDELL: Let me explain the motion a little bit. We have
had this for only a short time, and we haven’t even gone through
the last half of this whole thing that we set up last year, or
this year, whenever we set it up, and so I would like to see it
at least play out, and let’s see what happens. You’re going to
do some quotas, evidently, for the split time that is available,
but I would rather see it go the way that even I think the
advisory panel recommended that we do, to stay with the status
quo. Thank you.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Paul.

DR. MICKLE: Has it been seconded yet?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Yes, it has been seconded.

DR. MICKLE: I would ask Ed if you would consider, just for discussion’s sake only -- Alternative 1 accomplishes what you just said, and so no action, and it keeps it in the document and let’s us play around with it and move forward, and so I just wonder -- I am probably not going to support the motion, but I would support Alternative 1, which is, of course, no action.

MR. SWINDELL: Yes.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Well, having this motion in here was the reason why I asked the question about the time, when it would start, and so, if you have already determined that you’re just going to use the August 1 as the start date for the new action that we just put in, then I support Ed’s motion, because this just kind of muddies the water. If not, you have to go and do the calculations to determine the season length based on the various alternatives here, and so, if you keep it in, then I see that you would have to expand all of the iterations for season start or what the season days would be based on these seasons, to make them tie together.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Unless I am missing something, I am going to oppose the motion on the board. Public comment that we got from a lot of people in the eastern Gulf is they want to try to figure out a way where they can have that spring season, and we haven’t developed Dr. Shipp’s motion yet, and so I don’t know what that’s going to look like. This is an avenue that might could get us there, and so, for the time being, I would like to see it stay in the document.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Mara.

MS. LEVY: Well, not necessarily just to this motion, but kind of to Kevin’s point, I think, if you keep this in the document, that’s fine, because it’s sort of an alternative way to deal with it, but then I think maybe talk about, at some point, whether that new split quota thing -- If you want to consider different season dates, or are you just looking at the split
 quotation for an August -- Like, the way the seasons are now, and  
we’re going to look at split quotas for the way the seasons are  
structured now and see how to get the most days within those  
seasons, or how you want to allocate, or do you really want to  
look at split quotas for all of these different variations of  
seasons, because I sort of see them as both addressing the same  
issue, but in different ways, and so maybe you don’t necessarily  
want to look at split quotas for all these different things, but  
I think it would be something that it would be helpful for you  
to tell staff.

DR. HOLLENSEAD: If I may, certainly looking at all the  
combinations would be something that would take staff a little  
while, but I might suggest just -- You would have that  
information available. If it was still in the document, that  
would be something that you could at least consider. If you  
decide to go with Alternative 1, you still could, without having  
any change. Doing this would allow you just a little bit more  
information to inform your decision, I would think, and, if Sue  
and Mara want to chime in on that, with whether or not that’s a  
good idea, but I think that would be okay.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I am going to let Susan go first.

MS. BOGGS: What is the timeline on this document, now that  
we’ve added this new action, because I know everybody is wanting  
something before the council so that it will be effective next  
year, which, obviously, it’s not going to be, and so what is the  
timeline that we might be looking at going forward with this new  
action that we’ve added?

MS. GERHART: Our general timeline for getting rulemaking done  
has been six to eight months, and so that’s after the council  
takes final action, and so, if you were to take final action in  
January, then that’s a possibility. After January, not so much,  
and so, relative to what you’re talking about here, if you want  
to consider both of these actions in conjunction with each  
other, then that is a whole lot of work that may not be able to  
get done by January. If you consider them separately, as an  
either/or type of deal, either you change the seasons or you do  
a split quota, then that’s easier for us to analyze, and it’s  
possible for January.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Paul.

DR. MICKLE: To that point, I would just suggest that -- I don’t  
think we’re in a hurry. It seems like the AP was very vocal in  
saying that they want this to lay out and have the data behind
the changes we’ve done, and we all forget that we had a size
change that didn’t work, and we did a season change, a calendar
date versus year date, and we don’t know if that works yet, but
it’s kind of looking like it doesn’t work, and so I would use
what was said by Sue to keep this in the document and keep them
separate, and let’s take our time. Am I missing something of a
big hurry here? I don’t know. I’m asking the group.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Tom.

DR. FRAZER: I don’t think we’re in a rush to do this at this
point, and so I guess my suggestion might be that we work on the
revised document and, if possible, bring a revised document back
in January, and, if it’s not complete, if the analysis is more
complicated, then we’ll look at it in April.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Is there any more discussion on
this motion? It sounds like we might need to do this one by a
show of hands, if there’s no more discussion. How about all of
those in favor of the motion, please raise your hand. If you’re
in favor, that means it’s going to Considered but Rejected, just
to clarify; all those opposed. The motion fails three to ten.

All right. Just to recap where we are with this document, I
think we kept Action 2, and we kept Action 4, and we have added
a new action, essentially, to consider the split quota. Is
there any other discussion on amberjack right now?

DR. FRAZER: Okay, and so we’re at a convenient breaking point,
and we’re going to need all of that time, and so we were
scheduled to come back at two o’clock, and we’ll come back at
quarter to two.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on October 22, 2019.)

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October 22, 2019

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
Management Council reconvened at the Tremont House, Galveston,
Texas, Tuesday afternoon, October 22, 2019, and was called to
order by Chairman Martha Guyas.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Continuing on our theme of easy, straightforward issues, we will do the red grouper assessment. I think Dr. Sagarese is going to take us through the assessment.

STOCK ASSESSMENT REVIEW: SEDAR 61 - GULF OF MEXICO RED GROPER
STOCK ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION

DR. SKYLER SAGARESE: Thanks, everybody, for coming back after lunch. I hope you all enjoyed it, and I hope you’re all very excited to go through the results of the SEDAR 61 red grouper stock assessment for the Gulf of Mexico.

I am going to start off just giving you sort of a thousand-foot view of the data inputs that went into the assessment, and I’m mostly going to focus on some of the major changes to the data inputs that were made from the last assessment, which was SEDAR 42, and that was conducted a few years ago.

I am going to go through some of the results from the model, but I am going to focus most of this discussion on the projections and some of the information that we looked at to try to get at how that 2018 red tide might have affected red grouper, and, with that, I’m also going to touch on quite a bit of stakeholder input that we received throughout the assessment process, to help us get a handle on where we think the stock was after this assessment.

One thing to note is that the terminal year for this assessment was 2017, and the severe red tide hit in 2018, and so, for this assessment, all of the data inputs were updated through 2017, and then we had the situation where 2018 occurred, and we knew there was an issue, but we didn’t have all of the inputs, and I will sort of talk about that a little later.

As we all know, the 2018 red tide was all over the news, and it was all over Facebook. In this bottom-right figure, thanks to Ed Walker, I’m just showing pictures of red grouper that were observed in fish kills, and so, overall, we’ll go through this and kind of tell the story of what we think happened with that red tide and how it feeds into this assessment.

On this figure on the right, there’s a lot going on, and there’s a lot of different colors. Essentially, this is just summarizing a time series for each of the different data components that we have in this assessment model, and so we’ve got landings from the commercial fisheries and from the recreational fisheries, and the one thing to note here is this assessment is the guinea pig for the Gulf, and it’s the first
one where we are using MRIP FES estimates of landings and
discards, and so it’s the first assessment where we have this
issue now that everything is in the MRIP FES units for the Gulf.

In this case, we have got abundance indices from a variety of
sources. From the commercial indices, we have catch per unit
indices that, in this assessment, are truncated in 2009, because
of the IFQ. At this time, for this assessment, we were not able
to update those indices throughout, and that analysis still
remains a research recommendation from this assessment, and that
is something that we certainly value the importance of the
commercial data and we’ll be looking at in the future on the
scamp assessment, on how to go about developing indices from the
commercial information and potentially exploring the utility of
observer data as well.

This red grouper assessment, we also have fishery-independent
surveys from the NMFS bottom longline survey that’s run that
covers the majority of the adult red grouper habitat, and the
SEAMAP groundfish survey, which covers younger juvenile red
grouper, primarily ages two to four, and then we’ve got a
combined video survey, and so this red grouper assessment is one
of the first assessments that combines the video data from three
data sources, the FWRI, Panama City, and the SEAMAP reef fish
survey. All of the information is combined, and there’s been a
lot of updating to the methodology to develop a single combined
index for the video.

We also have, with this assessment, a new case of data that was
provided is from the FWRI hook-and-line survey, and that’s been
funded by the NFWF work, and so, for that, we have an index of
abundance as well as length composition. For the red grouper
assessment, we also have, in the model, length compositions from
the discard data for the commercial fisheries as well as the
recreational fisheries.

I just want to highlight the importance of this discard length
information, because it gives us a really good understanding of
what sizes are being discarded and what sizes are being kept
over time. That’s really important for us to see, how different
management decisions may be impacting what’s being caught, and
so those data sources are very valuable. We also have length
composition from the various surveys.

For this assessment, we have age composition from all of the
fisheries in the assessment, and so we’re able to track how the
cohorts are changing over time, and we can see strong pulses
throughout each of the fisheries and the assessment, and,
lastly, we have discard estimates that are going into the 
analysis in commercial and recreational fisheries.

The first major update, as I mentioned earlier, was the 
treatment of the recreational data. For this assessment, all of 
the recreational data we used was from MRIP FES, and that 
includes the discards and the landings. As many of you noted, 
looking through the report, those estimates are substantially 
higher than what was produced with SEDAR 42, but, for this 
assessment, we’re following the Option 1a in the white paper, 
treating that time series throughout the whole time period of 
MRIP FES-calibrated estimates.

We also had quite a bit of work done from our Fisheries 
Statistics at the Science Center, looking at how to calculate 
the commercial discards, and that was one of the major issues 
with the last assessment, and there were concerns that those 
discard estimates were too high, and the model previously was 
having a hard time capturing those changes in discards.

Then there has been a lot of work done, and the commercial 
discards -- There was some analysis to look at how we would 
define effort for calculating the discards. After all the work 
has been conducted by the Science Center, those estimates have 
become much lower in the current assessment, and we have seen 
much better fits within the model to that data that has gone in, 
and so two major improvements to the methodology, the rec data 
as well as commercial discards.

DR. MICKLE: I am sorry to interrupt, but is it all right to ask 
a real quick question, because we’re on it? How did the Science 
Center actually delve into quantifying the reduction for effort, 
effort specifically?

DR. SAGARESE: What they did was they wanted to look at -- 
Across the logbook and the observer data, they wanted to look at 
the variable that was used to quantify effort, and so, in each 
of the datasets, they looked to match, whether it was number of 
trips or whether it was number of fishing days, to determine 
which effort metric would be unbiased, and then they used that 
effort metric to calculate the discards, and in the assessment -
- There is a working paper that details the methodology, but 
they basically back-calculated the landings and compared them to 
what the logbook landings showed.

There was some good agreement there, but, for the longline, they 
found that the effort metric that produced the most unbiased 
measure was the number of sets, and then, for the vertical line
gear, it was the number of fishing days, but there was a lot of work that went into just trying to make sure.

One of the hypotheses with the last assessment was that it was just a -- The data was being interpreted differently, and so we were overestimating how long the trips may have been, as opposed to what was done, and so that was a big modification for this assessment.

The next couple of slides are just kind of an overview of the major results coming out of the model. On the left-hand side, over time -- One big difference to notice here is the SEDAR 61 assessment model starts in 1986, and the model that was ultimately used for management advice with SEDAR 42 started in 1993, and so, in this case, on the figure on the left is total biomass in metric tons of red grouper. On the right, it’s just the trend in spawning stock biomass with confidence intervals on that right-hand side.

In the left-hand side, let’s talk about the total biomass. The red line is the result from SEDAR 61, and the blue line is the result from SEDAR 42. There is a dot at the beginning of each time series which represents essentially the initial biomass, and so, because with this red grouper assessment we’re not starting way back in time, and we’re not starting in an unfished state, within the assessment, we have to set sort of an initial starting point, an initial condition, of where we think the stock is.

For these assessments, we generally use an average catch at the beginning of the time series to give us that initial point, and then the model estimates the trend thereafter.

One thing that I want to point out here, and we detail in the report is, during the review of the SEDAR 42 assessment model, there was a lot of requests made by the review panel at that workshop that made some major modifications to that assessment, including changing the start year as well as combining the two recreational fleets at the time into a single fleet, and a lot of data inputs had to be reprocessed, including these initial catch estimates.

What we found, when we had all of this time to thoroughly review and vet everything that was done, is that there was a computational error in how those initial catches -- How that initial condition was being set up, and so, when you look at that figure on the left, what you see is that blue line is that SEDAR 42 result, and so you can see how much higher the stock
biomass was over time, and, when you look at that initial starting point, it was starting at a much higher position than where it really should have been.

The take-home is that final model that was used for management advice thought that there was a much larger population of red grouper out there, and that is largely the reason why that OFL at the time essentially doubled, to about fifteen million pounds, and, at the time, given the information that was reviewed at that assessment, it was thought that -- For example, the commercial discards, one of the hypotheses was that there had to be that much biomass to support all of those discarded fish, and there was some anecdotal information from fishermen at the time that they were discarding red grouper.

The one thing to highlight here it’s really hard now to really compare the old model with the new model. The first modification we made was correcting that initial catch condition, which substantially led to a major change in what was going on with the stock, but both of the models picked up the trend, the declining trend, in 2005 from the red tide, and, in the more recent assessment, they picked up the decline in 2014.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Go ahead, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I have been going through this, and it is very hard to kind of tell what the changes we made in 61 -- What is driving the model, because we really don’t have 42 to compare to. How hard is it to go back to 42 and change that initial parameter on biomass and get what the blue line would have been for 42? Not updating it with all of our new stuff, but just take the old 42 and change that initial parameter, and I’m sure it’s not as easy as hitting “start”, but I would like to see what the blue line would have really looked like. It helps me understand where we’re at now.

DR. SAGARESE: During the process, we did prepare a lot of analyses such as that. What I can tell you is that it does drag that trend down, essentially where the SEDAR 61 estimate is, the time series. It’s very similar. Now, for the continuity that we did for SEDAR 61, although this doesn’t address your question about keeping everything similar, but that one change makes a huge difference in the model, but we do have that information, and it hasn’t been shown to the SSC, but, if you wanted to just see the SEDAR 42 model with that correction, we have that information prepared.

MS. BOSARGE: Yes, I would love to see that, and it doesn’t have
to be today, but I would like -- That really helps me understand where we were then versus where we are now, as far as the health of the stock.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Yes, I would be interested in seeing that too, and I’m just wondering as to -- You know, we had set up management based upon the higher level, and so we had those higher landings then, and I’m just curious maybe, if it could be done, or if there could be some discussion at the SSC as to whether or not we ended up -- The timing of it with a red tide also could have timed up with a recruitment failure, due to overfishing. I mean, that would be something that would be interesting to see too, to see whether or not that could be teased out as well. If we had landings that essentially were twice as much as we should have been doing, what would that have done to recruitment and such, and so that would be just something curious that I would be interested in seeing.

DR. SAGARESE: One thing to point out with the recent landings -- I mean, I know the landings are just getting lower each year, but, since that change was made, the landings really haven’t exceeded or gotten anywhere near that OFL, and so it’s almost been an unregulated fishery at this point, because they could have caught as much as possible, and then it’s slowly starting to trail off, and so there’s a lot of moving pieces here. Are there any other --

DR. FROESCHKE: Skyler, we’re having some technical difficulties here with the slide, and so just give us a second, and we’ll get it going.

DR. SAGARESE: Okay. That’s actually a timely question, because recruitment is next.

MS. BOSARGE: While we have a second, Martha, if it’s okay -- So that one computational error, that kind of explains why, when we got that last stock assessment, we were getting these huge increases in ABC out of it, and that came to the council, and we had the ability there in front of us to raise quotas across-the-board, and it didn’t really match up with what our fishermen were telling us at that time, or at least on the commercial sector at that time. They were saying, no, don’t do this and this stock is not in a good place, and so now we know why, and so that’s great. Thank you.

DR. SAGARESE: You are 100 percent correct. Essentially, there
was a lot of folks saying we couldn’t even catch this, and so, with perfect hindsight and lots of time to reevaluate things, that’s what ended up happening, but even -- So one thing just to highlight is it didn’t have an issue, and we didn’t catch the fifteen million pounds, but that change certainly affected the market, and it certainly affected how the fishery is operating and how the quotas and such -- So it’s one of those things that we’re very grateful that we caught it, but just to caution that having that much work to do overnight, when you’re already exhausted from the whole day, it was just an unfortunate timing of not having enough time to thoroughly vet and diagnose the model at that time. Are there any other questions while we’re waiting?

DR. FRAZER: We’re going to take a five-minute break.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

(There is a break in the audio recording.)

DR. SAGARESE: The red tide event at that time that was incorporated for 2005 -- In the current assessment, we also included the 2014 red tide event, and so, when we had all of the data in the model, we were able to estimate the magnitude of the mortality from the red tide on red grouper, and this is where we have an issue, in terms of projections, because we don’t have all of that data available to really quantify what effect the 2018 red tide had on the stock, but we’ll get there in a few moments.

One thing to note here also is, in the most recent years, the fishing rates are much lower than throughout the time series, and so, recently, as it follows what’s being seen in the fishery and the landings, current fishing mortality is lower, and, in this case, the red tide is really a major player within this assessment.

Again, the first thing I want to highlight is this is a really unique situation, and, in the current assessment, our terminal year was 2017, and so the stock status that comes out of this assessment is what was the status of red grouper at the end of 2017.

Based on the information within the model, currently, using the newest definition of the minimum stock size threshold, the stock is not overfished, and the stock is not undergoing overfishing. The only thing to caution here though is, again, this is before the big red tide in 2018 really roared up and kind of had a major impact, and so, at that time -- This plot is a Kobe plot.
On the left-hand side, it’s just showing the ratio of the fishing mortality rate to the F 30 percent SPR. For red grouper, we used the 30 percent SPR proxy as an MSY proxy within this assessment, and so what you’re seeing in this figure is, basically, there is -- On the X-axis, it’s the ratio of the spawning stock biomass to the spawning stock biomass at that 30 percent SPR.

What we’re seeing is that thick vertical line is essentially the target, and so we would want to be at SSB 30 percent SPR. That’s the target we’re going for. Then you see that the red circle is essentially in between two lines, and so the line to the left is our minimum stock size threshold, which we’re above, but we’re below the target, and so we’re kind of in the middle, meaning that, given these definitions, the stock is not in bad shape. However, we are not where we want to be.

We’re not above the target, and another thing, just to note, is that, just for continuity’s sake, we did determine the stock status using the old definition of minimum stock size threshold, which was one minus M times the BMSY proxy. By that definition, the stock would be considered overfished, if that older definition was still in play today, and so it really -- That decision about what’s the status depends on that decision that’s been made by the council, and so, again, things are really not rosy, but what we’re not seeing is things in really dire shape, but, again, just to caution that’s because we have not looked into that 2018 red tide yet, and that’s where the projections become really important.

For the projections for red grouper, the first thing to caution is the projections that we run are really based on a number of assumptions. For this assessment, we’re assuming that recruitment will be similar to recent years, and so, for 2010 to 2017, we’re assuming an average recruitment over that period. We are assuming that is constant, and we’re assuming constant selectivity and constant retention, and so we’re assuming the fishery is going to operate as-is.

In terms of the allocations, we are still using the 76 percent commercial to the 24 percent recreational. That is what is currently on the books, and so the projections are based on all of these assumptions. One thing to note here is the terminal year for our assessment was 2017.

The first year of our projection isn’t until 2020, and so what we end up doing in that projection is, for 2018, we put in the
final landings that were provided, and, for 2019, we have to make an assumption about what the removals would have been, and so, for this iteration of what you’re going to see, we assumed that in 2019 that the ACL that was just put into place with the emergency rule would be removed, and so we’re assuming -- We’re putting in the actual landings for 2018, and we’re assuming that 2019 ACL will be removed, and then the first year of our projection is 2020.

This is one of those assumptions, and, if anyone is curious, I did also do the projections assuming the 2019 landings would be similar to 2018 landings, because they are much lower, and they’re not even up to the ACL, but the results are very similar, and so that’s something that we did plan, just to make sure that we had our bases covered.

Just one thing to note here is that, within the assessment models, we put in the landings for commercial fisheries by weights and then, for the recreational landings, we put in the numbers of fish and then let the model estimate the weight, and so, in this figure, we assumed that the recreational landings would remain consistent from 2018 to 2019 for the projection’s sake.

As I mentioned earlier, we were sort of in this position, and we had the assessment model, and we got the stock status in 2017, and we knew that the 2018 red tide likely had an impact on the stock, but we just didn’t have the information or data to quantify exactly how bad that effect was, and so one of the things that was provided at the data and assessment workshop was the Gulf Council’s Something’s Fishing with red grouper online tool, where they put out a bunch of questions to get feedback from various stakeholders, mostly private fishermen, but also commercial and for-hire, and basically it just said give us your observations and what weird things are you seeing with red grouper, and are you seeing them in the red tides, and are you discarding red grouper?

This kind of information was really helpful for us to kind of get an idea of almost a litmus test of what the fishermen are seeing and what recreational divers are seeing and this whole sort of sense of what’s going on, because we didn’t have the quantitative data from the fishery-independent surveys and such to give us an idea.

The figure on the right was developed from the results that were presented, and so, on the top panel, it’s just showing the makeup of the survey was primarily private fishermen, and the
figure, the second from the top, is just showing their distribution by area, and so by shrimp grid zone in the figure on the top right. Most of the survey is coming from 4 to 6, and so off of central Florida.

The second from the bottom is showing the distribution of those observations of who saw red grouper in red tide fish kills, again primarily within that central Florida area, and then the figure at the bottom -- I think it’s really important to highlight that, for the majority of the respondents, they were essentially saying there is major issues with the red grouper stock, whether that was that they’re not able to catch them or that they don’t think they have recovered from the 2014 red tide, but there were also some fishermen and divers and such and stakeholders that said, you know what, we’re seeing some positive signs.

For example, we’re seeing lots of sub-legal red grouper, and we’re catching lots of shorts, and so it’s going to be good in a couple of years, once they grow up, and so some of the key messages from the survey are just that, essentially, red grouper are going deeper than they used to and that there is some positive trends, in terms of recruitment, and I keep hearing that from many different people, which is encouraging, considering the current status.

Also, just sort of a snippet of some of the major ecosystem or environmental effects that may be out there. For example, the predation, which we heard yesterday, how that’s becoming a major issue that seems to be increasing, or other issues, such as the hurricanes, that they tend to move, and so it was just really -- From my perspective, for red grouper, I think it was really great to have that information and to be able to summarize what is being seen out there and then be able to have that help us sort of figure out how to treat 2018.

Building on that as well, we were very lucky with this assessment -- Well, I should say it was an unlucky time with the 2018 red tide. However, the Science Center ended up getting some funds that helped us sort of spread out and go to local areas in southwest Florida, where we started, and do some local ecological knowledge surveys, and so, essentially, go to a place and have a one-on-one with fishermen and just sort of pick their brain and start from when they started fishing and describe how it was back then, what red tides do they remember, and sort of work our way up.

What species did they observe, how bad did they think it was at
the time, and so to just sort of develop some sort -- We’re hoping, overall, at the end of this project, to be able to have a timeline of when these major events occurred back past the time series we have for satellite data, and so back in the 1970s and 1980s and such, just to be able to give us an idea that these events have been occurring over long periods of time, but there do seem to be some commonalities that we’ve seen with these interviews.

In this figure, it’s just an idea of giving you an idea, and so each of the columns is when an interviewee essentially identified a red tide, and so the left-most column is just historical red tides prior to 2003. There were a lot of folks from the different counties that remembered various events, and maybe they didn’t remember the exact year, but they had an idea of that, and so that was really helpful.

For the purpose of this assessment, and, if you’re interested in this topic, we do have a working paper that goes into much more detail about this evaluation, and it’s still ongoing. We’re still moving our way up the coast to talk about some of these issues as well, up in the Panhandle, but, basically, what we’ve come to see is that, many of the interviews that we conducted, that 2018 really tended to be an event that seems to be more severe than what was seen in the past.

Granted, it’s the most recent, and so there may be some recent bias there, but we’ve been doing some work that suggests that there is just some alarming trends that we are seeing, and so, for example, that figure on the left is just showing -- Again, each of the columns represents a red tide year, and so prior to 2003, and then, as you move to the right, it becomes the most recent event.

The ends at the top just show you the sample sizes and so, for the most part, most of the interviews were focused on that 2018 red tide, and the shading of that color -- The darker the shade, it just leads to an observation that talked about how devastating it was, and the medium shade is major, and then the lightest shade is minor, and it didn’t really have a major impact.

The first thing you note with that figure is, in 2018, the majority of the respondents, essentially, said that this was an extremely devastating event, not just on red grouper and other species, but on their business, on their fishery, on their hotels and their tourism and such, and so it seems like this 2018 event did have a major impact. The more information we
looked at, the stronger the support was for that.

On the right, it’s just giving you an idea -- As we’re doing these interviews, we’re trying to get a comprehensive idea of what species have been seen in these fish kills. The FWRI database has a lot of information over time, but those surveys tend to be the species that wash up on the beach.

One of the biggest data gaps we have, and we’re hoping to fill as we get additional resources, is what happens offshore. We know these red tides can occur offshore, and, much of the time, the fish sink, and so it’s really hard to get an idea of what species and what age classes and such. That is some of the big issues when we have these assessments, is how do we treat these red tides? For the purposes of red grouper, we assume that all of the age classes are vulnerable to this red tide.

With all of that in mind, as I mentioned earlier -- So, for red grouper, we use the 30 percent SPR proxy. What we’re showing with this figure on the left is going to be the projected retained yield, and so that’s in pounds of gutted weight for red grouper. On the right, it’s just looking at the trends in depletion over time, and so if we focus on the left for now.

The red line -- Essentially, these are different scenarios of the potential 2018 magnitude for that red tide, and so the red line would be assuming that there was no effect in 2018, that there was no red tide and red grouper had no mortality. Then, as you move further down to the black line, it’s basically increasing severity, that we assumed and ran projections to see what would the effect be if that red tide was more severe than we thought.

Just to note that the blue line identifies the line where we’re assuming that the 2018 red tide was similar in magnitude to the 2005 red tide event, and that was the scenario that the SSC ended up supporting as well, given the information we presented, and I didn’t want to spend too much time, but I did want to mention here that we did receive updated fishery-independent indices for the bottom longline survey through 2018 as well as the SEAMAP groundfish survey through 2019. Both surveys showed very low, near record abundance lows, for those surveys, and so there’s a lot of pointing evidence suggesting that the red tide was severe.

At the end of the day, the line that you would want to focus on here is the blue line basically represents what comes out of the standard projection for F 30 percent SPR, and that is
essentially what the SSC supported, given the current control rule.

In terms of the depletion, on the right, what you’re seeing over time is the depletion is just an estimate of the spawning stock biomass in each of those years over the SSB from the unfished condition, and so it’s just a ratio of showing where you are, and so the spike you see is 2020. Again, it’s the first year of our projection period.

You see that, if there was no red tide, that the stock was just above the target in 2020, where the model would expect the stock to be just above the target. Part of the reason of what’s driving that increase is essentially that 2013 recruitment that I had mentioned, that you see it moving through the recreational fishery and the commercial fishery, and so we see that pulse of fish that the model thinks is out there, but, again, that red line is assuming no 2018 red tide, and so just to give you come context there.

In the other scenarios, you can see that the black line essentially just represents a worst-case scenario, a what-if, if things are twice as bad as 2005. In that instance, you see that the stock size would drop below the minimum stock size threshold, but, overall, what we see is, as you would expect. The more severe the red tide, the lower the projected yields would be, and the more depleted the stock would become. In this case, each of the scenarios would rebuild in about 2035, which is a fairly long time, if we were to go with this sort of information.

Equally as important here was to show the projections on what if we maintain the status quo being the 2017 landings levels, and what if we just fished at that level from 2018, 2019, 2020 -- Sorry. From 2020 onward. What would then happen?

The first thing to notice is yield would remain constant for each of the scenarios, again, and then the depletion levels -- You can see that, over time, the stock essentially, depending upon that severity of the red tide -- Again, the blue being the preferred scenario by the SSC, but, essentially, even there was a red tide equivalent to the 2005 event, the stock would essentially be up at the target biomass level at I think it’s 2025-ish.

Even if we maintained the current -- Again, this is assuming that that 2019 ACL could be removed, and I understand that, currently, we’re at about 50 percent of the quota for both
commercial and recreational, and so even the current landings don’t seem to be on that trajectory.

Given the wealth of information that we presented and the scenarios and all of the information, what we tried to do was boil the entire assessment and decision down to a decision table, and so each of those figures on top corresponds to a red tide scenario. The left-most scenario would be the no 2018 red tide, and the right-most would be the most severe, and so it doubled the 2005 magnitude.

What you're seeing, in this case, is that information corresponds to that first row in the table, and so, again, each of the columns in the table is that red tide scenario, and then it’s the scenario -- The F 30 percent SPR would be the MSY proxy run, and that’s the catch level that would come out of the assumption that 2018 was like 2005, and so, in that figure up top, the second-to-the-right, what you’re seeing there is that thick red line would basically be the 50th percentile, the OFL, and so the 50 percent probability of overfishing, by definition, of what would come out of that assessment.

The decision table is showing you that, if you maintain that red line, but in fact say the red tide was twice as bad as 2005, then you would be expected to use that distribution on the right-most side, but, when you compare the red thick line to that distribution, 100 percent of the time, that red line where you are is above that, and so, essentially, you would have a 100 percent probability of overfishing. It would be very -- You would have more risk in that situation.

As you move forward, for example, looking at the no 2018 red tide, if you -- Making the assumption that it’s like 2005, but, if in fact there was no red tide, you would see that there is a slight little amount of red on that left-most side, meaning that you would only have about a 3 percent probability of overfishing, and so, in this situation, treating this red tide like 2005, this is the catch advice that comes out of that, but this table allows you to see, over the various levels, how bad could things get if you made certain decisions.

Granted, they are based on certain assumptions, but, at least to give you some context, if we think it’s this, but it’s really this, what’s the risk of that decision, and, in this table, the other catch levels below that F 30 percent SPR are just showing the second row from the top is the P* of 0.427, which was used for red grouper, and the next one below is a P* of 40 percent, followed by 30 percent, and then the value for the 2017
landings.

The take-home with this decision table is, essentially, the scenario treating the landings like 2017 would give you much lower probabilities of overfishing, in the instance that there was a red tide event, and so maintaining the status quo seems like potentially a good way to go, as opposed to raising the catches, as the F 30 percent SPR could potentially lead to, but, again, given the landings that are currently being caught by both commercial and recreational, it’s possible that the status quo -- Maintaining the status quo could potentially be a way to go, or even lowering the -- Yes.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Explain the first row to me, the F 30 percent SPR, and then you have catch, 5.3 million, roundabout.

**DR. SAGARESE:** That catch level corresponds to the 50th percentile of the distribution that comes out within the assessment, and so, essentially, the SSC -- That’s the definition of the OFL for the SSC, the 50th percentile, and so that 5.35 is what is provided.

**MS. BOSARGE:** I thought that the OFL with no red tide that came out for 2020 would have been 8.68 million pounds.

**DR. SAGARESE:** This whole table is showing -- Your baseline is going to be the 2005 level, and so that F 30 percent SPR corresponds to the 2005 scenario, and so you’re right that the no red tide table that’s in the presentations of that eight million or so pounds, but that, again, is assuming that 2018 had no effect on the stock, and so this is the scenario that was supported by the SSC, which we’ll see in a few moments with Luiz.

**MR. RINDONE:** Just to clarify, these numbers are using the FES estimates from MRIP?

**DR. SAGARESE:** These are all using the MRIP FES currency, correct, including the 2017 landings, but I will be showing that in a second. In summary, I am just briefly going to be review the SSC notes, which you’ll see in a moment, but the SSS did support the scenario assuming that the 2018 red tide was similar to 2005.

I didn’t have enough time to present all of the information, but we had a lot of support for treating that decision. It seemed like there was a lot of information from stakeholders and fishery-independent sources that that 2018 red tide had a major
effect on red grouper and killed a lot of them.

In this instance, maintaining the current catch level, and so the 2017 level, as I showed with the decision table, could be a way to lower the probability of overfishing, in the event that there was a red tide, rather than worrying about how bad was the red tide under the various scenarios, with the exception of the worst-case scenario. It would be a very low probability of overfishing in these instances.

Thank you, Ryan. That was a good time to mention that, and so the one thing that’s been requested quite a bit is, because this assessment -- All of the information was in MRIP FES units, and the old ACL that was determined in the emergency rule for 2019 is in the old MRIP currency of APAIS.

In this slide, we’re going to look at a comparison of -- Essentially, what’s on the books right now is the top, and so, the current ACL that’s on the books of 4.16 million pounds, that’s coming from the landings from the MRIP APAIS and the commercial landings. What we’re showing in the bottom plot is essentially looking at the change in -- The new recreational landings from the MRIP FES survey essentially have become much higher. Therefore, what would the 2017 landings turn into if the new currency was used?

What you can see from the table is that there is an increase, and the recreational landings that were used within the emergency rule were one million pounds. Given the new currency of FES, that one million pounds becomes converted to 2.05 million pounds, and so it’s essentially a doubling, in this case, of what’s being input. Therefore, that 2019 ACL would be higher than what is currently on the books, given the increase in the recreational landings.

MS. BOSARGE: When you say we used FES in the stock assessment, we scaled everything to FES, and so I understand that Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama, red grouper, those landings are currently being collected and coming out in FES the way they are. The survey is FES, but Louisiana is not. Louisiana is LA Creel, and so I’m assuming you had to convert Louisiana landings, which probably means you had to scale them up by some factor to get them to FES numbers, to go in the assessment, and then did we scale Texas numbers?

DR. SAGARESE: For red grouper, we don’t have Texas landings in the assessment. We also don’t have the LA Creel numbers, because the landings are very, very, very small. For red
grouper, it’s just mostly the State of Florida, and so it’s MRIP FES. The issue you raise is going to come up with some of the other species assessments that are coming up in the future. For red grouper, Texas and Louisiana were not an issue, at this time, and so we did have everything in MRIP FES currency for now, for this assessment, for landings and discards. I think the next slide should be the questions, and so any other questions?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Are there questions for Skyler?

DR. SAGARESE: Can I just thank everybody that was involved in this whole process, especially all the stakeholders and everyone that responded, and it’s been really amazing to -- I think I probably learn more from some of these opportunities than they learn from me, and so I just want to say that that’s been extremely valuable with this assessment, is being able to kind of work as a collaborative unit, and that’s been great.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Well, if there aren’t any additional questions for Skyler -- Tom.

DR. FRAZER: I am not sure that you are the appropriate person to ask this question, but I was looking at the executive summary of the assessment, and so one of the things that I noticed in there was, when you were looking at the average -- This was with regard to the recreational fishery, and so you used a discard mortality rate, I guess, of about 11 percent, and then, when you look at the average catch over kind of the reference time period and the number of fish that were discarded at that time, the discards were 0.87 million pounds of gutted weight, and the total catch was 2.29.

When I look at that, I see that mortality rate is about 37 percent, and so, when I look at the empirical data, how do I reconcile that to what the discard rate is that you actually used?

DR. SAGARESE: In the assessment, the way that the discards are treated is we input -- The discard mortality is a fixed value, but, the way the what the model is operating, selectivity is in terms of length, and so it’s length-based, and so it’s accounting for -- The selectivity pattern defines what the fishery is encountering, and then, from there, the discard mortality is applied to a fraction of that that is being -- Sorry.

A fraction is being retained, and a fraction of that selected
fish is being discarded, and then, from that component, the 11 percent is applied to that, and so I think it has to do with the age structure, in terms of the weights, and it’s not necessarily going to be 11 percent just looking at that comparison, but it’s essentially internal to how the model is treating discards.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Any other questions? Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: On the red tide, and I’ve been wondering this, when we put it in the model, and not the 2018, but the actual red tides that were part of model in 2017 and before, we’re telling the model that that is essentially an additional fishing fleet, right, and that’s how we model it, like we have a commercial fleet, a recreational fleet, and we have this fleet, we have this red tide fleet.

I have been wondering how this model -- If you look at all the other fleets, both fishery-dependent and fishery independent, almost all of them have a negative trend. Things are going down, and they’re not going in a positive direction. Then we tell the model that there’s this other fishing fleet, and essentially that’s where the rest of the harvest, or kill, is taking place.

Is the model thinking that everything is okay because of, on the whole, harvest is probably staying about the same, or even going up, because that red tide is what’s taking it out, and does the model is not a fishing fleet and that everything is pointed down?

DR. SAGARESE: I did run sensitivity analyses that essentially removed the red tide fleet. In terms of removing that 2014 red tide, you still see that declining trend, and so, essentially, even with or without the red tide, the model is picking up on all of those declines in the indices and declines in the landings, and so you still see that behavior, that the stock is going down, but it’s just the inclusion of the red tide helps account for some of that.

For example, we see improved fits to the indices of abundance, that’s the sort of information where the red tide helps. It helps us explain what’s really going on, but we did look at sensitivities with that issue.

MS. BOSARGE: Just a follow-up, Martha, and so I’m just trying to figure out -- We did an MSE, which obviously is very limited.
We did a management strategy evaluation and went through the SSC, to try and figure out what we should implement for that emergency rule, remember, and theirs was just slightly higher than what we ended up implementing. It was four-point-something million, I think, like 4.3 or something like that, and we implemented four-point-one-something, which was landings from the prior year.

Yes, they have limited data, but they were looking at things through 2017 and 2018, and they came up with something that is essentially half of what the stock assessment -- If you don’t account for the 2018 red tide, it gave us an OFL of eight-point-something million and an ABC of eight-point-something million. I am trying to figure out where that disconnect is in the stock assessment. Even in 2017, it shouldn’t have been that rosy, and where is the disconnect?

DR. SAGARESE: Two things here. Just remember that the catch advice was about eight million, assuming 2018 red tide was not an issue. That likely is not what’s going on in reality, and so, essentially, that 2005 scenario -- What the model is doing with that eight million pounds is it’s saying there’s a relatively large recruitment event coming through, and recent fishing mortality has been fairly low, and let’s ramp up fishing, because we can, because there is all this biomass that essentially is there, but it has potentially been removed by the red tide, and so I think it’s really -- I would be really cautious focusing on that eight million number, just because it’s assuming that there is no effect in 2018 of the red tide. That seems to be a decision that needs to be accounted for, and, with the decision table, we’ve tried to sort of show the influence of that decision, but, in 2017 -- Clay, go ahead.

DR. PORCH: I was going to let you finish, but I just wanted to get in the queue here. I do want to point out a couple of things. The first one is we can do another interim analysis in 2020, once we get the 2019 data, and then we’re going to actually have some good, quantitative information on what the effect was, and so the projections work for now.

They have to make some assumptions, and it seems the preferred assumption is that the 2018 event was similar to 2005, but, in 2020, once we get the 2019 data from the bottom longline survey, we can do another interim analysis.

The other point I want to make, just because I’m a little afraid that some people might be confused. When we say we model the red tide like a fishing fleet, it’s not actually counted as
fishing, and this is just sort of Stock Synthesis lingo. People who do the assessments know what they mean, and they are using the same sort of structure, but that source of mortality is not added in any way to fishing or anything like that. It’s completely separate accounting, and so, when she shows graphs of fishing mortality, fraction taken by fishing, that does not count the red tide. That’s a separate source of mortality, but it’s just lingo, but I can imagine someone hearing that and saying, wait a minute, you’re counting it as a fishing fleet, and they are distinguishing the two.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Tom.

DR. FRAZER: Clay, if you want to do the interim analysis in 2020, and you get the bottom longline data, when would you run that, do you think? I mean, when would that start?

DR. PORCH: That can happen pretty quick in 2020. It takes a little while to process the data, and I think we’re just about done with the survey, and it takes a couple of months to process the data, and so fairly early in 2020 we should be able to get it done.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. If there aren’t any other questions for Skyler, I believe there are a few more slides.

DR. CRABTREE: I was going to go over a few that are sort of focusing on the allocation issue, and I don’t know if you want to do this before the SSC report or if you would rather here the SSC version. It’s your call.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I think SSC makes sense, to do that first, and so let’s hold those. We’ll come back to those.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Madam Chair, I just wanted to tell Skyler thank you so much for coming to the Reef Fish AP in person and the SSC meeting and for doing such a great job. Thank you.

SSC REVIEW OF SEDAR 61, OFL, AND ABC RECOMMENDATIONS

DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: Let me echo Dr. Simmons’ thanks to Skyler for everything she’s done. I mean, this has been a monumental amount of work, and she’s done a great job putting this assessment together, and it was great to have her at the SSC meeting presenting in person and being able to answer a parade
of questions from the committee and then coming to the AP meeting, and so many thanks for that.

I just want to sort of reiterate some of the points that Skyler just brought up when she gave this overview of the assessment, but, basically, the main conclusions of the SSC and then our catch recommendation going forward, and so we considered this assessment the best scientific information available, and we agreed with the stock status determination outcome of this assessment.

As of 2017, which is the terminal year of data going into this assessment, the stock was considered to be not overfished and not undergoing overfishing, and Skyler already explained to you that, of course, this not overfished stock status is due to the new definition of MSST that you have adopted. If we were using the old definition, the stock would have been considered overfished.

The stock status, nevertheless, we know that the stock is in very low abundance, and, if you remember, looking at her trajectories of spawning stock biomass and total biomass over time, this is the lowest point over the entire time series, since 1986, that we have the red grouper stock biomass, and so it's the lowest that it's been in a long time.

The stock has been impacted by a number of factors, most prominently these intense red tide events that happened, the 2005 one that was very, very intense and then the 2018 that we believe, and we don’t know, and we don’t have all the information in hand yet, but we believe that this one was very intense as well and comparable, similar, in intensity to the 2005 one, and that has impacted the stock greatly.

Despite the great work that Skyler did and all the results that came out of this assessment, capturing the dynamics of red grouper is difficult at this point. There are a number of things that are going on that are not easy to understand. I mean, all of us looking at the assessment outcomes can see that there are things that are difficult for us to understand.

Poor Skyler, when she was at the SSC meeting, I asked her like a ton of very detailed questions, kind of grilling her a lot, Dr. Crabtree style, when Dr. Crabtree grills me, because a lot of things that we wanted to understand, in terms of reconciling what we see as the condition of the stock right now with the stock status and the catch advice that’s coming out of the assessment, and some of these things, we believe, are due to
factors that may be impacting the dynamics of red grouper and that are not being properly accounted for, because we don’t have the information, and we don’t have the knowledge, of what those things may be.

A couple of suggestions here from the committee is that continue using the combined sexes for estimation of reference points, for stock status determination, of red grouper, and there is some research that is ongoing in the eastern Gulf that is looking into factors that have to do with sexual transition and the dynamics of mating in red grouper that might be informative for us to try and explore into the future, as we look into future assessments.

Another one is there might be other ecosystem-level factors besides the red tide that might be impacting this stock that we are not really being able to put our finger on, and so an easy one that I think we all can think of is with the expansion, the rebuilding, of the red snapper stock and the expansion of this stock now kind of recolonizing the West Florida Shelf, the eastern Gulf, that this has to have some impact on other species that are there.

Questions that came up ten years ago, literally -- In 2009, we did a big update of the original red grouper benchmark assessment, and, at that point, we were asking these questions, because we could see the red snapper stock beginning to rebuild, and we already had these questions about potential impacts and interactions among species, and so those are issues that the SSC pointed out as potential contributions going into the future for assessments that can have more information added to it.

Then I don’t need to repeat this slide for you. Skyler did a great job of explaining it, but, basically, this decision table was something that really influenced the discussions of the SSC in determining what kind of scenario are we going to look at in making a choice for how we’re going to determine the stock status and then the catch advice coming out of the assessment, and so the no 2018 red tide, which is the greener scenario there, of course, is not realistic, and so, if we go with that one, we run a very big risk of setting catch level recommendations that would not be sustainable, and you can make other assumptions, that 2018 was actually just half of 2014, or equal, in intensity to the 2014 red tide, equal to the 2005 event, which is what the SSC chose, or double that.

Looking at different lines of evidence, we actually decided to go with the scenario that the 2018 red tide event was similar in
intensity and scale to the 2005 event and pursued our recommendations afterwards looking at that scenario.

Here is a table similar to what Skyler just showed you that came out, and it’s another format of that decision table, and one thing to note is the left-most column there is you have a number of potential scenarios for catch levels in pounds associated with different probabilities of overfishing that I will explain in a minute, but one point that the SSC wanted to make is that, instead of adopting, like we usually do, projections, like five-year projections or three-year projections, coming out of the assessment, that, to avoid that spike --

Remember that, just now, when Skyler showed you those trajectories of projections, that there was a spike there, and then they kind of level off. I don’t know if you want to see that again, but it’s Slide 12 in -- If Skyler’s presentation is still handy, and I don’t know if it is, but it’s Slide 12 in her presentation.

You can see -- Remember that I mentioned yesterday an issue that the SSC is working with the Science Center and other partners on in discussing and trying to determine what is causing our projections coming out of the assessments that we conduct to have that spike that basically could be overestimating the productivity of the stock, or there is something informing the model that that first year after the terminal year of data that’s going into the assessment is going to be better than it usually turns out to be later on.

To avoid that spike, the SSC decided to use an average, and not use the projections as an annual yield stream coming out of there, but just use an average of the period, 2020 to 2024, and so five years, and average those years, to actually avoid having to deal with the spike.

This is why you see there that instead of -- Usually we give you a number of years, like either three years or five years, and we give you yield streams with catch levels, OFL and ABC, per year, and we’re giving you just one set of numbers there, and it’s an average for the five years.

The top one is actually an average using the 2005 red tide as being similar to 2018, and, at the 50 percent probability of overfishing, which is determined by our ABC control rule, if you may remember, and so it’s sort of risk neutral there, and that 50 percent is what we consider the OFL. That is the 5.35 million pounds.
Then, at the bottom, instead of going with the level of probability of overfishing that we used last time, and I think it was 0.42, for the last assessment, considering the condition of the stock as it is, considering that there are uncertainties associated with this assessment that we’re not being able to account for, we decided to go down to a probability of overfishing for an ABC of 30 percent.

We wanted to go below what we used last time, but still stay within what you told us was the range of probability of overfishing that you found acceptable, and so the highest one is 0.5, and that’s the OFL, and then you gave us the flexibility to go up to 0.3, to 30 percent probability of overfishing, as we make our ABC recommendations.

With that, the very top there, the 5.35, would be our recommendation for OFL. Again, it’s just one number over the next several years, and, at the bottom, the 4.9 million pounds, is an ABC recommendation, and that has a 30 percent probability of overfishing.

You can see there the proportion of the red grouper population that was estimated to have been killed by the red tide as you look at those different scenarios, and that’s something that we felt helped us make a choice here on which one of those scenarios we would go with, and we went with 2005.

Just to wrap it up then, OFL was the 5.35 million pounds at a 50 percent probability of overfishing, and the ABC of 4.9 million pounds gutted weight at a 30 percent probability of overfishing, and Skyler and Ryan already explained that these new numbers are using the FES-adjusted MRIP data, and, as I explained, these numbers, the catch advice for OFL and ABC, are based on the average yield from projections in this assessment using the current sector allocations and assuming that the red tide in 2018 was similar to the impact of the red tide in 2005.

In terms of assumptions on the allocations, the SSC discussed this a little bit, and Skyler had come to our meeting actually prepared to show us different scenarios of what different allocations could look like, but the committee felt that allocation is strictly a council function and that we did not want to overstep our charge, and we decided to go with a recommendation that uses the current allocation scenario, the 76 commercial and 24 recreational, and leave it up to you to then proceed with a different recommendation as you see fit. That, Madam Chair, completes my presentation.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Thank you. Are there questions for Dr. Barbieri about the SSC report? Clay.

DR. PORCH: Maybe more a comment. I just want to take some of the mystery out of that big jump-up in the first projection year. One, it looks worse than it is, because the scale of that graph started at four million pounds, and so it makes it look like the current catch is really low and then jumps up a lot, but the other thing is you have to remember that these are projections to get the OFL -- That means they assume that the fishing mortality rate would be the reference point at 30 percent SPR, whereas the assessment has estimated, in recent years, the fishing mortality rate has been a lot lower than that, and it attributes a lot of the mortality to the red tide event in 2014.

The bottom line is the assessment estimates, in 2017, that the fishing mortality rate is well below F 30 percent SPR, but, to calculate OFL, the overfishing limit, you would assume then that the fishing mortality rate has to go up to F 30 percent, the reference level, and so, if you increase the fishing mortality rate, then, of course, the catch is going to go up, and so that explains a lot of the reason that you’re getting that jump-up.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Luiz, when you all reviewed the MSE, your data went through 2017, because you did it in 2018, because we implemented it in 2018, that emergency rule, and, when you all looked at the limited data through the 2017 terminal year, you all came up with a very different picture than what the stock assessment did.

You didn’t take into account the 2018 red tide either, and you were looking at 2017 and back, and you all came up with about four-point-something million for an ABC, 4.3 or something, whatever it was, and what was the big positive thing that happened in this stock assessment to make this model look it through 2017 and come out with eight-point-something million as an ABC, before we start buffering it down for the qualitative indexes that we have for red tide? Where is the difference?

DR. BARBIERI: It’s funny that you ask this question, because this is one of the questions -- It was one of my first questions for Skyler when she came to the SSC meeting, and it was almost exactly like this. This is what I mean by trying to reconcile what we see as a condition of the stock, and we use fishery-
independent indices and the level of landings from the fishery-dependent information, and I was trying to make sense of that and how the -- Not necessarily the stock status even, but the catch advice that was coming out of that assessment could be so different, even if we were to ignore the 2018 red tide event.

Those are the things, and maybe Skyler can come and explain some of this, but she talked and showed us some information about recruitment coming in and a slug of younger fish that had been showing up in some of the indices and in some of the catches and that, working through, they are beginning to show up and project that they will continue showing up and increasing the productivity of the stock during this time period, because stocks go up and down like this as they get inputs of recruitment all the time.

Without going into detail, and I will have to rely on her to go into more detail, but those things -- We looked at the whole distribution of recruitment inputs and the deviations of those over time, and we tried to get completely into the weeds, because we are not really understanding what was informing the model that this was the case.

I think that she came up with a very reasonable, likely explanations, but, still, I think that there are issues here that are going on, and this is a single-species stock assessment that is very data rich, when you look at all the information that is going into it, but there is a lot still, at the ecosystem scale, that we are missing that is not being input here, because there’s information that we don’t necessarily have our hands on to be able to input into this assessment to account for why this is happening.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: As one of those factors that may be influencing the assessment, did you all discuss maybe how FES has changed the game here? Skyler didn’t show the graphics of how the recreational catches and discards change, but they become very peaky, but can you talk about that?

DR. BARBIERI: Yes, and I’m not sure if I’m going to have a whole lot of reasonable answers for you there. Again, and Skyler may remember, those are some of my questions, and I asked several of them, because I was curious as well about the impact of how the FES-calibrated data would have into this assessment, and, being familiar with the structure of how assessments are set up, I had been thinking about how the model was going to interpret a new data series from one sector only that would completely change the balance of the different fleets that go
Skyler explained that, in the new version of SS 3 that is being used to run this assessment, you actually have the ability to use a larger coefficient of variation, larger band of variability there, in the data that goes into fitting the landings, and they used a CV of I guess it was 30 percent, and that CV would give the model then more flexibility in either considering or ignoring some of that data, depending on how well it would fit into all of the other data sources that are coming in, and so that, in my view, explains some of what happened, but it’s not intuitive to us to then determine, because, at some points, the model may be not considering as much, as certain, that recreational data, and, because of that, it may be ignoring it at times, and it’s hard to tell what the impact of this new data series had, but I’m still scratching my head as well and trying to understand.

I mean, this is like a moving surface that you end up with these models, and it’s like a Etch-a-Sketch, but, instead of having two knobs that go up and down and left and right, you have sixty-five knobs that go into different dimensions, and so reconciling all of this is really, really difficult, with different data sources going in, but a big question-mark.

MS. BOSARGE: I will be quick, Martha. I think the key to starting to understand that is -- That’s why I asked could we go back and change that one preliminary input into SEDAR 42. Not this assessment, but the one before, and actually understand where we were then, because that’s what we have to compare to. How much did our virgin biomass, starting biomass, whatever, change when we changed this large input?

What effect did it have, and, right now, we can’t tell, because the old assessment had that error, but, if we can go back and rerun that old assessment, and I’m not saying it will answer all the questions, but it will sure give us a base to compare to, to get a better understanding of what is driving this assessment. What is so positive in this assessment that it’s trying to give us an eight-million-pound ABC, when we’re landing about three million? Something is off. Even when you go back to 2017, that’s the case.

DR. BARBIERI: There are issues, and I think the SSC had this discussion regarding the FES-calibrated MRIP data, and we still are trying to understand -- This is our first stock assessment coming before the SSC that is using these FES-calibrated data, and the new MRIP, the MRIP that has the revised and updated
APAIS and the revised and updated -- It has the FES instead of the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, and the new MRIP is better. It’s a better survey. That is unquestionable.

However, it also produces results that are somewhat different than what we used to see. For example, the error bars, the variability, the coefficient of variation, the proportion standard error, around the data is actually larger now than it used to be.

This may be not necessarily a bad thing, and maybe we’re having PSEs that are now more realistic to the high variability in the data, but you can imagine how stock assessments would read data that is so highly variable with a high confidence interval and try to interpret that.

Another thing is that the data is no longer smoothed over time, and so you’re going to see that there is jagged ups and downs. The peaks are higher, and the valley are lower, and so there is quite a bit more variability.

Again, realistic for the estimates that are coming out of the MRIP, but how the assessment uses and interprets this information is bound to be a different, and so I think that the committee is still trying to grapple with all of this and trying to understand how these different factors may be impacting the way that the models run and the way that that produce the outputs.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I just wanted to expand on something that Skyler had said earlier about that eight-million-pound estimate. That eight million pounds is in FES and not APAIS, and so it’s larger than what we’re using to seeing for this particular stock, as far as a catch recommendation might go, and it’s also assuming that recruitment, catchability, selectivity, retention, discard mortality, that all of those things remain constant over that eight-year reference period of 2010 to 2017, and there is a recruitment spike that is predicted in 2013, which brings that average recruitment a little bit higher than the surrounding years.

If you were to remove that 2013 recruitment event, which, as Skyler had said, the model is predicting is really coming into its own in the stock in 2017, 2018, 2019, and so forth, then the recruitment would be -- It would be pretty poor, and that event
is important, and that’s why she had recommended caution in
looking at that number, is because there’s a lot of reasons why
it’s as high as it is, but that’s also why the SSC didn’t think
that that number represented reality, because it also doesn’t
account for that 2018 red tide event, which is predicted to have
killed as much as 34 percent of the entire stock.

When you take all of those additional factors, the move from
APAIS to FES, the red tide, the 2013 recruitment event, and you
think about that when you’re looking at that eight-million-pound
projection level, it becomes really nonsensical at that point,
and that’s why the SSC converged on the catch recommendations
for you guys that they did.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Clay.

DR. PORCH: I will second what Ryan said, and, on top of that,
you’re assuming the fishing mortality rate is going to go all
the way up to the reference point to calculate an OFL, but the
other point that I wanted to come to was what the assessment,
back in SEDAR 42, would have been had we not had that early
substitution of too high catch numbers, and I think actually
there was a run, and maybe Skyler can come up, but, as I recall,
that takes into account almost all of the scale difference
between the two, but you can get a feel for it, just from the
difference in ACL advice for how much it would have been.

To me, it seems to be a little bit of a red herring to go back
and show what it would have been had we run that assessment with
the right numbers, and the current assessment is the best
available scientific information.

DR. SAGARESE: Just one thing to point out with that SEDAR 42
assessment is the model that was reviewed at the assessment
workshop did not have that error in there, and so the catch
division, essentially the MSY that it was estimating, was around
seven million pounds.

It wasn’t until the review stage where that model changed and
that error was made, and then that MSY comes out to about
fifteen million pounds, and so, when you look at the model that
was presented to the assessment panel, it was much more similar
in line with what we see with this assessment and with past
assessments, and so, in general, the red grouper assessments
generally estimate an MSY around seven or eight million pounds,
and so that increase that was noted with the issue -- You can
sort of go back in time and see came out of the other
assessments.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Any other questions for Dr. Barbieri or for Skyler? All right. Next, we’re going to jump around a little bit, and we’re going to go to the AP report, and Ryan is going to take us through that.

REEF FISH AP RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, ma’am. Dr. Sagarese gave a similar presentation to the Reef Fish Advisory Panel, and, in Tab B-9 is where we have their summary, and, if you go to page 3, the top of page 3, you can see the catch level recommendation that the AP provided.

The AP talked at length about the difference between the FES and APAIS data currencies and their effect on catch recommendations for red grouper, and they ultimately settled on a unanimous motion to recommend that you guys set the ACL for red grouper at 3.5 million pounds gutted weight in MRIP APAIS currency, and I’m adding that word “currency” in there, and adjust accordingly in the future, and so their intent was that, based on the catch levels that they are used to now under the APAIS-adjusted MRIP currency and what they have been landing, and they thought 3.5 million pounds represented a responsible catch level, and so, whatever that up-converts to under FES is what they thought would be appropriate.

Further, they recommended to support the council’s request for an annual red grouper interim analyses for the next few years, for use in providing updated catch recommendations, and they had made this recommendation to you all just based on the fact that red grouper show exceptional vulnerability to red tide, and they have very intermittent recruitment, and it’s unpredictable when a good year class may come through, and so it was a good idea to have pretty high resolution on what’s going on with this particular species. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Are there any questions about the AP discussion? If we need to, we can call Captain Ed Walker up here again. Is everybody all right? Okay. In that case, we will bounce back to the slides that I think, Sue, you’re going to present?

MS. GERHART: Well, actually, Dr. Crabtree was going to do that.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Nice.

DISCUSSION OF ALLOCATION IMPLICATIONS
DR. CRABTREE: Okay. I just wanted to say a few things about the allocation implications. One is we’ve been through -- This assessment uses the FES landings, but, as Luiz said, the projections are based on the status quo allocation, which is 76 percent commercial and 24 percent recreational. That is based on the old MRIP data.

What we have now is a new set of recreational landings that are considered the best available landings estimates, and so, to maintain internal consistency, we need to define the allocation based in similar currency to what the ABC is based on, because changing the allocation will change the projections and change the ABCs, because the selectivities are a little different in the recreational and commercial fishery.

This is just sort of a hypothetical example of how, in a very simple way, this kind of could play out, and so assume you had a fishery with just two sectors, A and B, and, to the best of your knowledge, the fishery is in good shape, not overfishing and not overfished, and everything is right where it should be, and so you have each sector catching 100 pounds a year, and the ACL is 200 pounds, and the allocation is 50/50.

Now, just say, hypothetically, you somehow discovered that in fact one sector has actually been landing 200 pounds all the time along, and so now the ACL would be 300 pounds. If you were to maintain the 50/50 allocation though and not update it based on the new perception of landings, you would end up with each sector being allocated 150 pounds.

One sector would take a fifty-pound cut, and the other would get a fifty-pound increase, but, if you shifted the allocation to reflect the new understanding of the landings, it would switch the 67 percent Sector A and 33 percent Sector B, and each sector would be continuing to catch what they historically have caught.

At least in my view of the world, I consider maintaining the allocation at 50/50 to in fact be a reallocation, because you are in fact changing the historical mix of the fishery, whereas adjusting the allocation to reflect the new landings maintains the historical mix of the fishery, which was the goal of your allocation, and so that’s an admittedly simple example.

These are the landings that we’re using now, and these are the FES-adjusted landings. The current allocation comes from Amendment 30B, which was put in place I think in 2006 or 2007, and the allocation was based on the mix in the fishery during
the years 1986 through 2005, and so that’s a nineteen-year period, and I don’t believe that the Florida trip ticket system broke down species of grouper by species prior to 1986, and so you really can’t go further back in time than 1986.

When we put in place 30B, back then, I think 2005 was probably the last year of data we had at the time, and so, if you take the time period and you then use the landings that are used in the assessment with the FES landings, you come up with an allocation of 40.5 percent recreational and 59.4 percent commercial, and so that’s the shift that results from using the updated landings that are now considered the best available, but, if you maintain the intent of the allocation in Amendment 30B, which was to maintain the mix in the fishery at that time, based on these new estimates in the new assessment, that’s what that mix in the fishery at that time was.

Skyler has rerun the projections, and you used the new outcome of the allocations, the 59.4 and 40.5, and these are you come up with -- This is using all of the other factors that follow what the SSC did, the red tide equal to 2005 and the same probabilities, and you end up with an OFL of 4.67 million pounds and an ABC of 4.27 million pounds and a recreational ACL of 1.73 million pounds, and that’s in FES terms, and a commercial quota of 2.54 million pounds.

Now, there are lots of different ways that you can slice this and look at it, but, to me, that’s the most straightforward application of what was the intent of Amendment 30B and the new assessment and the best available landings that we have, and I think that’s everything I had to present.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: John.

MR. SANCHEZ: Should we be cautious in assuming that events and things that we’re looking at, observations that we’re making today, relate directly to things that happened potentially all the way back to 1986, and is that problematic, potentially?

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I mean, clearly, there is uncertainty in all of this. The recreational catch estimates are not known with certainty, and the assessments don’t give you answers that are known with any certainty, and so I would say you should be cautious with all of this, but these are the best estimates that we have and what has come out of the new assessment.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Tom.
DR. FRAZER: When Luiz was giving that talk, and they were basing the OFL and the ABC on the old allocation, and so you had an OFL of 5.3 million and an ABC of 4.9, but you had an ACL suggested at 4.3 in this figure here, your ACL and your ABC are the same, and is there a reason for that, and is there no buffer between the ABC and the ACL?

DR. CRABTREE: Yes, that’s my understanding, that there’s not any buffer set between the ABC and the ACL, and so what you see is, I think, right now, with the emergency rule, the commercial quota is set at three million pounds, and so this comes down somewhat from that, and the recreational ACL is one million pounds, and so it goes up some to reflect the new FES data.

MR. RINDONE: Just to that point, red grouper uses annual catch targets for setting the seasons and issuing the IFQ quota, and the difference between the ACL and the ACT is 8 percent for the recreational sector and 5 percent for the commercial sector, and so the ACTs for those would be just a hair lower.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann, did I see your hand a minute ago? Go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: Under the current allocation scheme, we get an OFL of 5.34 million pounds, which converts to an ABC with a probability of overfishing that the SSC wanted of 4.9 million. If you were to reallocate this fishery by the percentages you said to the recreational sector, why are we all worse off? Why do have a lower OFL, 4.6 million pounds, and a lower ABC of 4.27, versus the five-point-three-something and the 4.9?

DR. CRABTREE: It comes down, because the -- When the projections go forward, the projections assume the catch limits are caught, and so you’re telling the projections how much of that is recreational and how much of that is commercial. The recreational fishery catches smaller fish, on average, than the commercial fishery has, and so I guess you lose some yield per recruit from it, and the catch levels come down a little bit. I don’t know if you want to --

MS. BOSARGE: Well, this will actually argue in favor of the recreational fishery, but that’s confusing to me. So you’re saying it’s actually better for the stock if you catch the bigger fish, which are the bigger spawners, than to catch the little fish?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Clay.
DR. PORCH: You’re still fishing at the SPR level, but then buffered down by the ABC. It’s just that, if you’re going to catch smaller fish, then you need to decrease the TAC that would get you to that same SPR level, because you’re changing the mix of fisheries, and so remember we’re trying to get to an SPR of 30 percent. That’s the target, and, if you’re going to catch smaller fish, than you’ve got to decrease the weight of the quota to get you to that SPR of 30 percent.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: So, right now at least, and it’s been for the past couple of years, the commercial size limit is lower than recreational, and I get that they catch bigger fish, because they’re further out, but has that -- Is that still the case, given that lower size limit? Okay.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann, I can see your hand itching over there.

MS. BOSARGE: In Roy’s example, even the sector’s whose percentage of allocation goes down, they end up staying neutral, and they get to catch as many pounds as they did before, right, and the quota in pounds stays the same, in your example, but that’s not what is happening here.

DR. CRABTREE: No. In my example, there is no red tide, and there is none of that effect, but, if you look at that, they were catching 200. When one side’s estimate changed up, the actual ACL went up from 200 pounds overall, and it goes up to 300 pounds overall.

Now, this situation is more complicated, because we’re building into this the assumption that a large fraction of the population died because of red tide, but, generally speaking, what you’re going to see with bringing the FES data into it is the model is going to say, okay, more fish were caught overall, and so the population is larger overall, and it will generally scale up the total allowable catch some.

Now, it’s not linear over time, and so it won’t be one-to-one, but I think, as you run assessments using the FES, as a rule of thumb, you’re going to get larger estimated population sizes and larger total allowable catches. This is just a special example, because you have other things going on, with red tide and all, that are unrelated to all of this.

MS. BOSARGE: One more question. What were FES recreational landings last year? Do you have that? Then what were commercial landings last year? I know that’s not changing, but I don’t have it in front of me. I want to compare it to what
the quota is going to be, possibly be, if we make this change.

**MS. GERHART:** If you look on the bottom of this slide here, those are the 2018 landings, 2.05 million pounds, in FES numbers. The commercial landings were 2.36 million pounds.

**DR. CRABTREE:** The bottom line is, last year, the commercial caught a little less than what comes out of this, and the recreational caught a little more, and so, if the recreational catch rates stay where they are, or even increasing, because the stock is growing, they would likely end up triggering an accountability measure.

If we’re seeing some recovery in the population, and I have had fishermen tell me that they’re seeing small fish, and, to the extent that happens, then I suspect the commercial fishery will come closer to catching their full allocation, and the recreational catch rates will certainly go up.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sue.

**MS. GERHART:** Again, to remind you of what Ryan pointed out, it’s that these percentages that you’re seeing on the screen are percentages of the ACL, and we currently have ACTs in place for both sectors, and so the actual -- The amount of quota that would be given out through the IFQ program, as well as the projections for the recreational season, would be based on lower numbers than you’re seeing there.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** On that note, when -- The last time, five years ago, I guess it was, when the fishery was peaking, at least on the recreational side, and they were bumping up against the -- They were hitting the quota, actually their ACT, and closing early, and the feedback that we got from the recreational grouper fishery was whatever we need to do, basically, to keep the fishery open late in the year, right, and so I guess, depending on where we go here, we may need to consider, of course based on how people react to this, and I think we may need to consider management changes, or at least that may need to be something on the table for the recreational side, and I am just putting that out there for people to think about, because what we’ve heard in the past, particularly in southwest Florida, where the heart of this grouper fishery is, is fishing late in the year was important to them.

For those on the council, you may remember that we ended up dropping the bag limit from four to two, and we got rid of that wonky accountability measure, where it went up and down and was
very confusing, and so I just put that out there as something to think about, another confusing item. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: We sort of went through this same exercise when we got the great quota out of that last stock assessment, when it says, hey, you can increase everything. Some of the people were saying, no, no, no, don’t do that, and this stock is not in a good situation, and then the recreational sector said, hey, we’re closing early, and we’re catching our fish, and you need to increase that quota.

That’s kind of what we’re about to do right here. We’re going to make sure they stay open all year, and, yet, we just got a stock assessment that said this thing is not in good shape, and you may have a small closure, Roy, if you have 2019 landings that look like 2018.

Right now, what we just looked at on the MRIP, when you look at the old system, old MRIP quota and old MRIP landings, they’re at 50 percent of their quota for the year, and that’s apples to apples. That’s MRIP quota to MRIP landings. Something just doesn’t jive to me here.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Maybe to clarify what I just said, I think the question for the recreational sector would be how do you want to take that cut? Is it going to be an early closure every year, like an ACL closure or an early ACT closure? Do you want to mess with the bag limit? Do you want to have a closed season? That’s the question that I put out to recreational folks. If we’re going to have to go down this road, they’re going to see some cuts, and how do they want to take that cut?

In the past, the feedback that we’ve gotten is they want as long of a fishery as they can have, and that may not be the case, now that the fishery is at a two-fish bag limit, and we’ve had red tide impacts, but I think it’s something that we’re going to have to ask. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I think the last time there was a recreational closure was 2015, and so they haven’t had a closure in some years, and I don’t -- I am not sure how to read your comment, because what we’re looking at now is there likely would be a recreational closure, all things equal.

Well, that’s because we have lowered the quotas, and this, essentially, maintains lower quotas, and the information we have is the stock is not in that great shape, because of the implications of the red tide, and so they’re looking at likely
shorter seasons, and the commercial guys are looking at probably a small reduction in what they’re able to catch.

Now, you can go below this, if you feel like the stock is in worse shape and you want to be more aggressive in making reductions, and these are sort of the upper bounds that come out of the assessment, but you could be more conservative. If you choose to reopen the whole allocation game, and look at some alternative basis for allocation or some alternative sets, you’re free to do that through a plan amendment, but we’ve just tried to offer to you, if you stick with the new assessment and the new landings and the allocation on the books, here’s the way it comes out, and, to me, it’s not really anything that surprising about it. It comes out about where you might expect it to.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: John.

MR. SANCHEZ: I think, in this fishery, we’ve seen this before, where we have had episodic mortality associated with red tide events, throughout, I guess, history, and we have also seen smaller fish, which we’re seeing again, and I personally have seen a lot of small red grouper and not been able to catch some keepers, nearshore and offshore, where I’m at, in south south Florida, and I’m hearing that from everybody I know that fishes recreationally as well.

There is a lot of small fish, and maybe we’re in one of those year classes that is where, in a little bit, they will be entering the fishery, and this will kind of do what it’s done historically, which is we have seen this happen before. We’ve seen this show before.

Reallocating right now, with all these things going on, I don’t know if it’s the thing exactly to rush to judgment on, but I also recall, during some prior discussions, which weren’t in this fishery, and it was in king mackerel, some of my colleagues said there was some value to leaving fish in the water, and so maybe we should leave some fish in the water and not rush to reallocate.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I have been looking at this, but let me be clear that I’m not endorsing changing our ABCs and everything without an amendment that goes through allocation. We have an allocation on the books, and we can’t pass some motion today that changes the allocation that’s on the books.
Now, if I thought that we might do that with every species, and simply plug the new numbers into the historical time series for that allocation, maybe I could follow that logic, but, when we get to the other species, I know good and well that won’t be the case. We’re going to want to look at every single year and determine what is the correct time series.

When you look at mackerel, do you think we’re just going to plug it in and have it be the new allocation, because, even with increased recreational catches, you are probably going to shift allocation to commercial. It won’t happen. We’ll go through an allocation amendment, and we’ve already talked about, with red snapper, we’re not just going to plug it in, and we’re already talking about what is the appropriate years to look at. We have been through this discussion of how do we look at that.

I can’t see where we do anything different than what either the SSC recommended for an OFL and an ABC in a document or continuing with the emergency rule OFL and ABCs and ACLs that we have without going through an allocation amendment, and I don’t see how you can just change what’s on the books, based on a motion. You have to go through an amendment.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: No one is suggesting that, Leann. You have to go through an amendment process to change it, but, back to John’s comment about changing the allocation, I think the appropriate way to look at this is, if you stay at 76/24, you are reallocating this fishery.

That is a de facto reallocation, which I would caution you not to do, because I think it would be indefensible. If you shift to the 40.5 and 59.5, I think that is consistent with your prior determination about the basis of the allocation, but, to put that on the books -- I will defer to Mara, but I think you will have to do a plan amendment to do that, and so you are going to have to go through the process, but I think you could potentially -- If that’s what you’re going to do with the allocation, you may not have to evaluate a wide range of alternative allocations. You may able to just say this is what’s on the books, and this is with the new data, and that’s the allocation we’re going to use. That is up to you.

Now, I wouldn’t hazard a guess as to what you’re going to do with all these other species, or king mackerel, and you’re going to have to figure that out. I can tell you that you have some
species, like red grouper, where you have a reasonably robust
timeframe that the allocation is based on. It’s nineteen years,
and it makes some sense.

You have other species, of which red snapper is one, that the
years that your allocation is based on are very difficult to
justify anymore, and it’s 1979 to 1986. The current survey
doesn’t support 1979 or 1980 anymore, and so it’s not
straightforward to apply the calibration back to those years,
and that then leaves you with 1981 to 1986 or 1987, and I might
be missing a year, and that’s a pretty short time period to base
an allocation on.

I think there is some degree of you’re going to have to treat
each species a little different. Sometimes you may decide you
have a strong basis for staying with the years you have approved
in the past, but there may be other species where sticking with
the allocation on the books is a problem, because, for some of
these species, the allocation was put in place in Amendment 1,
back in 1990, and there was only a very short time series that
could be used to base an allocation on.

That may be a problem, but I think, in all of those cases,
you’re going to have to go through some process here and make
some determinations, and, depending on the timing of this and
how it proceeds, you may well get the new interim assessment
before you actually get this implemented. If Clay and the
Center can deliver that relatively early next year, I think that
will be the case, and the interim rule, or the changes we just
made, will be in place until we’re able to get this done.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: John.

MR. SANCHEZ: Then the other concern I have is that, in pretty
much all of these instances, we have a finite universe of
participants in the commercial sector, but it’s wide open on the
recreational side, and so it’s kind of a no-brainer that, if the
quotas kind of remain the same over time, one group is going to
continue to grow, and, even though they are catching, seemingly,
the small bag limits, the universe of participants is going to
grow over time, whereas one is contained, and you’re going to
forever be reallocating to the recreational from the commercial,
and so it’s endless, and it’s kind of going to go that way in
the long term, and that’s concerning to me.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dale.

MR. DIAZ: Kind of to what John is talking about, but I am
viewing it differently. I think we absolutely are going to have
to start a plan amendment to reallocate, because of what Dr.
Crabtree said. If we don’t, then we have done a reallocation,
and so I think we have to do that, but, in my mind, like we’re
talking about here with red grouper, I want this to be fair.

I would like for people, after reallocating, to be about where
they were before we plugged these new numbers in there, and I
was hoping that there would be a standard way where we could do
this for all of the species that we’ve got the new stock
assessments coming, but, as we talk about it around the table, I
don’t know that that’s going to be the case, and maybe it
shouldn’t be the case, but I think we’re going to do it with all
of these new stock assessments that we get. I don’t see any way
around it.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I see you, Leann, and then I think we’re going
to take a break.

MS. BOSARGE: Well, good, and so I’m going to end with an
apology, because I apologize. I thought -- If you want to go
through a plan amendment to look at allocation, I am good with
that. I saw OFLs and ABCs from the SSC presentation, based on
the stock assessment, and then the next slide that I saw was
OFLs and ABCs that we ought to implement, and I thought the
suggestion was -- Normally, we start a plan amendment to
implement whatever OFL and ABC comes out of our stock
assessment, and I thought that the implication here was, no, we
need to start a plan amendment that will implement this now. We
have an OFL and an ABC, and that’s one thing we have to do.
It’s a separate discussion to go through an allocation
amendment, and so that’s great.

DR. CRABTREE: I apologize if I gave that impression. These are
simply -- I believe you likely will need to go back to the SSC
and get them to give this their blessing with this change in the
allocation formula, but, yes, you’re going to have to go through
the appropriate vehicle, which I think Mara is saying is a plan
amendment, in order to implement all of this.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Real quick.

MR. DIAZ: So everything is about timing. Now we’ve got a stock
assessment in front of us, and the fishing year is fixing to
start, and a plan amendment takes a great deal of time to do. I
mean, as Sue said earlier, it’s six to eight months once it gets
out of the council.
In reality, we’re probably going to have to live with what we have on allocations until we can push that through, which it’s probably going to be sometime in the late summer or fall of next year, under the most optimistic, and this is going to happen every time we get a stock assessment. We’re going to have some allocations that are not right, and it might not happen every time, depending on when the fishing year starts, but, with some of them, it’s going to push into times when we have to live with what we have for a while, until we can work through the process.

DR. FRAZER: We’re going to take a fifteen-minute break.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: We need to cover the draft format of the stock assessment executive summary, and then, at some point, we’ll bring red grouper in for a landing, recognizing that we obviously are not going to solve all of those problems today, but, for the moment, I am going to pass it over to Ryan, so he can talk about this executive summary.

DRAFT FORMAT OF STOCK ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, ma’am. This is Tab B, Number 7(d), and this is something that the Science Center has been working on with council and SERO staff, to try to briefly characterize the biggest highlights in the stock assessment, and this is -- The executive summary, as you might imagine, is designed to be easily digestible by the largest swath of potential audience members.

We have structured this thing in such a way to keep what folks are most interested in right upfront, what stock we’re talking about and the stock status, and, as you move through the summary, you will see the reference points, the SSC recommendations, which, for red grouper, if this goes back to the SSC, then that will get updated.

Then the socioeconomic considerations and red tide projections, the data that were used in the assessment, the meristics of the length-weight and age-length conversions and all of those things that a lot of the staff find themselves using at various points through the amendments. Then recruitment, landings, discards, and, at the very end, that table that has the commercial and recreational landings in pounds by fleet in the FES-calibrated MRIP landings and effort.

What we’re looking for from you guys is feedback, and just as
far as structure, information, content, things like that, things that we might be able to do to revise this to be as useful as possible. We intend to work with the Science Center in producing these for every stock assessment, and so are there thoughts?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I guess I first would say thanks for putting this together. It is much better to go through a nine-page document versus a 500-page one, and so I will just start there and say that, but, yes, we’re looking for feedback on this from the committee.

MR. RINDONE: Dr. Sagarese and Dr. Stevens, Molly Stevens, worked very hard in putting this together, and so a big hat-tip to them.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: My feedback would be there are some nerds in the room that still like to read the big assessment, and they might like to start here, but read the 400-page one, and so if there could be a link, like somewhere, because, usually, we’re reading this on the computer, and so if there could be a link somewhere at the beginning of the summary that you could just click, and it would take you to the full assessment from the summary, straight to the full assessment, where you could dig into the data, and I have not read the summary, because I read the big assessment, and you may have that in there already, but that would be my word of advice.

MR. RINDONE: We actually have that at the end of the summary, before that appendix table, at the bottom of page 7.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: I think it’s good. It’s, obviously, a lot of work to condense the salient points down into a rather short document, as documents go for the council, and I just wanted to follow-up. It was mentioned that Dr. Sagarese had used some of her presentation to really expound upon the responses that came from the Something’s Fishy application, or tool, and so I wanted to reach out to Emily and say kudos for getting that off the ground and trying to get some support through the fishermen in the community to engage in that.

Certainly there’s a lot of skepticism out there on the science and such, and so I saw -- I was keeping up with some of the Facebook postings, and I saw it was a little bit of a challenge
to encourage folks and to get them to buy-in, so to speak.

I think if we can somehow, not necessarily in this document, but
I don’t know if you were going to do something that would help
to explain and condense some of the points that Dr. Sagarese had
brought up that were helpful as the assessment folks were
looking at those responses and trying to, again, reconcile some
of the later time series and some of the data they were looking
at and then using their responses to help kind of fill in the
gaps, if you will.

I think that would be helpful in at least relaying that out to
those that did respond specifically, if you’ve got contact
information for those. If you come up with that post, you can
say, hey, thanks a lot for participating, and please read the
summary, and then that would get out also to the general fishing
community for the next time the Something’s Fishy comes along,
and there might be some more -- Less skepticism, I guess, and,
more buy-in, and so I think that would be helpful, if you could
spend a little bit of time and do that, Emily, and I appreciate
it.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Any other feedback? Carrie.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is this
going to live in front of the full assessment report, or is it
going to be a standalone document?

DR. SAGARESE: My understanding, after talking to Julie, is this
can’t be amended at the beginning of the SEDAR stock assessment
report, but, on the SEDAR website, under the post-SEDAR
material, we can post this summary, as well as Molly also
developed a one-pager that is like a really succinct summary of
what’s been coming out of it, and so the thought is that it’s
going to go to the SEDAR website.

At the top, you have the link to the full assessment report, and
then, below that, you see the executive summary, as well as the
one-pager, and part of that is because, as Ryan mentioned, the
goal of this executive summary is really to summarize the entire
process, because, normally, the assessment reports stop after
the review, and there’s often a lot of changes that are made at
the SSC and the modifications, and so hopefully this document
will be a living document of all the decisions and the final
outcome of what came out of the assessment and how that changes
over the steps.

I know that I have been in that position and trying to go
through all the old documentation, to figure out what decisions were made, and it can be very tedious, and so hopefully this will be a standalone document that we can revise as necessary after each step of this process.


DR. PORCH: I just kind of wanted to ask again, and hopefully everybody has had a chance to look at it, and is there anything missing from this document that you think really should have been there? I mean, we want to save you from having to go through the full stock assessment for key information, except for folks like Leann who want to get into all the gory details.

On the other hand, it also is pretty long for an executive summary, and so is there anything in here that you think you don’t really need to see in the executive summary and you would have been happy just to go and leave it to the big report? I mean, I think they’ve done a nice job, but we just want to refine things so that it’s as useful to you as possible.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Dr. Sagarese just mentioned that it would be kind of an update, if you will, or a living, breathing document, and so I don’t see anything in here relative to findings from the previous assessment, maybe, and so, if there were major deviations in how the model was treated, or how data was input, maybe that might be something in here as kind of like the first paragraph of, hey, this is our third iteration or third assessment for this stock, and the previous two assessments were done this way, or had this result type of thing, and there may be, in a paragraph or two -- I know it adds more length, and I can’t comment right now on your desire to try to reduce it, because I think a lot of the sections in here are pertinent and worthwhile and provide a lot of information that would describe the assessment. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Skyler, go ahead.

DR. SAGARESE: Just to follow up on that, we did go back and forth a lot while we were developing this, with putting that kind of information in, and it would lengthen the document. I think we initially targeted for four pages, and we’re essentially doubling that, but we could certainly, as Leann mentioned earlier, have a link to the section in the stock assessment report that we describe in detail what were the major data changes, what were the major changes to the model
configuration, and we could potentially add a link directing you directly to that section, to see here is the breakdown of what happened.

That would take up only a few lines, versus having to -- Because some of this assessment, in particular, we had a lot of modifications, but the previous assessment -- In this case, because the SEDAR 42 model that was used had those errors, I would imagine, going forward, we would want to -- For example, looking at the stock status table, maybe have the old assessment and the new assessment, to see how those different metrics compare.

That is something we can do moving forward, but, at this time, we just didn’t want to waste the space in this executive summary, given what we were comparing was not necessarily appropriate, but that’s something we can certainly do.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Well, I am not seeing any more suggestions now, but, maybe between now and Full Council, if folks didn’t have a chance to look at this before the meeting, they can and bring suggestions to Full Council. Thank you, all, for working on that. All right, and so, before we leave red grouper, I want to circle back to a suggestion that Roy made before the break that we maybe kick those projections to the SSC. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I am going to make a motion. I move that we ask the SSC to review red grouper projections based on the allocation time series from Amendment 30B (1985 to 2005) and the best available landings used as inputs in the new stock assessment, which is approximately 40.52 percent recreational and 59.48 percent commercial, and direct staff to start work on a plan amendment to update the red grouper allocation and establish catch levels based on the new assessment.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. I am going to read it out loud, to make sure it all makes sense. The motion is to ask the SSC to review red grouper projections based on the allocation time series from Amendment 30B (1985 to 2005) and the best available landings used as inputs in the new stock assessment (40.52 recreational and 59.48 commercial) and direct staff to start work on a plan amendment to update the red grouper allocation and establish catch levels based on the new assessment. Is there a second to this motion? It’s seconded by Dale. Is there discussion on this motion? Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.
I will put out one other idea for a motion that the committee may want to consider, and so we’ve talked a couple of times in this discussion about those interim analyses, and the Reef Fish AP asked that we conduct those annually, and we had a discussion about hopefully getting one of those in 2020, and it might be nice to have a motion to formally request that from the Science Center folks. The motion would be to ask the Science Center to conduct interim analyses for red grouper annually, starting in 2020. I am just -- That’s what a proposed motion maybe could be.

MR. DIAZ: So moved.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Thank you. Is there a second to that motion? It’s seconded by Leann. All right. The motion is to ask the Science Center to conduct interim analyses of red grouper annually, starting in 2020. Does that make sense? We’re good? Okay. All right. Is there discussion on this motion? Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.

I think, at that point, we are ready to move away from red grouper for the time being. Greg.

DR. STUNZ: This isn’t specifically for red grouper, and it’s just in general, but red grouper is sort of our example here, and, mainly, this is for Roy. We have this issue where you have this de facto kind of reallocation that doesn’t really take place until you do this plan amendment that your motion put into place here, but what I’m wondering is what happens in the meantime?

We’ve got this second motion to do an interim analysis, but I assume that’s just updating it with the recent catch statistics, but do we just go with what we’ve got in the meantime, or -- I am not real clear what happens, because that plan amendment could take quite a while to get through.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, it could, and I would say that’s largely in your hands as a council. If you move expeditiously and don’t needless complicate things, hopefully we can get it done, but, in the meantime, we just implemented a rule to reduce the red grouper catch levels and establish them where they are now for 2019 and beyond, and so those would remain in place, and we would have to, until we get this taken care of, take the FES landings and convert them back into the old currency, which is what we’ve been doing, and so that’s what we would do, I guess, for 2020, and then hopefully we get all of this in place in time for the 2021 season.
I am fairly comfortable with that, and we’re not in the position to ask for an interim rule, because we’re not overfishing this stock, and we don’t need a rebuilding plan, and, because we just enacted some pretty steep reductions in the red grouper catch levels, I think we’re okay, but we do need to work on this amendment and get it done as quickly as we can.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. With that, we’re going to move on to our next agenda item, and we’ve got about forty minutes to cover the Itarget model update and projections for Gulf lane snapper, and then we’ll get to the rest of the Reef Fish AP report, and I believe Skyler is back up to present the lane snapper.

STOCK ASSESSMENT REVIEW: ITARGET MODEL UPDATE AND PROJECTIONS FOR GULF LANE SNAPPER

DR. SAGARESE: All right, everyone, and thanks for trying to make this not as long as red grouper. In this case, a disclaimer here. All of the analyses that you’re going to see are using the old currency of MRIP, and so this assessment used the MRIP APAIS numbers for recreational landings and recreational discards. That decision was not updated during this analysis that’s been done up to now, but it could potentially be presented to the SSC at the following meeting, to see how would this advice change, given the new MRIP FES numbers that are coming out for lane snapper.

Just let me start by saying this is work that Nancie Cummings at the Science Center has led, and I’m going to just try to give you a brief update of some of the key highlights, and she has some documents that kind of give more details on the analysis, and this is essentially a strict update of the data-limited method that was used for lane snapper, and what it is, essentially it’s a data-limited method that requires a time series of landings, as well as an index of abundance.

The index that was chosen, that we’ll discuss a little later, was the headboat index, and so the first thing that Nancie did was update that headboat index, using the same methodology and the same approach.

The only thing that changed was new data was added, and then she reran the Itarget data-limited approach to provide an updated OFL and ABC catch advice that the SSC reviewed, using the decisions they made, and so we’ll kind of go through each of those steps, and, just as a reminder, this is an unofficial update, because it’s not really an official SEDAR process, but
it’s of a SEDAR 49 evaluation, where lane snapper was one of the
species that was reviewed, and I believe the only species where
the assessment advice was considered for the assessment, and
that was back in -- The SSC finalized the results in 2017.

The first thing to talk about is the headboat index, and so,
essentially, we’ve got four more years of data, and the terminal
year for SEDAR 49 was 2014, and this assessment now is covering
through 2018, and so what Nancie did was go back and update this
headboat index, using the same approach.

It’s essentially a two-step approach that goes towards
developing the index. First, you look at the proportion
positive of the headboat data that shows lane snapper being
captured, and so this figure is just giving you an idea of, over
time, and so from 1986 onward, what was the proportion of effort
where lane snapper were observed versus not, and so the number
of trips with lane snapper versus those that are total trips,
and so you can see, in general, the lane snapper have a pretty
high occurrence within each of the years, ranging from about 40
percent up to about 70 percent, but there is a clear increase in
that trend, and so lane snapper are very prevalent within the
headboat data, and that was one of the reasons why it was
chosen.

Just keep in mind that we see an increasing proportion positive,
and then that sort of information goes into the rest of the
assessment, to develop the full index of abundance, and so, in
this slide, the orange color is essentially the index that was
provided and used for SEDAR 49.

The gray index here is updated through 2018, and that’s the
newest estimate of the index of abundance, the same methodology
and same assumptions, and so what you see in this trend is you
can see that the overlapping years are fairly similar across the
different assessments, but then, in the most recent years, we’ve
seen a large spike, and so there is essentially -- It’s
suggesting that there is higher relative abundance in the most
recent years, with a slight drop in 2018, and so what we saw at
the end of that assessment of SEDAR 49 -- Since then, we’ve seen
abundance go up above, and that’s one of the strengths that,
when we talk about the method, I will kind of go into a bit more
detail.

Another thing to look at with the headboat is we wanted to
compare the headboat effort that was affiliated with lane
snapper with the total headboat effort that is being -- The
total effort that’s being portrayed by the fishery, and so,
overall -- Again, this plot is over time, and the red color is --
- Total effort, I believe, is in blue, and then the lane snapper
targeted effort is in the orange.

This is on a normalized scale, and so, essentially, the trends
are similar. We have seen sort of a recent -- Since that SEDAR
49 assessment, we have seen an increase in the effort, according
to this headboat survey data, and the trends between those two
sources, and so total effort and then lane snapper effort follow
a very similar pattern.

One thing to highlight here is, for this assessment, for this
presentation, we have updated the landings. Again, this is the
commercial landings in weight, and the recreational landings are
the MRIP APAIS-adjusted landings in weight, and, in this case,
the assessment model, or the data-limited approach, uses total
removals, and so it’s accounting for the landings plus the dead
discards, and so, overall, in the time series, what we see here
over the different time series is essential removals are
primarily recreational, and so we would expect -- If the similar
patterns follow with the MRIP FES numbers, you would expect
that, if that recreational component goes up, we will see that
for this species as well, and that’s something we will review
with the SSC in a couple of months.

What we see here, mostly we’ve seen very variable landings
overall, up to about 800,000 pounds, in this currency, in I
think the late 1980s, versus, in more recent years, we’ve seen
sort of a spike in landings, which helped spawn this request for
this updated evaluation.

Just sort of a brief review of SEDAR 49. Many of you, if you
were involved in that process at all, you remember how it was
data-limited, but it was assumption-rich, and it was eight
species at once, and so it was quite a bit of work, the whole
process.

Lane snapper was the one species that, at the end of that
evaluation, was selected for catch advice, using an index-based
data-limited method that relied on this index of abundance as
well as total landings, and the reason why the headboat index
was chosen was because of the high proportion positive of lane
snapper. It had very high sample sizes and a relatively low CV,
and so, therefore, that index was chosen to represent what was
being used to track the trends in the population.

During that process, that approach was -- The index-based
approach was supported by a variety of different analyses that
sort of looked at data reliability and what we had available, and what the group decided on and supported was the is Itarget method that uses relative information from the index and gives you an idea of where you are, and then that would be used to potentially change your catch advice.

Just for context, again, this is sort of a strict update, where we have just updated the data streams that are going into the assessment, and we’re using the same methodology, the same approach, that was used for SEDAR 49.

The CPUE Itarget method, during SEDAR 49, there was a lot of behind the scenes work that went into evaluating some of the assumptions, and so, the way the method operates, it uses a reference period of mean catch. From that reference period of mean catch, you use a trend in your index, and so, during the reference period that was used, and, in this case, it was 1999 to 2008, which comes out of the previous decision during the Generic ACL Amendment, and so, basically, that reference period was chosen because it was a period of stable landings, and there was no trend in the landings, and we used the same assumption, and that was supported by the panels throughout this assessment.

We took the reference mean catch, and the way this Itarget method works is you have an index of abundance and mean index value during that same reference period, and you make the assumption -- What we assumed was during that period the stock was near an MSY condition, and the decision was made from the generic ACL work, and so, essentially, that mean CPUE, that mean index of abundance during the reference period, is where you’re trying to target. You are trying to get that value.

Then what you do is you take the last five years and see where we are now. For SEDAR 49, we were just kind of above that mean value, and so we saw sort of a slight increase in the catch advice, and so, depending upon the recent CPUE and the recent indexes, compared to our reference period -- If it increases, we would see an increase in the catch advice, and, if it decreases, we would see a decrease in the catch advice.

Basically, the take-home here is just the trend in the index helps track the catch, and so, over time, eventually, it will kind of stabilize and get us to a catch level that we would expect. Just to give you an idea of that reference period that was chosen, and this is, again, just reviewing the landings series, the decision that was made by the council, with the 2011 Generic ACL Amendment, is the period of 1999 to 2008 was a period of no trend, and what we end up seeing is that the
landings, in this case, have -- You can see the large variability between the over 800,000 to the more recent periods, but landings generally for lane snapper have been very variable.

Again, what we’re going to see now is, basically, what I mentioned earlier is we’re going to take that reference mean catch, and we take our difference between the reference index of abundance, the recent index of abundance, and we recalculate what the catch advice would look like.

In this figure, the thick vertical line is the recommendation that came out of SEDAR 49, and it’s about -- I think it’s 350,000 pounds. What you see with that distribution, that’s essentially the updated catch advice that comes out of the new model, and the first thing you will notice is it’s much higher than what was on the record from SEDAR 49. The main reason for that is because we’ve seen such an increase in recent abundance that the model is expecting that we can catch more fish, so that we can try to get at the target level we have set.

If we had seen a decline in our abundance index, we would expect to see a drop in the catch, and so, while these data-limited methods can be assumption-rich, they are designed to sort of track what’s going on over time, a similar concept to the interim analysis. You have sort of a starting point, and then you’re using information from another data source to kind of track where you are and eventually help you get to a stable level.

What this model is saying is that the catch advice can be increased to about 600,000 pounds, in this case, and, again, this is in the same currency, MRIP APAIS, that was used for SEDAR 49. Just for context, the dashed line of that distribution is essentially the 50th percentile.

At the SSC review in 2017, the SSC decided to use that 50th percentile of that distribution as what would be termed the OFL and then to use the 30th percentile of that distribution as the definition of the ABC, and so, in this case, this table is just showing you what the updated catch advice in the top row would be compared to what was on the books from SEDAR 49, and so you can see there’s a large increase in what’s being recommended, and, again, that’s based on that change in relative abundance coming out of the headboat index.

With that, are there any questions or comments? I am sure that Nancie is on the line as well, if there are any questions or comments for her as well.
CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I guess my only question is this -- I think you’ve redone this using FES landings?

DR. SAGARESE: We have, but the SSC has not reviewed that yet.

DR. CRABTREE: Is that in the plan, or what are we doing with that?

MR. RINDONE: We’re going to bring it to them in January.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Any other questions for Skyler? Kevin.

MR. ANSON: I am just curious. Can you recall what those numbers show, using the FES numbers, relative to these?

DR. SAGARESE: I am not going to give you an absolute number, but I can just tell you that they’re going to be much higher, because the majority of this fishery is recreational, and so, as we see those landings go up, you will see a different number.

MR. RINDONE: It’s been a million and 1.1 million pounds, and the other thing to remember for this stock is that we do not have sector allocations for lane snapper, and so all of the fun that you guys discussed previously with red grouper wouldn’t be as applicable for lane snapper.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Then I guess we could do some sort of framework amendment to implement the new catch levels, because there is no allocation here. Okay.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: We’ll have to cross that bridge when we get there, but it sounds like this is going to come back to us again following the next SSC meeting. All right. In the meantime, if there aren’t questions for Skyler, I believe Luiz has a slide about this from the SSC meeting as well.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically, the SSC accepted this assessment as the best scientific information available, and this, as Skyler explained, this is an assessment that was conducted as part of -- Analysis that was conducted as part of SEDAR 49, and the SSC reviewed that back in 2017, and then this potential overfishing over the last couple of years kind of elicited this move to go and look into this analysis
again and update it.

The SSC accepted the analysis and used the 50 percent -- Remember that we always provide our catch advice of OFL and ABC based on probabilities of overfishing, because that’s how our ABC control rule is structured, and so, at 50 percent, we use that for OFL, and then whatever percentage we feel, in terms of probability of overfishing, reduction from OFL to ABC, we produce that one, and so, in this case, we used 30 percent for ABC, consistent with what we had used last time, and 50 percent for OFL, and those are the figures there.

As Skyler already explained, this is based on the APAIS data and not the FES-calibrated data, and so we’re going to be looking at the new numbers, revised numbers, after she provides them, and then we’ll be submitting them to you as well.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Are there questions for Luiz? Seeing none, thank you, Dr. Barbieri, but we do have a Reef Fish AP recommendation regarding this assessment.

MR. RINDONE: I am chasing that down now. The Reef Fish AP discussed this at their October meeting, and, after hearing the presentation, they passed a motion unanimously to recommend that you guys set the ACL equal to the ABC, following the SSC’s catch recommendation.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. I assume there’s no questions about that. It’s pretty straightforward. Again, we’re going to talk about this again. Our next agenda item is to cover the remaining items from the Reef Fish AP report, and so I’ll pass it back to you, Ryan.

REMAINING ITEMS FROM THE REEF FISH AP SUMMARY REPORT

MR. RINDONE: I can so that. Again, this is Tab B, Number 9, and, as some of you noticed, we have a new Chair for the Reef Fish AP, and the AP elected Captain Ed Walker as the Chair and re-elected Captain Troy Frady as the Vice Chair.

If you scroll on down past all of the SEDAR 61 materials, you get to discussion of removing the rule allowing trolling in the Steamboat Lumps and Madison-Swanson MPAs, and so Captain Walker brought this issue before the AP, and he talked about having seen fishing for reef fish under the guise of trolling in Steamboat Lumps, and there was an FWC Law Enforcement officer present at the meeting that noted that it was particularly difficult to be able to say that someone was in fact trolling,
as opposed to drift fishing, while trying to bottom fish for reef fish, because the vessel is underway, or moving in a way that could be considered to be trolling, and so it makes enforcement of the trolling-only provision for fishing in Steamboat Lumps, and Madison-Swanson, for that matter, difficult to enforce.

After talking about the area and the bottom there and the kinds of fish that are held, the AP thought that trolling activity really isn’t something that goes on in either one of those areas and that the trolling that is perceived to be going on is largely just a ruse for bottom fishing.

They passed a motion to eliminate all fishing in Steamboat Lumps and Madison-Swanson MPAs, in order to protect spawning aggregations. That carried with twelve in favor and two abstentions. I guess I will take the motion things one at a time with you all.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I guess let’s pause there, just to see if anybody has any questions on that or reactions to that. Roy, are you putting your hand up?

DR. CRABTREE: I recall, when we changed the provisions in Steamboat Lumps and Madison-Swanson to allow surface trolling, and it was quite contentious, and it involved a lawsuit and a settlement and a study and a host of other things, and bear in mind this was before anyone had VMS on vessels or anything else, and I look back at that and consider it to have been a mistake, and I regret that I went along with making that change to it, and I have always felt like it’s an unenforceable situation, with the way we wrote the rule with respect to allowing surface trolling, and that we shouldn’t have done it.

I would support fixing this and getting rid of that provision, and I don’t think that we should have ever made the change to begin with, and I think a lot of things have changed, too. These places are way offshore, but, nowadays, you’ve got people with go-fast boats and four outboards on them, and I think, even though these places are way out there, they are a long ways to go, and I did, at the AP meeting, talk to the FWC agent, who had a lot of concerns, and I think it would be good to hear from some of those guys, or maybe have -- I think the AP may have already talked about this, but the FWC agents raised a lot of concerns with the unenforceable nature of some of this, and so I think it’s something we should address.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I want to call Captain Ed Walker up to the
podium. This is his issue, and he is the Reef Fish Chairman, and he can give us a little bit more, and I just want to confirm that the LETC did not talk about this, and is that right? Okay.

MR. WALKER: Thank you. The issue here is that, particularly in Steamboat Lumps, I’ve been involved in a research project with Sue Barbieri out there, on a gag grouper reproductive potential study, and I have since come to find out that that area out there, the Lumps, has become a primary fishing destination for a lot of recreational fishermen now, and the reason being is the fishing is fantastic in there, because the commercial guys haven’t been in there in fifteen or twenty years, because they have a VMS, and they simply cannot go in there, and so there is great fishing.

Now you have a lot of guys with go-fast boats, and the ones that are landing there are just knocking it out of the park. It’s the best fishing they have ever seen, and they tell their friends, and it’s a problem. I know some of these guys who go there, and it’s their favorite place to go fishing.

One guy told me that he was in there one day, in the Steamboat Lumps Sanctuary, fishing illegally, and there were six other boats in there that day fishing with him, and so it’s 130 miles offshore, and so enforcement is difficult, and so I talked to my local enforcement guys, and I gave them the coordinates of all the bottom in there, and they struggle to make a case.

It’s 130 miles out, and so they struggle anyway, but they agreed that, if they didn’t have a trolling allowance, it would be a lot easier for them to make a case on somebody. The FWC agent told me that, essentially, all somebody has to do, when they roll up on them, is put the boat in gear, and they are trolling, by definition, and they can’t make a case.

I think these guys need some help, because it’s -- Particularly in the Steamboat Lumps, it’s a really big problem, and we did probably twelve or fourteen trips out there last winter, and, in my experience as a charter boat captain, there is nothing special there for trolling.

It’s not a legitimate trolling destination, and I don’t think you’re going to hurt anybody. I don’t know anyone that has ever gone to Steamboat Lumps to go trolling. There is no big bottom features there, and it’s relatively flat. There’s no current edges or anything, and it’s really not a trolling spot. The trolling is merely a cover now for rampant bottom fish poaching, in what’s supposed to be -- In 2000, this was set up to, quote,
increase the stock size of gag grouper, these sanctuaries out there, and the area is being picked to death.

Now, I don’t know as much about Madison-Swanson, as far as it relates to if that’s a legitimate trolling place or not, but I talked to a couple of the charter boat captains up there and Pete Harwell, who is an enforcement guy up there, and they kind of concurred that the same things are going on in Madison-Swanson that they are in Steamboat Lumps, but that’s the issue, and it’s a really big problem. That place is being hammered by recreational go-fast boats every weekend, and I’m happy to answer any questions about that.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Lieutenant.

LT. ZANOWICZ: Thanks for the comments. Just to chime in from the Coast Guard side, obviously this area is definitely far offshore, and it’s also far from not just where we have Coast Guard patrol boats homeported, but also where we have Coast Guard stations, and so, historically, this area hasn’t seen a whole lot of Coast Guard enforcement.

We did have one of our fast-response cutters conduct a patrol there within the last few months, and they actually got feedback, while they were doing boardings, from individuals onboard that they were surprised to see the Coast Guard out there.

We do have regular overflights of this area, but we have seen several violations in these areas in the past couple of years, and so I would definitely say, if there’s any area in the Gulf, protected area in the Gulf, where compliance is an issue, it would probably be these ones.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Captain Walker, was there much discussion as far as the enforcement, since they are kind of out of the way and out into themselves and get to for enforcement, and was there any discussion amongst the AP that talked about addressing the provision that allows possession of reef fish onboard while vessels are in that area?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and thank you for asking that. That’s a tricky one, and you can possess fish in a transit situation only, and so you can have a reef fish onboard in the sanctuary, legally, as long as your -- The definition is your gear has to be stowed, and you have to be underway.
It's a ten-mile-by-ten-mile box, and I believe they both are, and so it’s a hundred-square miles, and so boats are going to need to transit through there, and I don’t know that you could say no transit, and like a commercial grouper boat might have to come that way on his way home, and so, yes, we did talk about that, and I don’t know -- If there was a way to eliminate possession, I think it would be great, but, without screwing around with the transit part of it, I don’t know that you could, but that’s a good question, for sure.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Any other questions or discussion on this? All right. Thanks, Ed. What else have we got?

MR. RINDONE: All right. What else do we have? They talked about the executive summary, and the AP generally liked the layout. You guys went through their lane snapper recommendations, and they talked about the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary expansion plan. Natasha covered that. Then also the Flower Garden Banks expansion, and they had an update on Coral Amendment 9.

They talked about the amberjack management measures, and they received a status update on Draft Amendment 52, the reallocation of red snapper, and they talked about Amendment 36B. It was a very busy meeting. Then the for-hire possession limits, and that ties it off. It was a packed one-day meeting.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Thank you. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Can we go back to the discussion we just had about Steamboat Lumps and Madison-Swanson?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Sure.

MS. BOSARGE: I was hoping that one of the recreational representatives would speak up and say let’s look into this, but I guess, if they are not, I will step up and say let’s look into this. It’s supposed to be protection over the spawning stock, and we have made sure that we’ve protected it from one sector, but it sounds like it’s not being protected all the way around, and so let’s take a look at it.

I would like to make a motion. Somebody help me out. Would it be a motion to start a document, or would it be a motion to look further into it? What would it be? Roy, I am looking at you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: I will just insert some thoughts while Roy is
conferring over there, but I think it sounds like we would want
law enforcement to look at this, or maybe get some kind of
report from the FWC Law Enforcement. I think, if you actually
did want to make a change, you would have to start some kind of
document, but I’m not exactly sure what type of document that is
at this point. Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I think the appropriate motion might be to
ask staff to start a framework action to reevaluate the trolling
provisions in those two areas.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay. That’s my motion. The two areas are --

DR. CRABTREE: Madison-Swanson and Steamboat Lumps.

MS. BOSARGE: MPAs.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: The motion is to ask staff to begin a framework
action to reevaluate the trolling provisions in Madison-Swanson
and Steamboat Lumps. Is there a second to this motion? It’s
seconded by Paul. Is there any other discussion on this?

MR. RINDONE: Just for clarification and direction for staff,
when you guys say “reevaluate”, the presumption being either to
allow it or not to allow it, and then the consideration perhaps
of the transit provisions that Captain Walker talked about, like
having something in there that says that those would continue to
be allowed? I am just trying to make sure we have enough
direction to move forward and bring something sensible back to
you guys.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Well, yes, allow it or don’t allow it, but I am
sensitive to the transit -- Not even transit, but this whole
idea of possession, and I am sensitive to it both recreationally
and commercially. There is recreational people that are going
to transit it through there too, and those are big areas, and we
need to make sure that we don’t unduly punish them for
transiting through there, and so we need to make sure, if it’s
going to be a definition of gear stowed, or gear out of the
water, essentially, that we get that right when we go about
this, because I don’t want them to be punished for not doing
anything wrong.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Paul.

DR. MICKLE: I guess, just hearing the information from Captain
Walker and talking about it, it seems like that the trolling provision seems to be the main issue, and he is identifying, from the AP, that trolling isn’t really the type of activity that is really favorable in these areas, and so this document will hopefully allow the public to flesh out and identify if there is a group that is going to be affected, but, again, trolling is -- It just seems like it’s not something that is really viable in these areas.

This motion would really tackle the problem, and with just the trolling issues. I think the other transit and possession -- It just really seems like this will take on the problem that’s been brought up from the AP report. Thank you.

MR. RINDONE: Okay. I think we’re good then.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Dale and then Mara.

MR. DIAZ: When I pull this up, and I just typed it in, and there’s another site out there called The Edges, and would that site also be something that would need to be included?

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: I don’t think we have a comparable provision for The Edges, and the problem provision on trolling is for -- It says within the Madison-Swanson sites and Steamboat Lumps, during May through October, surface trolling is the only allowable fishing activity. For the purpose of this paragraph, surface trolling is defined as fishing with lines trailing behind a vessel which is in constant motion and speeds in excess of four knots with a visible wake. Such trolling may not involve the use of downriggers, wire lines, platers, or similar devices.

That is the provision that we would be looking at, and that only applies to these areas, and I remember, at the council meeting when we did this, NOAA Law Enforcement got up and said, basically, we can’t enforce this, and we just can’t do this, and so it was an enforcement problem then, but I think that’s the provision, and I think it’s only applicable to those two places.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Mara.

MS. LEVY: Just to note that there are transit provisions in there already.
MR. RINDONE: Thanks, and, just to clarify the regs for The Edges, and I am pulling up the management history, and fishing is prohibited in The Edges from January 1 through April 30, as of July 24, 2009, for recreational and commercial fishing. That is prohibited, period, trolling and bottom fishing and everyone.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. Are we ready to vote? Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. We are finished with the Reef Fish AP report, and we’ve got about four minutes, if there is any other business for the committee. Okay. We’ve got two.

OTHER BUSINESS

DR. STUNZ: Mine is pretty quick. At the last meeting, I made a motion, when we had a lot of public testimony about the discards, particularly from the longliners and the IFQ folks, and I am trying to find the motion, but it was basically just -- Here it is. Provide some estimates of discards in numbers and weight of fish and gear type that is used to harvest commercial IFQ species, and that was to build into what was 36B at the time, but whatever it is now. I was just wondering what’s the status of that, and I don’t know if that’s a question for Clay or Roy, but I don’t -- There wasn’t a timeline on that motion, and so obviously I was hoping we would hear something at this meeting.

CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Carrie.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have not sent that letter yet to the Science Center, because we need more time to develop the request, based on what we had already received for the discard mortality workshop, and work through that information and get it up for the best practices. That is a top priority, and we wanted to try to get it out before this meeting, but we were just not able to do that, but we need to work with the Science Center some more, to find out what we can actually get, and get that letter drafted and submitted to them.

DR. STUNZ: That’s good, and I appreciate that, Carrie, because the example we were talking about, that website, and you look by fleet and by discard, and, if you look at some of the testimony, one person on one day exceeded the discard rate that that table shows, and so obviously there is some discrepancies in that data. In other words -- The last thing I want to make sure is clear is apparently there is -- During that process, there is reporting of discards that do go, official reporting, but I
1  don’t know what that looks like or whatever, but, anyway, that’s
2  what I was hoping to gain from the motion, and it’s clear in the
3  text of the report what we were talking about.
4
5  CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Troy.
6
7  MR. WILLIAMSON: In your package on Amendment 36B, in the
8  appendix, under the advisory panel summary, there was a
9  reference to a council motion back in January of 2018, and it
10  was an instruction to staff to start a white paper exploring
11  rents and royalties in the Gulf commercial red snapper fishery,
12  and to be included in that were examples of calculation of Gulf
13  red snapper rents and royalties and alternative methods for
14  distribution of shares. I didn’t see that white paper in the
15  documentation, and my question is, has that been developed?
16
17  CHAIRMAN GUYAS: Ava.
18
19  DR. LASSETER: Yes, and I can provide a copy of that for you,
20  Troy. It has been presented to the council.
21
22  MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you.
23
24  CHAIRMAN GUYAS: All right. It is 5:29, people. I’m just
25  saying.
26
27  DR. FRAZER: Without further ado, we will adjourn, and I will
28  see you at 8:30 in the morning.
29
30  (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 22, 2019.)
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