GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES COMMITTEE

The Tremont House

Galveston, Texas

OCTOBER 21, 2019

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Leann Bosarge ............................................. Mississippi
Roy Crabtree .................................................. NMFS
Dave Donaldson ............................................. GSMFC
Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley) .............. Florida
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Jonathan Dugas ........................................... Louisiana
Phil Dyskow .................................................. Florida
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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 17: Motion to approve the Framework Action to Modify Federal For-hire Trip Limits and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 18.

PAGE 46: Motion to approve the Gulf Council’s Research and Monitoring Priorities for 2020 – 2024 as written. The motion carried on page 47.

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The Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the Gulf of Mexico
Fishery Management Council convened at the Tremont House,
Galveston, Texas, Monday morning, October 21, 2019, and was
called to order by Chairman Dale Diaz.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN DALE DIAZ: I would like to call the Sustainable
Fisheries Committee to order. The new membership of the
committee is myself as Chair, Dr. Stunz as Vice Chair, Mr.
Banks, Mr. Anson, Ms. Bosarge, Dr. Crabtree, Mr. Donaldson, Ms.
Guyas, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Swindell, and Mr. Williamson.

The first order of business is the Adoption of the Agenda. Does
anybody have any objections to the way the agenda is presented?
Seeing none, the agenda is adopted. Next up is Approval of the
Minutes from August of 2019. I would like to get a motion from
somebody to approve the minutes, whenever you feel comfortable.

MR. DAVE DONALDSON: So moved.

DR. GREG STUNZ: I will second it.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Motion by Mr. Donaldson and second by Dr. Stunz.
Any objections to adopting the minutes? Seeing none, the
minutes are adopted. For the Action Guide and Next Steps, we’re
going to go through them as we come to agenda items, and we have
several agenda items, just so it will be fresh in our minds.
We’re going to just handle that as it comes up.

We’re going to move to Agenda Item Number IV, which is the Final
Draft Framework Action to Modify Federal For-Hire Multiday Trip
Possession Limits. Mr. Rindone is going to be handling that for
us. Mr. Rindone.

FINAL DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION TO MODIFY FEDERAL FOR-HIRE MULTIDAY
TRIP POSSESSION LIMITS
DOCUMENT

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Thank you, sir. In your Action Guide and
Next Steps, you guys will see that you will be reviewing the
updated analyses in this document and your current preferred
alternative and make any modifications you think you need to do,
and we’ll also go through our public comments and draft codified
text, and, if you guys are happy with the condition of
everything, you can recommend to the Full Council that it be
implemented

If we go to the document, since you guys have last seen this, we have gone through the data in the tables, and we have updated some things, but, largely, the story remains the same. The preponderance of trips, whether they be by headboats or -- This is Tab E-4(a), and I am at Table 1.1.1 on page 2.

Whether it’s a headboat or it’s a charter vessel that we’re talking about, the preponderance of trips that are taken by those vessels in the for-hire fleet are less than twenty-four hours in duration. The trips that are longer than that make up just a small fraction, anywhere from -- In Table 1.1.1, you can see it’s anywhere from -- Depending on the trip type, half a percent to a little over a percent-and-a-half, and then, if we go down to the percentage of those trips that caught a Gulf reef fish or a CMP species by trip duration, Table 1.1.2, again, you can see that it’s just a small fraction of those trips that would be affected by what’s being proposed here.

In Table 1.1.3, you can see the total number of vessels that are in the Southeast Region Headboat Survey against the number of vessels that fished a trip duration greater or equal to twenty-four hours at least once during that year, and a fair preponderance of vessels will make at least one trip, but there are a handful of vessels that make numerous multiday trips.

Then, if we go to Table 1.1.4, you can see the data from the Gulf for-hire survey, and this was requested by Mr. Anson at the last meeting, and so we’ve got this all worked up for you now. The large majority of charter vessels do not take trips that are greater than twenty-four hours in duration. There is a very small fraction here, less than one-tenth of a percent, for some of the options that were considered by the council for this document. It is of note though that Texas and Louisiana data are not included for 2014 to 2018, because MRIP reporting and surveying did not happen in those states at that time.

Then you can see the total number of vessels in Table 1.1.5 for the charter fleet. It’s 1,928 vessels, and, of those, you can see the number of those vessels that made a trip in any of those categories there, and the same vessel could have made trips that were on the duration that fell in multiple categories.

If we breeze on down to page 6, Section 1.4, the council currently prefers an onboard possession limit for federal for-hire trips in the Gulf exceeding a given trip duration, which you guys currently have at greater than thirty hours, that that
onboard possession limit will be two daily bag limits per angler, or per vessel for speckled hind and warsaw grouper, and that the second daily bag limit can be retained at any time during a trip with a minimum duration, again, of greater than thirty hours.

Your justification for this we characterize in Section 1.4.2, saying that changing when the second daily bag limit may be possessed is unlikely to result in any measurable impacts, because the presumption is that second daily bag limit would be possessed, if it was able to be caught, at some point on that trip, whether it’s prior to or after twenty-four hours have passed, and that you guys also determined that, since anglers would be allowed to possess the second daily bag limit at any time during the trip, the trip duration should clearly exceed twenty four hours, and so you guys chose to increase that minimum trip duration to greater than thirty hours. I think Emily has some public comments, if there aren’t any questions at this point, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Did you have anything from the Reef Fish AP that you wanted to mention?

MR. RINDONE: We did, but I was going to let Emily go first. It’s really up to you. I can do that first or Emily can go first.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: No, that’s fine. Ms. Muehlstein.

REVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We published a video tutorial on this framework action to solicit public comments, and we had 152 views of that video, and we received forty-nine comments from that video. We heard support for the preferred option that would allow for the retention of two daily bag limits at any time during the multiday trip, with the rationale that allowing operators to retain their multiday bag limit at any time during the trip would reduce discards on multiday fishing trips and also allow businesses to operate with greater efficiency.

We heard support for the allowance of a second daily bag limit on trips over twenty-four hours, and it was also noted that this should be based on hours at-sea, rather than on calendar days, and it was also said that vessels returning to dock early for any reason should have to report to law enforcement.
We also heard support for the allowance of a second daily bag limit on trips over thirty hours, and we heard that bag limits should be increased by an extra day for each consecutive twenty-four hours. For example, trips exceeding forty-eight hours should be able to retain a three-day bag of fish, and that concludes the summary of the public comments.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein. All right, Mr. Rindone. Did you want to go back and get the AP recommendations?

REEF FISH AP RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. RINDONE: Sure thing. The Reef Fish AP discussed this during their meeting on October 2, and they passed a motion in support of the council’s preferred option, with Preferred Sub-Option b, without any opposition. I will just note to the committee and the council that the newly-elected Reef Fish AP Chair, Captain Ed Walker, is here, if you want to pick his brain.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Rindone. The Law Enforcement Technical Committee did review this. Dr. Lasseter, can you tell us about their recommendations?

LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

DR. AVA LASSETER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Unfortunately, we don’t quite have the full LETC report together yet. That is coming imminently, and I have sent this respective section to Meetings, and we’ll go ahead and call that up on your screen for you, and then we also have Assistant Commander Jarrett Barker here in the audience, and he is the TPWD representative on the LETC, and so if we would like to bring him up to discuss the motion any further as well.

The LETC did discuss this action, and they did have some concerns about it, and I think they summed up their concerns quite well in their motion, if we could just scroll down just a tad to the motion, and I will read that out to everybody.

The LETC is comfortable with anglers possessing two bag limits within twenty-four hours, but they feel that the fish would need to be retained on separate calendar days, and this goes back to the concept that bag limits are based on the calendar day.

Thus, the LETC recommends that the council clarify when the second bag limit may be retained, but the LETC recommends that
the council remove the minimum number of hours requirement and
not allow retention of the second bag limit until the second
calendar day. In their discussion, it was that calendar day
concept that they really stuck with, that bag limits and
possession limits otherwise are set per calendar day, and so I
will pause there.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I am not seeing any questions. All right. Next
on the agenda, Ryan, there’s a section for South Atlantic
Council comments. Did you want to start that off?

SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL COMMENTS

MR. RINDONE: Sure. I participated in the South Atlantic
Council’s September meeting via webinar, and I reviewed the
document in brief with them, and there was a little bit of
discussion about it, and it was more to inform them of what was
going to be going on in the Gulf and the proposed regulations,
since it would affect primarily fishermen in the Keys that held
for-hire permits in both areas that make multiday trips north of
the Keys and south.

We reviewed everything with them, and we went through what the
regulations were, both for the Gulf and the South Atlantic, and
it is on their radar, and Mr. Conklin is here as well, and he
could speak to it, if you wanted.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Did you have any comments, Mr. Conklin?

MR. CHRIS CONKLIN: Yes. Thanks. We reviewed everything, and
we had the presentation from Ryan, and we decided not to begin
work on a complementary amendment, but we’re going to revisit
this topic the next time we have room for a new CMP or a reef
fish amendment, just because some of our provisions are
different in our region, and we want to have the ability to
travel up the coast and get the full input from all of our
headboat operators as well.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Conklin. The only thing we
haven’t covered is the review of the draft codified text, that’s
on the agenda, and so this particular item is at the point where
it’s ready for adoption, if this committee so chooses.

The committee could also choose to modify it or to disregard it,
and so, really, it’s up to the committee on how we move forward
here. Any questions or comments from committee members? Ms.
Guyas.
COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

MS. MARTHA GUYAS: Speckled hind and warsaw grouper, because I know this is going to be a question, since that’s a vessel limit, does this mean that they can have two vessel limits?

MR. RINDONE: Yes. The way that it’s written now, trips that are greater -- For-hire trips greater than thirty hours in duration would be allowed to retain two vessel limits of speckled hind or warsaw grouper.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. MARA LEVY: Just to say that we’re not really changing that. They’re already allowed to have two vessel limits as a possession limit. It’s just that we’re changing when you can keep it and how long your trip needs to be, and so the regulations already have that. We’re not changing what it says about those two species.

If you look at the codified text, we’re changing -- We are specifying that the trip has to be more than thirty hours, rather than twenty-four, and that you can keep it at any time during the trip, and then we’re adding, at the bottom, that the entire trip has to occur on days when harvest and possession of the applicable species are allowed, meaning the whole trip has to be on open days. You can’t be out on a closed day and an open day and still get two daily bag limits.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy, does that satisfy the agenda item for reviewing the codified text? Thank you, Ms. Levy. Mr. Swindell.

MR. ED SWINDELL: Ms. Levy, on that, you just mentioned days, and is the days that you just mentioned a calendar day or a twenty-four-hour period?

MS. LEVY: Well, there is two different things, right? I mean, the trip has to be more than thirty hours, right? You can keep it at any time during that trip, and so we’re changing it to say, if you go out on calendar day one and you are planning to go on a thirty-hour trip, you can keep two daily bag limits on that calendar day one, but what we’re also expressly saying here, because we’re allowing you to keep it any time, is that your whole trip has to be on open days, meaning calendar days, and so red snapper opens on June 1, and you can’t go out on May 31 and come back on June 1, or whatever thirty hours is after the day changes, and have two daily bag limits of red snapper,
because your trip was only on one open day and not two days. The whole trip has to be on open days for this to apply, is basically what we’re saying.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Walker, I wanted to make sure and give you an opportunity. If there’s anything you would like to address that happened at the Reef Fish AP, we would welcome any comments you might have.

MR. ED WALKER: Thank you. Pretty much everybody on our panel was okay with the way it’s written right now, and I don’t think we had any opposition. Everybody was pretty much in favor of it. I think it was unanimous, actually, but I’m happy to answer any questions that anybody has on that.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Walker. I appreciate it. Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: As I sat in on the Law Enforcement Committee of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, the law enforcement people were really concerned, it appeared to me, that they could not reasonably enforce, the first day, anything other than a calendar day, and so, if they would happen to stop a boat that was within that first calendar day of fishing, and you had more than your calendar day of fishing limit, then they would have to issue a ticket, yet we’re saying that, hey, we don’t want you to do that until -- If you’ve got a thirty-day permit that you’re going to be fishing under, and I think we’ve tried to address that, but I don’t see that the law enforcement people that we had at that meeting were anywhere near that kind of conclusion. I think they still wanted to be regulated on a calendar day basis, and am I not correct, Dale?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I think they went -- What I took out of it, and I’m going to invite Assistant Commander Barker to the mic, if he doesn’t mind, but what I took out of it is that, in state waters, in some of the states, they are strictly enforcing it with calendar days, and that would be very consistent, if this was calendar days, but, at one point, I heard some of them say that they could enforce it this way if the council so chose, is the way I remember it, but, Assistant Commander Barker, can you shed some light on that for us, please?

ASSISTANT COMMANDER JARETT BARKER: Some of our concern was around a calendar day definition and just defining it as such, and does a calendar day begin at 12:01, or does it begin at the time that the trip leaves the dock? There is some distinctions between that as to when a bag limit, as it’s enforced right now,
takes place.

If the fish stock allows for you’re going to give them a two-day bag limit, we really didn’t want to see you draw a line in the sand around twenty-four hours or thirty-six hours, because heavy weather can set in, and any number of events can happen during a trip, that that vessel needs to come back in. Now, do they have to idle around in the bay for fifteen hours before they can complete the trip, because they were forced back to the dock?

Essentially, we did talk about, at some point, these vessels are proposed to go to a hail-out system, and so we would know exactly when they leave the dock, because they’re going to hail-out that they’ve begun their trip, and we would have a record of that, presumably, accessible by the officer on the vessel, but that’s not always the case either, but, essentially, all of that is to say that they’re fishing under the commercial allocation, and they have a window of a season where that allocation is going to be met, and it really doesn’t matter when they catch those fish.

If you’re going to give them four fish per angler on a two-day trip for snapper, give them the four fish. Don’t draw some lines in the sand that are different than some of the other enforcement aspects that are already on the books, and so we typically enforce bag limits on a calendar day, beginning at 12:01 a.m. and ending at 11:59 p.m. We like to stick with that in most law enforcement or most statute wording and models, rather than go to these hours, if that makes sense. Do you have any other questions?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Frazer.

DR. TOM FRAZER: I am not sure that I’m going to direct this question at you, and I might direct it back to the council, who was involved in the discussions at the time, at the last meeting actually, and so my understanding is that, when a headboat goes out and intends to be out for more than a twenty-four-hour period, that there is records that are involved here, with a time stamp on those records, and so there would be an actual start time that would be available to the law enforcement officers, and is that correct?

ASSISTANT COMMANDER BARKER: It doesn’t currently exist that way right now. The IFQ system has that, and what I understand from our NOAA counterparts at the law enforcement meeting was that that’s the direction that this group of fishermen is going with their hail-out, and so it will be a very similar model, but we
don’t currently have that.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Boggs.

MS. SUSAN BOGGS: Thank you. I’m not on your committee, but, currently, the headboats do not have a hail-out process.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Currently, to have the possession limit on one of these trips that spans more than twenty-four hours, the regulations say that the passenger has to be issued a receipt verifying the length of the trip. Now, I don’t know if that’s going to tell you when the trip started. It’s just going to say how long it was.

Right now, our regulations say, essentially, the possession limit doesn’t apply until after the first twenty-four hours of the trip, right, and so the whole point of potentially doing this is to get rid of that requirement and say you can keep the possession limit at any time during the trip.

The regulations, the proposed codified text, is very clear about that. You can keep two daily bag limits, or the vessel limit for those two species, at any time during the trip, as long as that trip is going to be over thirty hours and you can document that you’re on a trip that is over thirty hours.

I get that law enforcement may not know when that thirty hours started and ended, but you almost have the same problem with the other trip, in saying after the first twenty-four hours of the trip, if you don’t know when it started, and so we’re not changing a lot here, is what I’m trying to get at. You were very specifically looking at changing how long the trip has to be and when you can possess that possession limit.

If that’s what you want to do -- I mean, I hear what law enforcement is saying, and, at the last meeting, you did talk about the fact that what happens if someone needs to come back earlier, and it’s an emergency situation, and then you kind of have law enforcement discretion at play there, but I’m not sure how you get at the calendar day thing, because, if what you want to do is let them keep it at any time during the trip, but you somehow specify that it needs to be separate calendar days, then that whole rationale doesn’t seem to work very well.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Schieble.
MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE: I guess just help me out with the
definition on this. We don’t deal with headboats very often in
Louisiana, and so what is technically the definition of
“abandoned”? If a vessel were to come back early, earlier than
the thirty hours, and it tied off to the dock, but the fish were
not removed from the vessel, and does that matter or not? Is it
landed if it’s not removed from the vessel, is what I’m getting
at.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER BARKER: Well, from a law enforcement
standard, we would not consider it landed unless it’s removed
from the vessel. The way these checks typically unfold is we
would either check the vessel while he is actually fishing, on a
reef or at some location, fifteen or twenty miles offshore, and
we probably would not know when that trip started, and, really,
as the model exists right now, it would be irrelevant.

We would look at the number of resources they had for the
current bag limit, daily bag limit. With the change, that
really wouldn’t matter much, other than they can, right then, at
that time when we’re checking them, they could possess two daily
bag limits right then, when we were checking them.

The other way that we check these vessels is that the jetties
they’re coming back in -- They have completed their trip, and,
right now, today, if they claim that it was a two-day trip, and
there is any kind of evidence that it was -- I mean, the onus is
on us to prove that it was not a two-day trip, and so, typically
-- We see vessels coming in all the time with possession limits,
but I think the model comes down to these businessmen, these
fishermen, they want to take their clients.

If they want to leave the dock and hit a reef and catch their
fish there, and then continue on to do the rest of their trip,
pursuing other species, does the council want to allow that
model to take place? Essentially, law enforcement -- Again,
like I said, we don’t really have a heavy weight in this,
because, if they’re fishing under an allocation system, and if
the resource is there to allow them to do it, they can catch the
resource, and it doesn’t matter if it took place on one side or
the other, but, the more regulation that you break apart and put
thirty hours on this one and another one, you’re going to stack
on forty-eight hours.

We would like to keep things consistent, where, if you’re going
to do anything with this, define it around the twenty-four-hour
day, or the day.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I guess, just to make sure that we get it clear, and considering where the council may want to go with this, is it enforceable as it’s written now?

ASSISTANT COMMANDER BARKER: I don’t know. Right now, tomorrow, if we were to go out and check a vessel, I wouldn’t know when the vessel started, and so, whatever they claim, we would -- Typically, for receipts, receipts are exchanged when you come back to the dock and the trip is done, and the client pays up their money, and they tip the guides and the deckhands, and they collect their fish and they go home.

There is really nothing onboard, other than you might see the start of the GPS track log, or you might see some movement on somebody’s phone, but, typically, for a check, we’re not going to access all those things. It could probably be done. We will get there, especially if those vessels do go to a hail-out system, and I think we could probably cross that bridge and enforce it.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you. Mr. Anson.

MR. KEVIN ANSON: To that point, for clarification, for enforcement, maybe in the codified text, on page 2, at the bottom, where it specifies that each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that verifies the length of the trip, we should probably modify that to say something on the order of each passenger is issued and has in possession a receipt issued on behalf of the vessel that identifies the duration of the trip, including the time of departure and the time of return, date and time of departure and date and time of return.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER BARKER: Well, again, it would come down to when are they issuing that to the client. I would envision they would have a stack of blanks that you just fill out on the deck, but, I mean, that’s how you would do that easily.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Go ahead, Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I certainly understand that there is ways to divert every law that’s on the books, but, I mean, the intention and the way it’s worded here is that they’re supposed to have in their possession the receipt that identifies the length and duration, and so that’s supposed to be in possession, and that’s not at the time they finish the trip. That’s while the trip is underway, and every angler should produce that receipt. I understand there could be somebody out there just handwriting
receipts and that type of thing, but with more privilege comes
more responsibility, I guess, in trying to do the right thing.
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy, is what Mr. Anson is proposing doable?

MS. LEVY: I think we could add something that says -- That
verifies the length of the trip, including the start date and
time. We will tweak it to make it sound right, but we could add
a clause that requires the receipt on these trips to actually
state the date and time of departure or something like that.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Sanchez.

MR. JOHN SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, everybody
kind of -- I guess we’re losing sight that this is a small
percentage of the fleet, and this is something they have asked
for, and we’ve kind of worked out already a lot of these
details, and there is a receipt, and now -- If it says the start
time, it’s pretty identifiable if they’re twenty-four hours or
not.

These are long-range, professional fishermen, and weather is not
going to be an issue for them. They will seek some safe harbor
and do what is asked of them, and, before long, God willing,
we’ll have some VMS on these boats, and that will address any
concerns of where they were and where they weren’t and how long
they were out.

Again, going back to the genesis of this, Amendment 1 allowed
for this, and then consolidation of some federal regulations
kind of muddied the waters, and here we are, and so we’re just
trying to fix something and go back to where we started from,
and it’s a small percentage of the fleet, and let’s let them do
it.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: Usually, on our agenda, it is usually in
bold when it’s in final action, but it says final draft
framework action for this one, but we are slated for final
action today, right, and you took us through the document and
showed us our one action item with our preferred.

MR. RINDONE: Yes, ma’am.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay. Well, if there’s no other discussion, I
like what Kevin had to say about that addition, and I think that
will make it a little more enforceable. I am pretty comfortable with our preferredes, and, if everybody else is comfortable, I am ready to make that motion to recommend it to Full Council.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: I would like to make that motion, and I saw some nodding of heads, if staff could help me with the verbiage. The name of the document is the Modification of For-Hire Multiday Trip Possession Limits. It would read to approve the Modification of For-Hire Multiday Trip Possession limits and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. That’s my motion.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Okay. We have a motion. Is there a second? Go ahead, Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Just to clarify what you guys have talked about and Ms. Bosarge’s motion about adding in the departure and return timestamp on the receipts. You might put that ahead of this motion, since that’s going to be something that they’re going to be required to do. The vessel captains are going to be required to, if they’re not doing it already.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I think we could come back with some codified text that includes that, so that you can actually look at it and approve it at Full Council. I mean, I think that’s fine.

MR. RINDONE: (Mr. Rindone’s comment is not audible on the recording.)

MS. LEVY: I don’t think so, because we’re just -- I mean, it already says it has to be a trip over thirty hours, and we’re just looking at the codified text to implement that in the document, and part of that is going to be requiring that the departure date and time be indicated on the receipt, and so I think that’s okay. You will approve it at Full Council.

MR. RINDONE: I just wanted to make sure that we weren’t glossing over any fine print or anything.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. We have a motion. Is there a
second? Second by Mr. Anson. Is there further discussion? Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I think I’m — I mean, you talked about the South Atlantic Council talking about this, and so, obviously, whatever you do doesn’t depend on what the South Atlantic Council does, and I mentioned this before, but just be aware that you’re going to have different possession limit requirements between the South Atlantic and the Gulf, and so, depending on what permit you have, snapper grouper, or even the CMP permit, depending on which one you have, the possession limit is going to be different.

Snapper grouper is a little bit different right now, because they do have a forty-eight-hour possession limit, but the idea that you can keep it at any time during the trip is going to be significantly different, and so I just want folks to be aware, and, when you look at the codified text, the CMP regulations for the possession limit are now divided into South Atlantic and Gulf, because we had to make Gulf different, and so it’s very obvious that they’re different, but just so you know that, given the issues with having differing requirements on that border, that’s going to cause this.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Is there further discussion? Seeing none, we’re ready to vote. Those in favor, signify by raising your hand; those opposed, like sign. The motion carries. Do you have anything else, Mr. Rindone?

MR. RINDONE: I do not.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you. Next on our agenda is Draft Amendment Reef Fish 48 and Red Drum 5, Status Determination Criteria and Optimum Yield for Reef Fish and Red Drum, and that’s going to be Dr. Froeschke. Dr. Froeschke, if you would, start out with the Action Guide and Next Steps, please. Thank you, sir.

DRAFT AMENDMENT REEF FISH 48/RED DRUM 5: STATUS DETERMINATION CRITERIA AND OPTIMUM YIELD FOR REEF FISH AND RED DRUM

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Sure thing. I will just kind of give you some background on this document. This is a document that we’ve been working on for a very long time. It’s a reef fish and red drum amendment, because it affects red drum as well, and the idea is we’ve brought this to you, the council, to review a number of times, and we’ve also brought it to the SSC to review twice in the last year.
We’ve been working hard on the actions and alternatives and trying to get them in a form that everyone is comfortable with the actions and the range of alternatives. We have recently brought that to the SSC for some additional review, and they provided some input, which I will be showing you today, and so what we’re hoping for you all to look at is to provide some additional feedback and let us know if you’re comfortable with the status of the document, in terms of the range of the alternatives for each action, if you want to modify them or restructure them, and that would be great to have that input.

If you feel like you can give us direction to somewhere where you’re comfortable, it would be great to have some guidance on if we should develop a public hearing document prior to the next meeting, and so that’s sort of the thing to be looking for as we go through the presentation.

What I have done is I have not brought back an entirely new draft of the document. What I have done is prepare a presentation that is similar to what was given to the SSC that highlights the actions and the alternatives that we currently have, and, in this document, also, the SSC recommendations are also contained. If we have any specific questions about the SSC’s input, Dr. Barbieri is available, and he has indicated his willingness to come up to the podium and address any specific concerns.

Just a little bit of background, and I know we’ve gone through this before, but it’s been a longstanding document, and so status determination criteria are the criteria used to determine the condition of the stocks of the fisheries that we manage, meaning primarily overfishing and overfished status, and so the council -- The FMP requirements include a requirement to define overfishing and overfished status and using measurable and objective criteria to do this, which sounds easy, but it turns out that it’s pretty hard, when you actually get down into the data that we have to work with, and so we can kind of come back to this, as you feel is appropriate.

Maximum sustainable yield is the longest long-term average catch or yield that can be taken from a stock or stock complex, and the recognition that we rarely know maximum -- This requires a lot of data. There is uncertainty in both how we get data and how we use it in this process, and we often don’t have a good understanding of the spawner-recruit relationship in stock assessments, that you need to understand what MSY really is, and so we often use proxies for this, as is the case with most of
the stocks that we manage, or all of them.

What I am going to do now is present a summary of the changes that we’ve made and give you an overview of the actions, and, again, highlight the SSC recommendations, and so the consensus that we have received from both the SSC and the council numerous times is to make this document simpler, and it is complex in many ways, and so what we’ve tried to do is to reduce the number of decision points.

Action 1, which deals with the MSY proxies, since the last time you’ve seen this, we have condensed the sub-actions into a single action, and we’ve made fewer decision points, and we have retained the use of stock complexes, but we have removed the use of indicators for the complexes, based on the council input. Goliath grouper and red drum are addressed as alternatives, rather than sub-actions.

At the SSC meeting, we were asked for some additional information about the red drum escapement rates and how those relate to the SPR, and so we have provided that in the document as well, or at least in this presentation.

This table here just gives you an overview of the action alternatives within Action 1, and so there are four alternatives, 2, 3, and 4, and the far-left column there shows for the three alternatives, and the middle column shows the complex, if applicable, that is addressed, and so all the shallow-water, deepwater, tilefish, jacks, and mid-water species and stocks within them, which are noted on the far-right column, are all addressed in Alternative 2, as well as cubera and lane snapper, and so these stocks -- The way it’s current structured, you would be making an MSY proxy recommendation for all of those stocks within Alternative 2.

Alternative 3 would affect just goliath grouper, and we’ve discussed this. The biology of this stock is sort of unique, and then red drum, again, is a separate single species managed under its own FMP, and it has unique biology and fishery management characteristics, and so there are alternatives for that as well.

What I’m going to do now is go through the alternatives as we currently have them. Each of the alternatives has options in them, and then the red box there notes the SSC recommendation. The Alternative 2, again, for all those stocks and stock complexes on that previous table, the MSY proxy is the yield when fishing at either 20 percent, 30 percent, or 40 percent
SPR. The SSC has given a recommendation for the 30 percent SPR for all of those stocks.

For goliath grouper, which is long-lived species, susceptible to overfishing, they have recommended a slightly more conservative SPR of 40 percent. Some additional information is that this is a jointly-managed stock, and the South Atlantic Council has previously established an MSY proxy of SPR 40 percent for the species, and so this recommendation would be consistent with the South Atlantic.

Alternative 4 deals with red drum, and, again, this is a species that is a state-water fishery, although it’s a federally-managed species. The federal harvest has been restricted for a number of years, and the current management is based on escapement rates from the states rather than something more typical with the other reef fish stocks that we manage, and so the current management is the states aim for an escapement rate of 30 percent, which should allow 30 percent of the fish to leave the bays into Gulf of Mexico federal waters, which they are then protected from harvest. It's 30 percent that would have escaped relative to an unfished condition.

Then Option 4b would be a yield when fishing at 30 percent SPR, and this came up at the SSC meeting a couple of meetings ago, was the relationship between an escapement rate and SPR, and so, way back in Amendment 2 for the red drum, it was assumed that 30 percent escapement would be roughly equivalent to a 20 percent SPR, and so we have sort of carried that forward here.

Then a last Alternative 5 doesn’t address a specific stock, but this is something that has been in the document for a while, and it’s an alternative that would hopefully streamline the process of which SPR proxies or MSY proxies could be updated in the future, based on the results of a stock assessment.

What this would do would -- If the SSC reviewed a stock assessment for any of these stocks and felt like a different value was more appropriate, they could make that recommendation. The council, if they agreed with it, could adopt that in a document, but it would not require the consideration of alternatives and things like that in a traditional approach, how we usually do things, and so it would streamline it, and so that would -- It would not obligate the council to take the SSC recommendations, and so it wouldn’t remove that from the council’s purview and the decision-making process, and so you don’t give away any of your authority or decision-making.
Sometimes the SSC may give more than one recommendation, as they
did for gray snapper, and so, if that were the case, then it
would go through an amendment process with alternatives and
things, just as we have in the past, and so, again, this was
recommended by the SSC.

I will just keep going, and, if you have questions, please
interrupt me. This table just tries to sum up the various
alternatives and the SSC recommendations relative to the SPR
proxies, and so, again, the SPR of 30 percent, which is
consistent with many of the other reef fish stocks that we
manage, would apply for all of the stocks and stock complexes in
Alternative 2.

Alternative 3 for goliath grouper, the SSC recommended SPR 40
percent, and, again, that’s consistent with the South Atlantic’s
prior recommendation for this stock as well, and then
Alternative 4 would apply to red drum, and they recommended the
option for a 30 percent escapement rate, which is consistent
with how the stock is currently managed, and we think that’s
approximately equivalent to the SPR 20 percent, based on the
language in Red Drum Amendment 2.

That’s all I have for Action 1. If there is no questions, I
will keep going, and we can come back to anything that you like.
Are we good? Okay.

Action 2 addresses the maximum fishing mortality threshold, and
there are three alternatives in here, two action alternatives,
and these would apply to all of the stocks in Action 1 that we
just discussed, and the SSC recommendation for Alternative 2 is,
for a stock where an MSY has not been defined, set the MFMT
equal to the fishing mortality rate at the MSY proxy for each
stock or stock complex, and so, essentially, the MSY proxy that
you would adopt in Action 1, you would make the MFMT consistent
with that.

Alternative 3 would apply to stocks that are in a rebuilding
plan, and it would set the MFMT equal to the fishing mortality
that is projected to rebuild the stock to the BMSY within the
rebuilding time period, F rebuild. This is more restrictive
than is currently done in practice, and it is not something that
is required, and so the SSC did not feel that this was
necessary, and it could be restrictive, in some cases, and so,
again, they went with Alternative 2 and not Alternative 3.

The minimum stock size threshold, this addresses the overfished
stock status for various stocks. The idea is that, in a perfect
world, you would want the biomass for your stocks to be at the biomass to support MSY. However, we recognize, in practice, that, for various reasons, the biomass may fall below that, and for recruitment or environmental conditions or a number of reasons. If you were to set your overfished status at MSY biomass and, at any time, for any reason, if it fell below that -- You would be doing rebuilding plans all the time, and it’s recognized that that’s not practical.

The council has the ability, or the authority, to set the MSST anywhere from the biomass at MSY all the way down to 50 percent of that, and so the tradeoffs are, the lower you set that towards the 50 percent level, it allows a greater fluctuation before you enter an overfished status and have to do a rebuilding plan. The tradeoff is that, the farther down you go before you begin a rebuilding plan, the likelihood is that the rebuilding time period is going to be longer, and the harvest restrictions to rebuild are going to be more severe.

The SSC recommended an MSST of 75 percent times the biomass at MSY or MSY proxy, and their recommendation was based on that this would allow the stock to undergo some normal or natural fluctuations and sort of balance that with the idea of getting too far down and requiring these more arduous rebuilding plans.

This was also informed by some previous analysis by the Science Center that showed, based on some simulations, that it’s quite unlikely that this stock would fall below the 75 percent level without some degree of overfishing, and so, based on environmental conditions or something like that alone, it’s unlikely that you would achieve that.

Full disclosure is, in more recent -- In Reef Fish Amendment 51 for gray snapper, and the Amendment 44, which looked at seven other stocks, the recent history for the council has been to set this at the MSST equals 50 percent.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Just a comment, and not to your alternatives and changing anything, but, as you know, I haven’t been comfortable with that 50 percent of BMSY alternative in there, and I did try and pass a motion at the last meeting to change that and replace it with 0.65, and I think we actually have a real-life example of what that could look like at this point, and I am probably stealing some of Dr. Barbieri’s thunder, but, with red grouper, with that assessment, under our old metric for red grouper, we would have currently been overfished and undergoing overfishing.
When we changed the goalpost and moved it to that 50 percent of
BMSY, it’s fine, and we’re not overfished or undergoing
overfishing, and I think that we all know where the state of red
grouper is at this point. We’re not comfortable with where it’s
at, and we as a council have gone in and proactively reduced the
ACL on that stock, to try and get some hooks out of the water,
to try and reduce some fishing pressure, because all of our
fishermen, recreational and commercial, have said this thing is
not healthy.

Right now, we can fish it down even further, based on our
metric, and it would be just fine, and I just wonder exactly how
far we’re going to let a population get depleted using that 50
percent BMSY metric, if we go with that like we have in the
past.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, just to clarify that this is dealing only with
overfished, and so I just didn’t want people to think that,
because you chose 50 percent BMSY for red grouper, that that
somehow was implicating an overfishing determination or not.
This is solely whether something is overfished or not.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Okay. Alternative 5, if you will notice, also
has that red box on there, and that addresses -- There are four
stocks within the document, goliath, mutton, yellowtail, and
black grouper that are jointly managed with the South Atlantic,
and Alternative 5 would concur, essentially, with the MSST
definition for these stocks, which is 75 percent BMSY for
mutton, yellowtail, and black grouper. Goliath grouper, I
believe, is managed using the one minus M formula for MSST,
where M is 0.12, and so the MSST would be 88 percent of the
biomass at MSY proxy. That, again, was a recommendation by the
SSC.

Action 4 is one that we’ve worked on, and we have rearranged the
desk chairs a number of times, and so what I have here is -- At
the IPT, we sort of came up with some ways to simplify it.
Again, that was the recommendation that we have received from
both the council and the SSC, and so we have three different
ways that I am going to show you, and then I will indicate the
SSC-preferred recommendation.

This Action 4, what we have on the screen now, I’m calling it OY
simplified, and there are three action alternatives, four alternatives total, and Alternative 2 would apply for reef fish stocks, with the exception of goliath, and, again, it has three options, the 50 percent, 75 percent, and 90 percent FMSY proxy, and these are the same options that we recently went through with gray snapper.

Alternative 3 in this version of the action would address goliath grouper, and then Alternative 4 would address red drum, and so, essentially, you would have the ability to specify different OYs for all of the stocks in Alternative 2 and then goliath grouper and red drum.

This next idea is the OY even simpler, and this would just apply to reef fish -- This would apply to all reef fish stocks, to red drum and OY, where it’s undefined, and the SSC’s recommendation is that any of the OY values within this range of 50 percent to 90 percent was okay, and so this is -- They didn’t provide specific guidance for one option over another in this, and they felt that any of those in that range was reasonable.

The last approach was more of a number-crunching approach, and we had talked about this at the IPT, and what we did is we looked back at what our definition for some of these stocks that we have, OFLs and ACLs and things, specified primarily through the data-poor approach, and we developed a formula where the ACL, the annual catch limit, divided by the OFL multiplied by the FMSY proxy -- We could use more of that formula-based approach to develop an OY.

The caveats are that, again you would still need typically a stock assessment to get this FMSY proxy, so that there would be some challenges in operationalizing something, but perhaps the more informative portion of this is, if you look at that column, the ACL divided by the OFL, these are the numbers that we have in practice now for -- We don’t have an OFL for shallow-water grouper, because of black grouper, but, the ones that we do have -- You can see the range anywhere from 55 percent to 90 percent.

We did this after we had developed these 50 through 90 percent OY for the other alternatives, and so we felt like this was informative and that perhaps the range of alternatives, or the options that we have, is reasonable, even if we wanted to go with something like this.

Again, the complications, two other ones, are shallow-water grouper, the complex, and there’s not an OFL for black grouper, and that has a long and storied assessment process, and it would
be difficult to do that, because of the way the assessment is
done, and we don’t think that’s reproducible. Then, stocks like
red drum and goliath grouper, you don’t have an OFL or an ACL.
It’s set to zero, and so those are some challenges with doing
something like that.

**DR. CLAY PORCH:** John, you could clarify that other slide? Is
the intent there to be the OY is the long-term yield at that
fishing mortality rate, because the formula, as written, says
the OY is a fraction of a fish, because you’re reducing the
fishing mortality rate, and so is the intent for that to be the
long-term yield at that fishing mortality rate, or is the intent
OY equals ACL divided by OFL times the ACL, and so basically to
decrement the ACL, or MSY proxy, I guess that would be?

**DR. FROESCHKE:** Let me think through this. The intent was the
ACL divided by the OFL, and then I guess times the -- Well, how
we have it is the yield at the FMSY proxy is what -- Whatever
the yield was at the FMSY, say that was a million pounds, and,
if you took the ACL and OFL -- Whatever percent the OFL was
reduced by that, you would take that million pounds -- Say, for
example, if the ACL divided by the OFL was 0.7, and your yield
at the FMSY proxy was a million pounds, you would get 700,000
pounds. That was how we were trying to do that.

**DR. PORCH:** So then it wouldn’t be FMSY. It’s just MSY proxy
and so ACL divided by OFL times MSY proxy.

**DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes. Noted. Okay. So where we’re at now is
we’re here to get input on just sort of the structure of the
actions and alternatives. One, are you happy on the OY, when
you will notice there is three different choices, and, if you
could give us some guidance on that, we could develop this as a
public hearing draft and bring it back to you and sort of move
this forward.

What I think might be helpful is if we bring up Tab E-5(a), and
so this is just a short -- It’s not really even a document, but
it just has an overview of the actions and alternatives as I
went through the document, and this may be helpful to summarize,
and what I have done in here is, for the actions, I have the
alternatives as we currently have them, and I have noted the
SSC’s recommendation, where appropriate.

If you wanted to go through this action-by-action and let me
know if you felt comfortable with the range of alternatives or
you wanted to add or modify them, that would be really helpful.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Tom.

DR. FRAZER: I think, John, at this point, we’re scheduled for a break, at 12:30. We are going to take that break, and we will come back, and I will get with Dr. Barbieri, to think about an order of discussing this, and so we will either get SSC input on this or we’ll through this table first. We will reconvene at two o’clock.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on October 21, 2019.)

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October 21, 2019

MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Sustainable Fisheries Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened at the Tremont House, Galveston, Texas, Monday afternoon, October 21, 2019, and was called to order by Chairman Dale Diaz.

DR. FRAZER: John, do you want to pick up where you left off? Go ahead.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are going to start back up and finish up Agenda Item Number V, which is the Draft Reef Fish 48 and Red Drum 5 and the Status Determination Criteria and Optimum Yield for Reef Fish and Red Drum.

What we are driving towards is we’re trying to eventually get this document to the point where we could move it out for a public hearing draft, and so please be thinking about if you’re okay with the structure of the document, the structure of the actions, and the content of the document and the actions as we go through this. Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Thank you. I hope everyone had a good lunch. I have, up on the screen, Tab E, Number 5(a), and what this is, it’s just a very short document that just has the actions and the alternatives, and no discussion or any other supplementary material, as we currently have them, in the hopes that, again, you could look at the structure of this document, and, if you’re satisfied with this, we would populate the document and bring it back.
On the screen is the maximum sustainable yield proxies, Action 1, and there are five alternatives. What is indicated on this are the recommendations, or preferreds, that were noted in the presentation we did before lunch, and so the Alternative 2 would address all those stock complexes and the individual stocks.

Alternative 3 would address the goliath, and Alternative 4 would address red drum, and then Alternative 5, if you scroll down, would address a mechanism to streamline revising the MSY proxy based on updated information and a recommendation from the SSC, and so that would allow the council, if they chose, to accept that recommendation without the need of a plan amendment and alternatives. They could just note it in a document. If the SSC gave multiple recommendations, we would proceed with the normal alternative kind of options. That is the structure of Action 1. Is there any questions or feedback on that? Okay. Then I’m assuming it’s okay.

Action 2, this is maximum fishing mortality threshold, and so, as we kind of discussed, this action is tightly coupled to the MSY proxy, and the SSC preferred is this Alternative 2, where the MFMT would correspond directly to the MSY proxy, and this is what they recommended. There’s not a lot of alternatives in this one, and there doesn’t seem to be many reasonable alternatives for that.

Alternative 3 deals with stocks when they are in a rebuilding plan, and it would set the MFMT equal to the F rebuild. The Science Center has indicated that this is more conservative than what they do in practice and what is required under Magnuson, and so the SSC didn’t feel this was necessary, and it was too restrictive, and so they did not recommend that as a preferred.

Action 3, if there are no questions, is the MSST, or minimum stock size threshold, and, again, this would establish the allowable buffer, or reduction, from the biomass at MSY to the biomass at where we would declare the stock overfished.

There are three action alternatives, and Alternative 2 uses the one minus M, where the M is the natural mortality of the stock. Typically, this is 0.25, between 0.1 and 0.25, for most of the stocks that we manage, and so we typically -- We used to do this more frequently in the past, but it could change, based on the estimate of natural mortality, and, in general, it led to biomass estimates that were fairly close to the MSY biomass.

Alternative 3 is 0.75 times the biomass at MSY. In most cases, this is a little more lenient than Alternative 2, but, again,
since the natural mortality rate could vary for stocks, it’s
hard to say that definitely.

The SSC preferred this alternative, in part based on some
simulation analysis that the Science Center had done that
showed, again, that it’s unlikely that a stock would fall below
this level based on natural variations in stock size alone, that
there was more than likely an overfishing component contributing
to biomass below this level.

The Alternative 4 is the 0.5 times the BMSY, and this is as low
as the council is allowed to set an MSST under Magnuson, and
that would be consistent with what the council has done for gray
snapper in Amendment 51 and for seven other stocks in Amendment
44, I believe, not too long ago. I will stop there.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: Do you want to establish a preferred alternative
here?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: No, we’re just working towards a public hearing
draft, and we don’t need preferreds at this time, and so we just
want to send out to the public an idea of what we’re thinking
about and get some feedback from them, to see if they think it’s
complete and structured right. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Then how will this be given to the public? Will it
just be a standard action with the alternatives, and there won’t
be any reference to what the SSC had a recommendation for,
correct?

DR. FROESCHKE: This structure is just sort of for this review.
The way we would do is we have the background in Chapter 1. All
of that, we would build out the Chapter 2 actions and
alternatives and write the discussion, and then we would develop
Chapters 3 and 4 for the public hearing, Chapter 3 being the
description of the environment and then the effects section in
Chapter 4, and so that’s what you would see next time, and just
we’re trying to get some stability in the alternatives before we
write that again.

Then, on this one, there is that Alternative 5 on the screen,
and I forgot to mention that, that would allow for concurrent
management with the South Atlantic for the four jointly-managed
stocks of goliath, mutton, yellowtail, and black grouper, which
is the 0.75 times BMSY for all the stocks except goliath
grouper, which would be 0.88.
I am ready for the next action, if you are. It’s the last one, and so if you recall, in the presentation, I presented three different forms of this action, based on the IPT, and we had a simple and a simpler and then sort of the numerical approach.

What I have presented here is the even simpler model that the SSC recommended, and, essentially, there is only a single action alternative and three options. The SSC preferred is Alternative 2, and the three options range from 50 to 90 percent of FMSY, and they didn’t provide a recommendation, and they felt that any of those recommendations were reasonable, and so that’s the reason why it’s there.

Again, we wouldn’t be asking you all to select a preferred at this time, but, if you prefer a different structure or additional alternatives or something, this would be a great time to give us that feedback.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I see a potential issue with this extreme simple version, partially because it includes everything, including goliath and red drum, which are managed completely differently than the other ones, and so, right now, there is no harvest of goliath, yet, somehow, we’re going to set an OY that is potentially 75 percent of the FMSY.

I mean, it seems like at least those two species warrant some sort of different consideration than the bulk of the rest. I mean, my personal opinion is that the fourth alternative that was offered, which I sort of suggested to the IPT, actually provides the most information, meaning we’re already managing based on OFLs and ACLs, and looking at the ratio of that sort of gives you an idea of how you’re managing now and what you expect the OY to be over the long term, and it’s most specific to each stock or species, although we do have the problem that we would have to deal with shallow-water grouper. I am not saying you have to go that way, but this seems too simple, to me.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: To Mara’s point, I believe it says with the exception of goliath grouper here, and then, in the past, we haven’t considered red drum to be part of the reef fish complex, and does that cover your concerns?

MS. LEVY: Well, red drum is part of this amendment, and so what are we doing with respect to OY? I guess it does say except goliath grouper, and so what are we doing with respect to those?
Are you planning on putting the other two alternatives in that
deal with goliath grouper and red drum, as in the presentation,
because those two species are included in this amendment, and
they have to have an OY somewhere.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Go ahead.

DR. FROESCHKE: Hopefully this doesn’t get us in a hole, but we
did discuss, and, as we’ve discussed here, we certainly could
add those in. The rationale, I suppose, for doing this approach
is that, regardless whether any of the options were selected, it
doesn’t affect the catch levels, which are specified through
annual catch levels, in any way. We don’t have a way to link
the catch levels, which are annual limits, with the optimum
yield, which is the long term.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy, to that point.

MS. LEVY: Right, and you’re not acquainting them, but to say
that you have no method to link them is a little bit not true,
which is what that Alternative 4 does. It takes your catch
levels, as compared to the OFL, and translates that into an OY
proxy, per se. This is how we’re managing.

We are catching these levels, and, as compared to the OFL, which
is based on the MSY-type thing, it kind of is your OY over the
long term, and that’s fine. I am not saying that you can’t do
it this way, but I don’t see how goliath grouper -- What are we
doing with respect to goliath grouper and red drum under this,
the way this is structured, because they have to have something,
and, to say that, for example, goliath grouper, we should be
saying that an OY is 75 percent of FMSY, when we allow no
harvest -- I mean, how are we even conceivably achieving OY? Do
you see what I’m saying? Like, even theoretically, we’re not
allowing harvest, and how could it possibly be 75 percent of
FMSY?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Porch.

DR. PORCH: To a slightly different point, but, since we’re not
explicitly accounting for things that would normally go into
optimum yield, and this is sort of implicit anyway, an even
simpler approach is, in cases where you actually have an MSY
proxy, your options could just simply be things like 75 percent
of the MSY proxy, or 90 percent of the MSY proxy, instead of the
way it’s written here. 75 percent, say, of the FMSY proxy
requires an additional projection. You have to make projections
to see what the long-term yield would be at these different
rates, whereas, if you already had an MSY proxy, since it’s not -- I am trying to avoid certain words.

It’s implicit, and it’s not an explicit accounting of the relevant social and ecological and other factors that would affect OY, but you just make the scalar times the MSY proxy. I mean, why do the extra work of going through projections? Anyway, that’s just a suggestion. You could make it even simpler. In that case, then the formula would look a lot like what Mara is suggesting, except that the ratio isn’t based on the ACL to OFL. It would be just something the council picks.

**DR. FROESCHKE:** The question I have is that that wouldn’t solve the problem that we don’t have an MSY proxy for any of these stocks.

**DR. PORCH:** So you mean you’re just here specifying a formula that you know you can’t fill, which we’ve done before, until we collect enough data, but, I mean, if that’s the goal here, then I can see the logic, because, otherwise, you don’t actually have an MSY proxy to apply the approach, but then that’s going to affect what Mara is suggesting as well.

**DR. FROESCHKE:** It’s my understanding that the more numerical approach -- You couldn’t fully complete that equation, because you don’t have an MSY proxy to do the multiplication by, and that was all the discussions we’ve had at the IPT.

**CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Ms. Levy.

**MS. LEVY:** I don’t think you can complete the equation on any of these, right? I mean, we are specifying MSY proxies in Action 1, but we don’t know what -- I mean, we’re not going to fill in a numerical value in any of these formulas, right, at this point, because you need a stock assessment and all of this other stuff to do it, and so that, to me, seems like neither here nor there, but they’re all formulaic, and we’re not getting to a number.

I guess my concern with the OY thing is that it’s lumping at least two species -- Well, again, it says except goliath grouper, and so how would we deal with goliath grouper under the way you have this structured? It also doesn’t address red drum, and so how would we address red drum, the way you have this structured?

I don’t think that red drum and goliath grouper should necessarily be lumped in with the other reef fish stocks,
because they are managed very differently, and so, to somehow say that their OY should just be across the board whatever it is for these other reef fish stocks, what is the reasoning for that? Shouldn’t we be considering them in their own context, is what I’m saying.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Froeschke, is this -- Would there be an option to add an Alternative 2 here and to address Mara’s concern with an Alternative 2, or should we go back and look at the other alternative that she referenced earlier?

DR. FROESCHKE: I think let’s bring up the presentation again that has the other approaches in there. There is the OY simplified that has the alternative that we have on there, but then it has an additional alternative for Alternative 3 for goliath and red drum. I don’t know if that’s more in line with your thinking or you feel something else is better.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I think, at the very least, we should be doing this, considering those two species in their own context. If you don’t want to go all the way to the other alternative that looks at the ratio, doing ACL to OFL and then using that as the percentage that you get for the OY, that’s fine, but it seems like at least this version looks at these two species in their own context and allows you to define the OY differently for them if the information warrants that and the other reef fish species.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Any comments on that from the committee? Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: I just wanted to chime in on Dr. Porch’s suggestion, and I think that would be a wise move, to have it linked to your MSY proxy, because MSY is a long-term function, and the OY is supposed to be a long-term goal as well, and so it seems prudent to have those two linked, instead of adding an additional step in there, and I would think that you would want those two to correlate a little better.

MR. Frazer: Dr. Porch, I just want to make sure that I understand here. What you’re suggesting is that what you could do is don’t use the FMSY, but just a straight MSY proxy, but, the way that I read this document right now, the MSY proxy really is the FMSY for goliath and for red drum -- Well, it’s FSPR, and so it’s not an MSY value. It’s another proxy.
DR. PORCH: Yes, and so, I mean, this actually should read something like long-term yield from fishing at that rate, but I guess my point is you would define -- You already have the MSY proxy defined as the long-term yield at the FMSY proxy, and so it’s just a little bit simpler just to say that, okay, then OY is just a percentage of the MSY proxy, whereas -- I mean, now, it doesn’t matter that much, because we can’t compute the values anyway, and so it’s just specifying the formula, but let’s say we do get a stock assessment.

This way, it just requires more work without any real obvious gain, because now you’ve got to do an extra set of projections to find out what the long-term yield is at 75 percent of the FMSY proxy.

My point is, since there is not an explicit accounting of what that buffer should be between OY, you’re just kind of looking at something that is sort of what feels right, and you may as well just work directly with catch numbers that are more intuitive to people, and so, if the MSY proxy is X tons, then OY is 90 percent of that, or something like that, and it’s more intuitive than saying 90 percent of a fishing mortality rate.

Then, when you run out, 90 percent of FMSY proxy over the long term probably amounts to 95 percent of the MSY proxy itself, because it’s non-linear. The population grows a little bit with less fishing mortality rate, and so I’m just saying that it makes sense to me just to do the simpler approach.

The formula that Mara suggested actually, when you rewrite it as an MSY proxy, which is what I think the intent was, it actually is along the lines of what I’m saying, except that formula, the ratio of ACL to OFL, is a way of kind of automatically specifying what the buffer is.

DR. FRAZER: But, because for those two species, you can’t calculate that ratio, because you have neither an ACL or an OFL, and so what do you do for those species where you can’t calculate that?

DR. PORCH: Well, in that case, we’re not going to be able to calculate any of these things, and so you’re just specifying a formula. I am more looking down the road. If we do an assessment, there is not really reasons to do two sets of projections, one to find what the MSY proxy is and then you do another long-term projection with a different F to find out what the OY proxy is. You could just multiply some scalar times the MSY proxy itself and keep it simple.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: This is sort of coming full circle to the conversations that we had on the IPT, and, for the numerical approach, I think we all -- The IPT agreed that the end result is similar to between the simplified and the formulaic approach. The problem is the shallow-water grouper, the goliath, and the ACL, and the problem is, with the red drum and the goliath, it’s not that the formula doesn’t work, but it’s that formula does work. It’s just zero divided by zero is zero, and so then you are essentially setting an OY for stocks like red drum, which we do harvest a bunch in state waters, at zero.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, that’s partially why those might require a different consideration, because it may be appropriate to have an OY for goliath at zero. We don’t allow harvest of it anywhere, and so maybe the OY is zero for goliath.

Now, for red drum, that doesn’t work, because you know there is all this state harvest, and so the OY for the whole stock really shouldn’t be zero, and so you have to come up with some other different approach, and shallow-water grouper just has a problem, because we haven’t defined an OFL, and so you can’t do that ratio.

I don’t know how to deal with that, if you want to go with the ACL/OFL approach, but, like I said, that was just a suggestion, but, at the very least, I would at least have the four alternatives dealing with goliath grouper and red drum differently than you do the other bulk of the reef fish stocks.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: I have to go back to the fact that the Scientific and Statistical Committee has to use the best scientific information that is available, and, if they can’t come up with some way to adjust the OY, based on whatever scientific information they can gather, then you can’t have an OY, but certainly you can, in some form or fashion, develop an OY, as rudimentary as it may be at the time, and it’s absolute at the time. The SSC is our body to tell us what it is and what it should be with the information they have available.

Already, when you do an MSY proxy, you have already selected -- The Scientific and Statistical Committee has already selected
how much -- You have already adjusted some of your MSY with
their spawning potential ratio that they are somewhat having to
guess at, because it still the scientific best information
available, and we could go on with this forever, but, if they
cannot come up with an OY, we certainly can’t just guess, and
it's going to be 50 percent, 75 percent, or 90 percent, and
that’s not acceptable.

You can’t do it this way. I mean, we have no reasonable idea as
to what to do, and so I suggest that this -- This ought to be
eliminated from the document. You’re either going to do an OY
or you’re not going to do an OY. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, OY is -- Specifying that is mandated by the
statute, and so you have to use the best you can, and you have
to pick something and specify it. Now, from my understanding,
the SSC -- They had a preferred as to how they wanted to
structure it, which was this very, very simplified way. They
weren’t going to give you a recommendation on what the OY should
be, because they felt like there wasn’t enough information for
them to do that, and OY is not purely a scientific call.

There are policy decisions based on OY, and, I mean, relevant
economic, social, and ecological factors, and that’s not a
purely scientific call. The council can just as easily look at
what they think are relevant economic, social, and ecological
factors on a stock-by-stock basis or overall for reef fish
stocks that are managed similarly and discuss what they think an
appropriate OY formula would be, and so I guess I’m just going
to disagree a little bit with the fact that the SSC is the sole
body that can give advice on this. They can give advice, but,
ultimately, the council needs to make a policy decision, and we
need to specify this to be compliant with the Act.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: I have a technical question, and maybe you guys
can help me with this. As a council, can we recommend or
request to the SSC that perhaps maybe they convene the
Socioeconomic Committee or Panel or whatever to review this a
little further before we try to make a recommendation? Is that
a possibility?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I think they were convened when
they reviewed this. I don’t want to speak for the SSC, but I
think they were trying to simplify it, and I think that’s why
they made this recommendation that’s on the slide, and, based on
the revisions and the recommendation to red drum being
equivalent to an SPR proxy with the escapement rate, I think
that’s why it was considered in Alternative 2 as one of the reef
fish species that would be appropriate, but I will let Dr.
Barbieri straighten us out here.

DR. LUIZ BARBIERI: I’m not sure if I’m going to be able to do
that, but I can bring some perspective from the SSC. Fisheries
management in general, and this is historically -- You can
globally, since the beginning of times that fisheries science
has been developed and implemented -- It has evolved into modern
fisheries science based on this concept of limit and target
reference points, and so this applied in several fisheries
around the world.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is structured along those same lines,
and so you have a limit, which is MSY, and then you have a
target above that that is OY, which is not simply a biological
or a fisheries-specifically designed type of metric, but it
integrates these other components, the socioeconomic components
as well, and the desirability. What is the value of a stock or
a fishery? There is all these other dimensions that really
transcend just the purely biological metric that you get from
something like MSY.

The SSC wasn’t really here trying to provide any option for the
council to consider. It was presented a number of options that
we were asked to review and weigh-in on which one of those we
felt was more scientifically defensible, I guess would be the
term to use, and, because there is so many things here that we
cannot measure, we cannot evaluate, without really getting more
information, a lot more information, and analysis on the
socioeconomic components, and ecological as well, we felt that
any of those reductions -- The definition of OY is a reduction
from MSY as you take into account the socioeconomic and
ecological.

If that reduction is the 50 percent or 75 percent or 90 percent,
that is a judgment call that involves the value of that fishery
to stakeholders, to the economy or to industry or to society,
and those are things that, unless we have that information in
front of us, we cannot really properly weigh-in, and so this is
part of why we basically said that any of those, as you look at
those reductions, would be acceptable, and it depends on the
stock, and it depends on the value of that stock to society and
to stakeholders or of those components of the fishery.
In terms of whether there are catches that are happening right now with the fisheries open, keep in mind that stock status determination criteria -- You are actually setting something that eventually, if we get to the point that you have an assessment that can actually estimate these parameters, you have something to guide the interpretation of the assessment in terms of those reference points.

You want to have some metric of MSY, and you have to have a management limit and a management target to look for, and so, even though it’s not something that we can implement and operationalize right now, because there is no fisheries open to do it, it’s something that you set, and so, when the assessment team actually gets together with the data, when the data gets there, there is something that they can use, and this is the criteria that you are looking towards, when you get to the point of operationalizing. If you can’t do it right now, because the data is not available, that’s a different story.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Just to that point, I mean, under the Magnuson Act, you’re supposed to be achieving optimum yield from each stock on a continuing basis. If you decide, for example with goliath grouper, at this point in time that you cannot harvest anything, anywhere, then your optimum yield at this point is zero.

Now, I get that that might change, and then you can adjust what you think your optimum yield is, but, I mean, I think there are certain circumstances in which you’re not just looking forward if something happens. We are currently managing these species right now, and, if what we’re saying is nobody can take it at all, then the only way we’re achieving that is if our optimum yield is zero.

DR. BARBIERI: Just to that point, Mr. Chairman. Right, but remember that this council is actually setting those management parameters, right, and so the council is making these choices on how it wants to manage that fishery. If it decides that because, right now, the fishery -- There is no harvest, there is no active fishery of those species, legally, and it wants to set those values to zero, it does have that authority to do it.

The SSC did not want to overstep its bounds and set those parameters and make recommendations on what OY should be, or even MSY, because that was really managing it, and that management responsibility really rests with the council, and we were trying to be recognizing that, and so that’s why we kind of
evaluated what was there and didn’t really go outside of those parameters that were presented to us.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I just Mara -- Based on your comments, I mean, if you look at Alternative 1, in the context of MSA, is that -- Philosophically anyway, is that a viable alternative to even have?

MS. LEVY: I mean, it’s Alternative 1 because it’s the status quo, but, in terms of picking it as a preferred, no.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Not to draw this out any longer, but just a quick question. We can use our formula for goliath, and, as Dr. Froeschke said, when you plug in the numbers, it will come out to zero, but it doesn’t work for red drum, and so this is required by Magnuson, and we manage federally, right?

We’re managing federal waters, and so does it matter what they take in state waters if we’re coming up with a formula for OY for what we manage? I mean, do you see what I’m saying? For red drum, I don’t see -- I mean, it’s so closed for us, and so it’s okay if, when you plug the numbers in, it equals zero, because federal waters are closed, and have been, but that doesn’t affect the states though, right?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, you’re managing the stock, right? I mean, you’re managing the red drum stock, and so you’ve decided to close the EEZ to harvest, knowing that a certain percentage of the stock is getting harvested in state waters. I mean, yes, the MSY and OY are for the stock, just like with red snapper. The MSY and OY are for the stock, and we don’t divide it up into OY for state waters and OY for federal waters, and we’re doing it as the stock.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: I have to ask you another question about the SSC. The makeup of the SSC, do you have just biological scientists on the committee, and you don’t have an economist or an economics major? Why can’t we then rely on that technology to help with this economic, social, and ecological factors that we need in OY? Otherwise, you shouldn’t even be addressing OY from the
SSC. Thank you.

**DR. BARBIERI:** Well, I agree completely. I mean, I think that, since the SSC serves at the pleasure of the council, it is within your prerogative to request that the SSC provide you some input and organize a workshop or pull together the scientists that can weigh-in on this and provide you a report of what should be OY.

The discussions that we’ve had is that a lot of the socioeconomic data, even a lot of the ecological data, that’s used to make these decisions is not really readily available, and so you have to go to another type of decision-making process, just because the data is not available, but I don’t disagree with you. If you would like to see the Socioeconomic Panel within the SSC weigh-in and provide you guidance on how to proceed with OY, I think that’s a reasonable request.

**DR. PORCH:** I would just add that this is something that we in the agency have been talking about quite a lot, how can we get better information in this regard, but it’s tricky, of course, because the different user groups have different criteria for what OY is, and, in fact, recreational and commercial are quite different, and so even maximum sustainable yield is sort of a -- It’s a commercial quantity and more from the fish house perspective, to get as many fish in the house as you can, and, from a commercial fisherman, a boat owner’s, perspective, you would more want to look at something like maximum economic yield, and so what’s the maximum profit they can make.

In that case, usually you want more fish in the sea, so the catch rates are up, and recreational depends on the fishery. For some of them, it’s more like maximum sustainable fishing season, which would be minimum sustainable yield, but that’s not allowed by law, but there is a whole continuum of things on the spectrum, and so it is really challenging to give concrete advice.

On the other hand, we do need to make some more progress in it, and I think you will see, over the next few years, more effort from multiple organizations to try and characterize what it is that people really want and how that feeds into OY, but the short answer is I don’t think the SSC has actually seen any real clear analyses, because I don’t think there really are any at this point, and so we do need to do more work, and I’m sure that Assane and other could weigh-in on this more intelligently than I can, but it’s something that we’re thinking about a lot.
Yes, these here are 50 percent, 75 percent, and 90 percent. When you give them to the council like that, it’s more asking you for your gut feel, where you’re kind of weighing the relative priorities, just like you do with allocations. There is a gut-level decision being made there between different user groups.

Mara is exactly right. When it comes to something like goliath grouper, in practice, the OY has been zero, and the MSY is not zero. That is maximum sustainable yield, and so that’s some finite quantity of catch, but, in practice, we have made the OY essentially zero, and, for a lot of other stocks, maybe the council does have enough of a feel that they’re comfortable putting a number to it.

Another way to do is to say that we’ll buffer OY to MSY at the same level we’ve been developing buffers and ACLs, which usually is the buffer from OFL to ABC, which is scientific uncertainty, generally, but then sometimes you buffer the ACL below the ABC for accounting for management uncertainties, and so lots of ways you could do it. In the end, we haven’t given you the kind of analyses that you can really put quantitative teeth to any of these numbers. It’s going to come down to some level of gut negotiation.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, to that point, aren’t we just asking the council to set these values based on the SSC’s recommendations and information we have at hand, and then, once we get an assessment, in the terms of reference and deliberations and review of that process, that goes back to the council, and the council can modify these criteria, because, in reality, we have very little information for many of these species. I think even Dr. Barbieri and I have talked about should goliath be a fishing mortality MSY criteria, or should it be -- What is the model? The catch free model.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. We’re going to start moving this towards a close. Did you have something that you wanted to say, Dr. Barbieri?

DR. BARBIERI: I just had a quick question for Mara. I am just trying to understand, because then I can bring this to the SSC as we continue those discussions. My interpretation of this, and I think is how the committee interpreted it too, is just something that, when you set these reference points, and OY is a reference point, it’s something similar to, for example, if you
close a fishery, or you have a fishery that is overfished, and it’s operating under a rebuilding plan, you still have an MSY reference point that is set, and you could still have an OY reference point set, but you’re not going to be fishing at those levels, because there is something else taking place. In this case, it would be a rebuilding plan, where fishing is going to be at a different level.

The harvest level that is taking place during the rebuilding period, and, in this case, the rebuilding period could be thirty years, or thirty-five years, but it’s not really reflective of the level of yield that would be realized after the stock is rebuilt.

Reference points are set as goals, targets, to be achieved either as limits or as targets, right, but, during that rebuilding period, you are fishing at different levels, and so our interpretation of goliath grouper is that the council has not made a final decision to close that fishery forever. Right now, harvest has been stopped, interrupted, because the stock is not known to have been rebuilt to a level that is considered sustainable, and so my interpretation of how current level of harvest ties to those MSY and OY reference points don’t align with this idea that the catch is zero now.

**CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** To that point, and then we’re going to wind this up.

**MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, the Magnuson Act sort of expressly addresses that by, in the definition of “optimum”. It says, in the case of an overfished fishery, it provides for rebuilding to a level consistent with producing the maximum sustainable yield in the fishery, and so optimum, under the Magnuson Act, accounts for a rebuilding fishery, and so your optimum yield under a rebuilding fishery might be different than your optimum yield once it has reached that rebuilt state, I guess.

My only point is that we fish for things now, and we’re supposed to be achieving optimum yield on a continuing basis. Presumably, we are doing that by the annual catch limits over time, and so we are, in a sense, managing to what the council has determined optimum over the long term by setting these catch levels annually, and so there might be fluctuations above and below the optimum yield, but our management is supposed to reflect achieving that on a continuing basis, and so that was my only point, that we’re kind of going backwards a little bit, because we’re supposed to have optimum yield and then catch levels, and we’re sort of going backwards. We already have
catch levels, and now we’re trying to say what an optimum yield might be.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I’m just going to try to move us along here. I mean, clearly, there is multiple ways to look at the universe here, and so we have this OY simplified version, but Mara has offered kind of another way to look at it, and the suggestion, perhaps, because I don’t think we’re having a very productive dialogue at this point, would be to kick this back to John and reflect on the minutes and notes and come back, perhaps in January, with this a little more fleshed out, where we have both views of the world to consider. At that point, we can decide which one that we want to adopt, moving forward.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. That sounds good to me. Is everybody on the committee okay with that? We’ll see it again in January, and the primary focus of the document will be this Action 4. We pretty much went through the other actions, and you can maybe hit them really quick in January, but nobody had any comments or any problems with the structure of content there, and so have you got a question, Dr. Froeschke?

DR. FROESCHKE: If we go to this approach, would we bring back -- Not bring back a document that you would approve for public hearing in January, but we would bring a document that -- Chapters 1 and 2, the focus of the review on OY, and then bring it back in April for approval for public hearing, or do you want us to try to wrap all of this into a document that we can bring back, if it’s okay?

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I believe, if you could bring the public hearing document fleshed out, and we just have this one thing to settle, if we can settle that in January, you’ll be ready to go. If we can’t, we’ll move it to April. We just want to make sure that, whenever we move forward, we move forward with information that everybody is comfortable with.

DR. FROESCHKE: Got it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: My apologies, but, I mean, I guess -- So you have different ways to address OY, and, if you haven’t told staff whether you want to do version a, b, or c, then, in order to bring back a public hearing draft -- I mean, you’re going to have to write it like it is a, b, or c.
I am not saying you have to have a public hearing draft for the next time, but I think it would be good to say, for the OY, do you want to pursue this type of thing, maybe with Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4, so you could consider goliath and red drum separately, or do you want us to go down the path of using the ACL-OFL ratio to get to a percentage for OY, and maybe you could think about that, and we could come back in Full Council, but it seems like we need one way or the other if you actually want a public hearing draft for January.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: I guess what I was going to do, in my head, was Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4 would remain in the document, using the scalars, and then the formulaic-based alternatives would be wrapped into some additional alternatives in the document, in that same action, whether it be one Alternative 5 or if it would require 5, 6, and 7, and I don’t know, but that was my plan, as of this moment.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. Unless anybody has a motion they want to put out there, we’re going to move on to the next -- If anybody has any feelings about this between now and Full Council, they can bring them up at Full Council. Let’s go ahead and move on to the next agenda item, to the Council Research and Monitoring Priorities for 2020 through 2024. Mr. Rindone. If you would, Mr. Rindone, go over the action guide before you start your process. Thank you.

COUNCIL RESEARCH AND MONITORING PRIORITIES FOR 2020-2024

MR. RINDONE: Okay. You guys took a glimpse of these research and monitoring priorities at our last meeting, and the SSC has had the opportunity to look at them a couple of times, and so what you’re going to be doing today is reviewing these research and monitoring priorities for the time period of 2020 to 2024 and recommending modifications to the council.

They cover a large swath of subjects, like data collection, estimation of bycatch and discards, ecosystem management, episodic mortality, et cetera, and these help prioritize what the council sees as its gaps in knowledge, if you will, for different species and for fisheries management in general.

Once approved by the council, this will be posted to the council’s website as final and submitted to the Southeast Regional Office, and this gets used for prioritizing funding of
projects, and it will also be used by the Council Coordinating Committee for some things that they have to work on, and so multiple uses. It’s important stuff.

The document is Tab E-6, and, again, the SSC has now looked at this document twice, and they have set the -- They have either set or agreed with the listed priorities, and one of the major changes from the last time is that we removed a large number of the species-specific items that were further down in the document, because a lot of those are captured in the collated research recommendations that are curated by SEDAR, and so we didn’t think it was necessary to keep both things in different places. Are there any questions? I hesitate to go through the whole thing.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Just looking at the first one, fishery-independent sampling, and there’s -- The second sentence in it, that particular emphasis should be placed on the expansion and enhancement of the SEAMAP reef fish video survey, the Panama City Laboratory reef fish video survey and such, and I’m just wondering -- I mean, is that expansion of monitoring sites there off of Florida, where most of the reef fish video is currently being done, or does that expand across the entire Gulf? Do you have any insight into that?

MR. RINDONE: It was off of Florida originally, but, now, most of the time, what we’re doing is we’re combining multiple video surveys. You will have the Panama City Lab video survey, and the Pascagoula Lab survey, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Research Institute has a few different surveys.

These surveys have -- Where they can be, they have been combined, over time, to result in a much larger spatial and temporal coverage for the species to which they apply, and so the goal would be to just continue that expansion effort of the SEAMAP. In this case, it would be specifically the SEAMAP reef fish video survey, perhaps to Gulf-wide, if it’s possible to do that, to secure funding, and so it’s left open-ended, so that it's not too prescriptive.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ryan, I did read through the document, and I agree with the current prioritization, as the document sits. Dr. Frazer, did you have something? Okay. Anybody have any issues with the prioritization? Do you need a motion, Ryan, for us to accept these priorities?
MR. RINDONE: Yes, I think so.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I would entertain a motion from the committee, if anybody wants to put it out there, to accept the priorities as they are written. Dr. Stunz.

DR. GREG STUNZ: I will make that motion to accept these research priorities, whatever the official name of these research priorities are, as written.

MR. RINDONE: It’s the Gulf Council’s list of fishery, monitoring, and research priorities for 2020 to 2024, which you can clip just from the top of E-6.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: We have a motion by Dr. Stunz. Is there a second? Second by Mr. Donaldson. Any discussion? Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: Excuse me, but why is it that we have the data needs under Priority Code B, instead of A?

DR. FRAZER: Ed, could you be specific where you’re looking at in the document?

MR. SWINDELL: Are we not talking about the whole document?

DR. FRAZER: We’re trying to find exactly in the document where you’re referring to.

MR. SWINDELL: On down to --

MR. RINDONE: He’s on page 3, Item F, Sub-Bullet A, Data Needs.

MR. SWINDELL: The bottom of page 2 is Ecosystem-Based Management, Data Collection Priorities, and, on down, the data needs is Number A, and it’s Priority Code B. Item B is Ecological Relationship, Linkages, and Networks, and it’s Priority Code B. Of all the thing that we need, if we’re going to do OY, which we just had a discussion on, we’re going to need those things. Otherwise, we can’t do an effective OY. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Go ahead, Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: I saw that as well, Ed, and you’re referring to Section F, because I wondered why that wasn’t an A as well, the data collection needs or whatever, but I looked at that, and under the ecosystem-based kind of umbrella is the way I am
interpreting that that’s coming in, and so, obviously, we’ve got
to prioritize something here, and so, under that umbrella, to
me, it wasn’t as much of a priority, and I felt it was captured
in some of the broader priorities that were above, but I can see
where that -- Where you could interpret that differently.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Again, I just want to make sure that -- Many of
those economic and social recommendations that would be captured
in an OY analysis are actually in Item 3, and that is Priority
A.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: All right. We’re back to the motion. Is there
any discussion on the motion? The motion is to approve the Gulf
Council’s research and monitoring priorities for 2020-2024, as
written. Seeing no more discussion, is there any opposition to
the motion? Seeing no opposition, the motion carries. Is that
it for you, Mr. Rindone?

MR. RINDONE: That’s it for me.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you. Moving on, it’s the Eye on the Gulf:
An Electronic Monitoring Presentation on the Gulf of Mexico Reef
Fish Fishery by Ms. Neidig. Dr. Barbieri, did you have anything
to add on the priorities? No? Thank you. All right, Ms.
Neidig.

EYE ON THE GULF: AN ELECTRONIC MONITORING PRESENTATION ON THE
GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH FISHERY

MS. CAROLE NEIDIG: First, I would like to thank the Gulf
Council for this opportunity for us to provide an overview of
some of the work that we’re conducting in the Gulf of Mexico
with the snapper grouper fishery using the tool of electronic
monitoring.

I would like to thank my co-authors, Dan Roberts and Max Lee.
Max has joined me at the meeting, with the Mote shirt, and so
you can find him easily. Mote Marine Laboratory designated a
Center for Fisheries Electronic Monitoring at Mote in 2019, and
so we are now one of two centers at Mote Marine Laboratory, the
other being the Center for Shark Research. Mote Marine
Laboratory, for those of you who are not aware, is in Sarasota,
Florida, and we’re a non-profit research and education facility.

I thought I would start with the basics, for some people that
weren’t familiar with electronic monitoring. Electronic
monitoring is an integrated, onboard system, and it’s composed of cameras that are placed on vessels, along with GPS and sensors, and the whole package is meant to provide a permanent documentation of the fishing activities that are occurring on the vessel, and so, in this sense, it’s an electronic version of an observer, but both have their pros and cons on what can be conducted.

An important aspect in this fishery, in the snapper grouper fishery, is why is the application of EM important in this fishery? There is two main reasons. One is that there are limited resources for observer coverage, particularly in the bottom longline fishing vessels in the Gulf, and about 2 percent of those are covered with observers. The other is that there is limited reporting, and so management is not getting very much data on bycatch and discards, particularly in the sense that these are voluntarily provided by the fishers.

Some of the objectives of our center include to advance EM as a tool, as a fishery-dependent tool. What we’re looking at is, of course, I mentioned the permanent documentation of catch and bycatch and interaction with protected species, and, on that note, we had fishers approach us and ask us if we could help them in documenting their increasing shark bycatch and also to show what was going on with their catch and gear depredation, particularly off the west coast of Florida.

Also, to increase regional capacity for electronic monitoring in the Gulf, which includes partnerships with science and management and industry, and, also, another objective of ours is to link EM data, so that management can more easily use it to be able to associate it with observer reference numbers, dealer reference numbers, and dockside biological sampling information.

We first got our feet wet with electronic monitoring in 2014, with the Ocean Conservancy, when they asked us to come onboard as reviewers with a pilot study in this particular fishery. Currently, we have three research projects in which we’re working in the Gulf on this fishery and researching different aspects of it.

A big transition that we made three years ago was to go from a proprietary to non-proprietary software platform, and so we changed companies, and it was a big leap for us, but it was strongly suggested by National Marine Fisheries for us to do that to carry forward in our work.

We have had up to eighteen snapper grouper vessels help us with
EM systems in the Gulf. Right now, we’re at about fourteen, and
they are located in three ports in Florida and one right down
the road, at Katie’s Seafood, here in Galveston.

The electronic monitoring components have Quality is improved,
and the footprint of them has gotten smaller over the last eight
years, and, primarily for us, what we’re interested in with the
units is how many cameras can we fit onboard, and, with software
changes just this year, we can use up to eight cameras for full
coverage. With the systems that we are using on these vessels,
we are primarily using three to five, currently, but we’re
looking at options on having additional cameras.

Some of our in-house components for our center is having very
careful detail with every aspect that we do with electronic
monitoring. We have to track the vessels when they’re in and
out, and a big part of what we do is hard drive processing from
the point that it comes off to the vessel that it’s sort of
completed and erased and QC’d at the lab and returned to the
vessel. We track every task that we conduct. We track the
time, the person hours, and this we’re hoping will be useful for
evaluating EM cost-effectiveness.

In our projects, we review 25 percent of the events, and you can
see -- Since I don’t have a pointer, you can see that there is a
graph on there, and it’s a timeline, and I will show that in
more detail later, but what we’re looking at is 25 percent of
the events from every trip, and they have to be a complete
event, which includes a complete set, soak, and a haul.

Also, we have a dedicated EM server, and we use back-up systems
and quality control at many different time points. We are using
our statistical software, and our data analysis is done in-
house, along with Waterinterface LLC, which is our sub-
contractor.

An example that I wanted to show you is a vessel trip review,
and, if you look to the upper-left, you will see a map of
tracks, and that would be a vessel moving back and forth in the
Gulf, with their sets and hauls, and, quite often, we will see
tracks that will cover very large areas, and sometimes they are
very tight, and I will be showing some of that.

Then we have the camera views, and, as I was explaining before,
we follow a trip timeline, which you can see in the upper-right,
and those green spikes are speed and also sensor recordings of
hydraulics and the reel turning also at the point on which the
line is going out on a bottom longline and the line is coming
back in with a haul.

Below it is a figure to show the yellow to the left, and then in the middle is the soak, and then the purple is the haul, and the red markings are annotations in which we have identified specific species and gone to the detail with the drop-down list on the left of the disposition when it came onboard, the fate, if it went back over or was kept, and, also, additional things, such as lengths with sharks, sex of sharks, and so forth, and so we have spent several years working on these templates, to get as much data as possible out of what we’re doing. Then we can look at a species annotation listing as we move along and confirming what we have just entered.

Of course, the application for us of EM is important. One, as I mentioned, is with the documentation of shark bycatch, particularly depredation of gear and also the fishers’ catch. We are going into much detail and taking the size ranges of sharks, the sex, capture condition, and release disposition, and we’re also looking, as I mentioned, at their catch and gear damage, and, of course, there is some pictures of some of the species that we have viewed.

Another important aspect is the application of EM to document incidental marine mammal encounters, and, interestingly, I know Carrie had asked us about loggerhead sea turtle encounters, and we have had four in over 38,000 bottom longline and vertical line events since 2016. Two of those were mortalities, and two were live.

We have had zero other marine mammals that have been actually hooked that we have viewed and six seabirds, and so a very low number, but I wanted to show an example. The two pictures below is a porpoise depredation occurring with damage with red grouper, and we observed this through the video, of seeing the porpoises coming alongside the vessel, and they were raking the red groupers. They were not actually even taking them from the hooks, but, among that longline, there were a number of fish that came up injured, which, of course, affects the salability of those fish.

We are also conducting pilot studies, and one of our projects is an underwater camera system, and what we had found, with particularly the onboard camera systems, even having booms with cameras, was difficulty in seeing large shark cutoffs, making out particularly what the species of sharks were, and so we’re now testing an underwater camera system that will be tied into the whole software platform, and then we can identify the large
sharks, and, also, further, with fate of fish that are thrown over and which we can see if they are swimming away.

Another aspect with the software we’re using through Saltwater Inc. is the digital ruler platform, in which we can -- We are in trials with that right now, measuring fish as they are placed on different work surfaces, and then we’re comparing that data with observer data provided through Elizabeth Scott-Denton and also FWC dockside sampling data.

The other aspect that I mentioned was the linkages, which we felt were very important for management to be able to use EM data, and questions that I received when speaking to people with National Marine Fisheries and the Gulf Council was how can we use EM data, and so we tried to be proactive and think what other fishery-dependent data is being collected, and can we match that up with every EM trip that we have data from, and so we acquire all the reference numbers. Not the data, but just the reference numbers, and we match them up, so we can provide that.

I am going to show just a few data slides, and the data that I am presenting -- It includes from six bottom longline vessels from the West Florida Shelf from 2016 to the middle of this year, about May of 2019, and it includes 636 seadays and over 500 annotated set/haul events. Why I put 2,000 there is that those are events that we have available that we can review, but, since we do just 25 percent, this amounts to 537.

That included over 30,000 individuals that were annotated of 152 species, and, of those, sharks -- Of course, as we accumulate more data, this number goes up, and it goes down, and, at this point, it’s 4.22 percent of the total catch. I put that in there because of the interest of the fishers and the increasing shark bycatch that they are reporting that they are encountering.

I have a list here of our twenty most frequently encountered species that we have annotated, and you can look at the relative frequency percent. 62.81 percent of the red grouper relative frequency, and so, obviously, that is the fish species that is most often targeted in the Gulf in this fishery, and I wanted to show that, within that twenty list of species, we have three species of sharks that are commonly seen that are included in that top twenty, the Atlantic sharpnose shark, the spiny dogfish, and also blacknose sharks.

I wanted to show just a view, and this is to show our
concentration in the Gulf, and you can see the West Florida Shelf off of Florida is our highest concentration, because we’ve been working with those vessels for the longest, and we have just introduced, earlier this year, the Texas vessels, and we have over 10,000 annotations ready to load this coming week that we would show more coverage here, but, right now, I’m showing some of the vertical line or bandit vessel occurrences in the northwestern Gulf, but, also, you can see, on the western shelf, you can see also some of the yellow dots for vertical line.

What I wanted to show is, within that map that you just looked at, we have an intensively-fished area in the West Florida Shelf. This area that is in the blue outline on the right-hand side -- You can see, first, the red is where all the occurrences have occurred off of our coastline of Florida, but the blue is intensely-fished area, which accounts for about 20 percent of that whole area that is being fished, and that has produced though -- Just that intensely-fished area has produced over 60 percent of the annotated catch from the bottom longline fishery.

Another aspect is that we’re looking at optimized cold spot and hot spot analyses, and you can see -- If you follow in any three of these, from orange to red, those dots, within that intensively-fished area, those are the areas of 90 percent or more confidence levels, and what we’re seeing is that, with the red snapper and red grouper examples, basically, if the fishers are out there fishing in that intensively-worked area -- If you’re going to go for red grouper, you’re going to get into shark species, also. It’s basically difficult to avoid that, and so that’s just an example of some of that work we’re doing.

Another is looking at condition. Of course, what is coming in and then what is going back off the boat is important, and condition at vessel arrival -- I am showing that relative frequency, and you can see that more than half of the fish coming onboard from bottom longline gear that we’re annotating are alive. We are seeing them moving, and we’re seeing that they are live.

Whether they suffered barotrauma or not, that is also recorded, but we are recording if we can see the appearance of if it is alive. We do have an unknown condition. If we’re not sure, then that’s what gets annotated, as unknown.

The other is that, interestingly also, the sharks have a very high, over 95 percent, coming onboard live, and, disposition-wise, you can see that, of all the fish, we have over 50 percent that are actually retained, as you would know from management,
but disposition of sharks -- We are showing that more than 90
percent are actually discarded live, which has been a question
that we often get on how are the sharks treated, particularly
when you’re bringing in let’s say juvenile dusky and so forth,
and species that are protected, knowing if they’re going back
off alive, and then our other aspect, of course, would be those
cutoffs that I mentioned earlier of the larger sharks.

Next, I am showing a frequency summary. We took a stab at it
and picked eight species for this, but the main take-home
message on this is that the red grouper -- The discarded are
over half of the percent of the total catch, and what we’re
observing with this is that these are generally undersized red
grouper that are going back over, and so there’s a lot of effort
going into catching red grouper, but then there’s also a lot
that are having to be thrown back.

The next three slides are to show you an overview of the
geographic frequency locations, and I will include retained
fish, discarded, and discarded dead. In the first, you can see,
in that blue square, that’s that intensively-fished area, and,
if you look at the reds, which are the highest frequency, and
then the brown and tan, and so you can see that, in that area,
there is a very high catch of fish that are kept. You will
notice the one red that is a high frequency, and you will see
that one reoccurring in the next two slides.

Next is discarded fish of all species, and you can see, again,
that one grid, and these are 625-kilometer-square grids in size,
is our grid sample. You can see, again, the distribution of our
frequency location of discarded, and then discarded dead follows
on the last slide.

Another aspect that we do, but we only, at this point in time,
have three vessel captains that are filling out vessel data log
forms to help us -- We were using this as a comparison with the
data that they provide to us from our EM hard drives collected
off the vessels, but we were looking at some differences in what
they reported versus what we see, and, interestingly, though
they did report over 61 percent retained and discarded over 38
percent, but what stood out to us was actually the low percent,
less than 1 percent, of discards recorded, which, obviously, is
what management has seen, and that is one of the reasons we have
observers and are now testing EM.

A few things that we have in progress is EM data modeling, and I
am not going to go into this in depth, but we’re looking at
catch per unit effort, catch in discards, and particularly we’re
looking at random and fixed effects. We want to know if like
time of year, the months, season, moon phase, how that affects
the data that we’re obtaining, and, also, geomorphic and benthic
habitat data that we’re looking closely at, and so we’re mapping
all of this information and obtaining as much as we can from
agencies and so forth to be able to pull more out of the
information that we’re collecting and provide that to both
industry and management.

This project, I want to thank -- There is a lot of people
involved in this, and I particularly wanted to extend a thank
you to two of our scientific advisers on projects, Dr. Elizabeth
Scott-Denton and also Dr. Jessica Stephen have been tremendous
assets to us, and the Katie’s Seafood group is in here, and so I
would just give them a thank you, but there’s a lot of people
that make this happen, plus my invaluable fisheries EM review
team, and you see some of them there.

We have about twenty-four what we call citizen scientists that
are retired and so forth from different specialties that help us
in the field and also for reviewing, many that have been with us
the whole time and help even train additional people. I want to
thank you again for this opportunity. I tried to speed it up a
little bit, since we’re running late, and so I didn’t want to
see any heads go down to the tables there, and so thank you very
much.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Ms. Neidig. There’s no heads that
are going to go down on that. That’s a very good presentation,
and there’s a lot of good information.

MS. NEIDIG: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Any questions? Dr. Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: I do have a question, and thanks for that very
useful information. I am trying to get a handle, in general, on
the cost, both in time and in money per vessel, but, in
particular, the time it takes -- That was a lot of people in
your citizen science room looking at the videos, but what kind
of manhours is involved, and I don’t even know sort of what
units to put it in, on an average day of -- You have the cameras
running and the process, and what is that timeline to process
all of that?

MS. NEIDIG: We haven’t done all of the analysis, but we have
some parts broken down, but it definitely ranges based on
whether we’re looking at vertical line vessels, data from
vertical line vessels, or data from bottom longline, and we can run anywhere from -- Just reviewing a hard drive, it’s from let’s say thirty minutes to over an hour. Sometimes there is some, such as the Texas group has thrown something into this, with having up to ninety-seven events, and so we’re reviewing then 25 percent of those events, whereas, in Florida, on the West Florida Shelf, we’re dealing with maybe eight to eleven events per trip, and so they are making us work longer hours here from Texas.

Also, the cost you mentioned, the equipment itself has definitely come down in price from when we first started, and, particularly, working with non-proprietary software is approximately $10,000 per unit that we invest, per vessel, and then plus our technical cost for installation and so forth.

DR. STUNZ: Just a quick follow-up. I probably wasn’t as clear as I should have been. I guess, for like watching the video, and you’ve got the events going on, because you look like you have a dozen or so people watching this, but I am trying to get it back to -- Like, if you had just one person looking at one per day, how much time does it take, and how long do people have to spend looking at the videos, is what I am trying to get to.

MS. NEIDIG: Actually, reviewing videos is very time consuming. One trip may take us a couple of -- I would say at least forty hours, maybe, to go through, if it has a lot of events. It’s quite time consuming, and that’s why I have a lot of people helping. Particularly if there’s a lot of catch -- I mean, if there’s not much catch, then that’s to our advantage. If there’s a lot of species that need to be annotated -- What we stress, at least in our lab, is that quality and not quantity.

We are looking at the quality of the product of the data that we provide from annotating, rather than having people speeding through, and I know there are methods to that, such as Dr. Wallace with AI that we’ll be looking into that might help us, artificial intelligence applications for possibly reducing reviewing time, but reviewing time is time consuming for us, and we’ve done a lot to actually make it quicker, just because of people that are trained and have a good eye for it, and also the people that we have, such as Max Lee, that is very trained in QC’ing the species, and so, basically, if you even have some people mark that they came up with a fish species, and, if they are consistently possibly wrong, we can go back and correct it, but QC is a big part of what we do, but the other aspect is making sure that the disposition and fate are correct, also, and so it is time consuming, yes.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I have a question for you, Ms. Neidig. After all the data is processed, do you all share it with the fishermen, after everything is done?

MS. NEIDIG: The data, we speak to them about it, and we haven’t -- Also, we provide them with actually mini videos of their trips, with information, and I actually brought a bag of them for the Texas fishers with us, but, yes, we do share the information.

Actually, they’re quite interested, because they want to see the mapping of where they’ve been, even though they keep careful records, but they want to know what we see as an overall picture in those areas, the grids that they have been fishing, and what were the results, particularly over time, and so they are very interested in that, and I think that’s what we have to do. We have to give back to industry.

This is definitely for management, but industry is very interested, and they want to participate in this. We actually have people asking to have the equipment, and we don’t have enough funds to put on all the vessels that are interested.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: That’s what I was thinking. I was thinking that fishermen would probably want to use this to help themselves be more efficient.

MS. NEIDIG: Yes, sir. They want a sustainable fishery. This is their livelihood, and, when we first started, people were unsure, and they were concerned that the data that we would find would then go to management, and that might turn the tables on them, but we have seen, I think through education and awareness and the word getting around -- One thing that we are very careful with the fishers that we work with too is confidentiality. I know that, if you’ve seen some of our reports, we have big dots and things like that, and so we’re very careful about reporting, particularly information from specific individual vessels.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Thank you, again. I really enjoyed the presentation. It may be too early to answer some of these questions, but --

MS. NEIDIG: Fire away, and I will see what I can do. It may be early, but --
DR. FRAZER: Here they come. We talked about sharks before, and there are about 4 percent of the occurrences in your records, and the dataset you have is only four years, but, looking at those four years, is that 4 percent cumulative, or is there any increase in --

MS. NEIDIG: At this point, but, actually, we -- Just before we placed some of the additional vertical line data in there, and this was just two weeks ago, the number went down from 6.24 percent, and so, as we’re -- It’s a little bit different with the vertical line fishery. You’re not seeing as many sharks on their lines as you are with the bottom line fishery, and that’s something that I think we could separate out, and, actually, we do in our reports, but there is a bit of difference, and so that is cumulative, yes.

DR. FRAZER: That relates to the next question, and so, in one of the figures as well, you showed, along the west coast of Florida, where you have that high-intensity area, and there is an apparent -- There’s a pretty clear spatial correlation between the red grouper catches and the red snapper catches, but what I’m curious about is about 63 percent of the occurrences are red grouper, and 11 percent, or something, are red snapper, but, when you actually look at that statistically, how strong is that relationship?

MS. NEIDIG: Well, we definitely -- For our fishery on the West Florida Shelf, definitely the red grouper stand out as a much higher percent, and we are starting to see, definitely with the Texas data -- It’s definitely the other way around.

DR. FRAZER: Let me rephrase it. If 60 percent of your occurrences are red grouper, and 11 percent or so are red snapper, is that -- I mean, how consistent is that relationship?

MS. NEIDIG: It is consistent. Yes, it has been.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. The second part of that, I guess, is then, when you look and you parse that out by the sector, and so the bottom longlines and the vertical longlines still have the same catch ratio?

MS. NEIDIG: No. Actually, the bottom longlines is much higher. With red grouper -- What we’re seeing more is the vertical line fishery becomes more species-specific. It depends on the area, obviously, they’re fishing, and so most of the time -- Also, what’s playing an effect with this are IFQs.
Some of our fishers barely have any IFQ for red snapper, and so
our data is kind of weighted with that also, because we have
more vessels that are really just trying to target those red
grouper, rather than the red snapper, because their owner,
possibly, hasn’t allocated red snapper IFQs to them, and so
there are some points in there that, if we take that as
individual vessels, I think I could give you a clearer picture.

**DR. FRAZER:** Thank you.

**MS. NEIDIG:** You’re welcome.

**CHAIRMAN DIAZ:** Dr. Stunz.

**DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, and I know there’s a lot of questions
from this committee, because I personally think this is the way
that we need to go for a lot of things, and so I think you have
a lot of questions, and it’s a way to reduce a lot of in-person
observer costs and that kind of thing, but I did have a
question, and it was on your Slide 24, where you’re kind of
summarizing some of the things that you’ve done.

Of course, this group is very concerned about discard mortality,
and you had said, basically, it’s about a 60/40 retained versus
discard in your slide, but, in that bottom bullet there, it
talked about less than 1 percent was recorded as discard
mortality.

**MS. NEIDIG:** Those were specifically on forms that we provide to
the captains, and that’s what I thought was -- We wanted to see
what was going to come of it if we provided data forms to the
fishers, and some did a much thorough job than others, but it
seemed to be that not necessarily wanting to report about
discard mortalities, and it could just be left off.

It’s similar to what is written about in management and the
problems with National Marine Fisheries not having that data,
that fishers are electively providing discard data, and some
don’t -- They just leave it off, and it can come back as zero
discards, and so, unfortunately, but that’s, I guess, actually
the reason too for observers and for EM, because, basically, a
lot of it can’t be missed with either, and, with the cameras, we
have the permanent documentation, and so we can go back to it
and provide it if someone says we would like to see what you
have been doing, and we would like to review it and QC you, and
we can provide it for that.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Okay. Well, thank you, Ms. Neidig.

MS. NEIDIG: Thank you so very much.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: We appreciate it very much.

MS. NEIDIG: I appreciate the opportunity, and, as Max said -- He wanted to mention that we’re here all week, if you have any other questions.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Okay. We’re going to take a fifteen-minute break, and we will start back at five minutes to four.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Next up is a presentation on allocation review criteria and Dr. Diagne.

PRESENTATION ON ALLOCATION REVIEW CRITERIA

DR. ASSANE DIAGNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon. Today, we would like to discuss with you allocation review, and, specifically, the bulk of the presentation will give you a progress report on the work of the allocation review workgroup that was set up, following your direction, but, before we get there, I would like to define a couple of terms and perhaps remind us of the allocation review triggers that you selected as a council.

In terms of definitions, the two terms that I like to always define when we talk about allocation review would be the allocation review itself, because, as a council, this is not something that we typically do. What we typically do is the second bullet there, the evaluation of fisheries allocation options, meaning the FMP amendment with options and alternatives, and one could essentially just state that the allocation review would be subsumed in that, but, based on the NMFS allocation review policy, from now on, we will go through this exercise and have formal allocation reviews, which would be the evaluation that leads to the decision of whether or not the development of an amendment would be required.

As a council, in April, you selected the following allocation review triggers. You selected time-based triggers as your primary trigger and the council’s public and open process as a secondary trigger.

Here, perhaps, we would like to emphasize the fact that the
triggers that you specified will not prevent you from conducting additional allocation reviews whenever you see fit, and that is the first point, and the second point, of course, is, as a council, you could initiate additional reviews when, for example, new information is made available to you. For example, the example used here, or the one we used in the previous document had to do with data adjustments and things of that nature.

Just also a reminder of the various types of allocations that we have in the Gulf. We do have allocations between the two major sectors, if you mean the commercial and the recreational sector, and we have allocations, at least one, within the recreational sector, and, by that, we mean the red snapper allocation between the federal for-hire and the private angling components.

We do have allocations between zones and gear types, and we have allocations between councils, meaning between us and the South Atlantic Council, and, finally, we do have, thanks to Amendment 50, allocations between the five states, five Gulf states.

This is also just, I guess, a recap of what it is that we are looking, I guess, ahead to do when it comes to allocation reviews, and this was included in the letter that you approved, as you recall, and, essentially, this shows the timeline of the initial allocation reviews that we would have to conduct in the Gulf.

Starting from let’s say April of 2023, all the way to I guess April of 2027, and I would add one more year to this, every year we will have some allocations to review, and we will start with the recreational red snapper ACL between the private angling and the federal for-hire and finish with the allocation between the two councils at the seven-year mark. Right when we do that, of course, what it is that we did in the first one there, in 2023, the second review would come due, because it will have been eight years since we started, and so on and so forth.

When you adopted the allocation review criteria, you proceeded to approve a motion, which is here on the board, that directed staff to contact SERO and the Science Center and convene an allocation review workgroup to essentially discuss the procedures and contents, criteria, if you would, that would be in the allocation review.

After the meeting, we did contact Dr. Porch’s and Dr. Crabtree’s offices, and they did offer a portion of their staff, members of their staff, and we established the workgroup, and the names of
the people who participated are here, and, essentially, it is a
mix of between social scientists and biologists in the
workgroup.

We have had the opportunity to meet twice, once in June and once
in July, and, essentially, during our first meeting, we
discussed the procedures, meaning the different steps that one
would have to consider to conduct an allocation review, and the
second meeting looked more at the different criteria, meaning
really the content of the review, and so, in terms of procedure,
we started with a notice indicating, I guess to the public, the
list of species to be reviewed, and then the group proceeded to
discuss the membership of the allocation review panel, and, on
some of these items, we would like to get some feedback from the
committee, in terms of how you would see this proceed.

For example, in terms of the membership of the review panel,
would you suggest that we set up something like an IPT, meaning
between the council and NMFS and Science Center staff, to go
through this, or do you envision that allocation review may
include some outside parties or participants? That is, I guess,
one open question, maybe for later.

In terms of an allocation review template, the overall template,
if there are some, I guess, particular things that, as a council
or committee you would like to emphasize, I mean, we are going
to welcome those suggestions. Of course, within the procedures,
we did discuss that at some point the SSC, Standing as well as
the Socioeconomic SSC, would have to weigh-in and provide
recommendations, and the same would go for the relevant advisory
panels.

An allocation review being a council’s responsibility, and the
review itself is a council document, and so, at the center of
this would be, of course, council discussions and
recommendations and conclusions.

During the second meeting, we had the chance to discuss the
criteria, if you would, to consider when reviewing a particular
allocation, and this slide here is a reminder for us when it
comes to the questions that an allocation review should answer.
One of those would be to review the FMP objectives and revise,
as necessary, and the question would be, essentially, are the
objectives, as revised, being met? Finally, have other relevant
factors that would impact allocation changed? A review would
have to address, if you would, these three issues.

Given that the workgroup spent time looking at the criteria or
variables, if you would, that one may consider for inclusion in a review, the first one stems from the allocation review guidance from NMFS, and so the FMP goals and objectives would have to be included in an allocation review. In fact, one would start there. The regulatory structure, meaning changes to the regulatory structure also, seasons and bag limits, et cetera, would have to be provided as background.

In reviewing allocation, ABCs and ACLs and quota and quota utilization rates and landings histories by user groups would have to be also considered, or could be considered, if you would. Discards, as well as discard mortality rates, can also be considered. Bycatch of protected species could also contribute to the discussion when it comes to reviewing an allocation.

The group also looked at accountability measures between the different user groups, if there are any, and season closures and payback provisions would be examples. The status of the stocks, if there is a stock assessment that has been completed, that would also be included, or could be included, in the review. Also, the habitat impacts and I guess significant environmental events, and the example that comes to mind here would be red tide, and an overall discussion when it comes to participation and effort trends, and that would include the number of permits, number of vessels, number of trips, et cetera.

Finally, what we would call economic efficiency considerations, and that would include consumer and producer surplus measures and, if the particular species is managed under an IFQ, one would look at allocation transfer price also, for example, and we could also look at distributional effects, economic impacts, demographic trends, and some relevant indices, such as the engagement and reliance, as well as social vulnerability indicators. These are some of the variables or criteria that one could consider for inclusion during the course of an allocation review.

The group, or at least a subset of the group, did suggest or consider an idea of having a tiered allocation review, meaning having varying levels of complexity, depending on the species at hand. For example, if one wanted to review, let’s say, the allocation for tilefish, which is a group, the tilefish aggregation, the IFQ, we would have much less data available to work with, as opposed to, for example, reviewing the allocation of say red snapper.

In that context, perhaps, we could have a tiered approach by
which, for certain species, we would use the expedited, if you
would, or short approach, but, for other species, perhaps, use a
lengthier and more complex review. That’s just an idea for now,
and it will be developed further.

To develop this further, one would have to consider the number
of tiers or levels of complexity. The first brush may be a very
short, very simple, and then medium, and perhaps a full fairly
complex. The information to include in each tier would have
also to be decided, should we see that this approach has merits
moving forward.

Finally, we did, I guess, consider next steps, or potential next
steps. What we are thinking about now is, when the time comes,
to convene the allocation review workgroup to do, essentially, a
few things. One would be to look at the council’s
recommendations, and two would be to look at SSC
recommendations, and three would be to look at the GAO report on
allocation.

I said when the time comes because that third item, essentially,
the report on allocation, is scheduled to be released, I think,
by the end of the year, and that is the Modernizing Recreational
Fish Act, and that’s a long name, and it says something like
that, by December 31 of this year.

Should that report be made available to us, then, of course, we
will bring it to the council, and then we will be able to
discuss with the workgroup the implications of that report on
the work that we have completed to date.

Where we are trying to go, with the council’s approval and
suggestions, as we progress, would be, down the line, to bring
before you an allocation review template, which would tell you,
beforehand, that, when you start reviewing allocations,
essentially you will start here and consider this and so on and
so forth. We will present that to the council and take your
feedback and then revise it accordingly, based on the
recommendations that you provide.

At least we have, I guess, what I would consider a good start,
given the fact that our first allocation review is scheduled for
April of 2023, and so it seems to me that we have a decent
amount of time to get the report from the GAO and I guess look
at it and add those to our work and then, at some point, prepare
a template for your review. Thank you. I will stop here and
try to answer questions, if you have any.
CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Are there questions for Dr. Diagne? Mr. Dyskow.

MR. DYSKOW: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have two questions, starting -- I guess I’ll take the easy one first. If we have an allocation review with your date of April of 2023, for example, would we start this process before that date, since it appears to be quite lengthy, or would you not start until April of 2023?

DR. DIAGNE: Our plan is to start in April of 2023, and that is why, on the slide, what we have -- These are the expected start date of the first review, per the time trigger that we selected.

MR. DYSKOW: Thank you. So then the second part of my question is this looks to be a lengthy process, and have you considered any time deadlines on how this -- Is this an eighteen-month process or a twelve-month process? If we don’t start until April of 2023, and we have established a four-year time interval, this may take years, the way it’s outlined.

DR. DIAGNE: It need not be that lengthy. It could be, because, right now -- Keep in mind that, in showing you the potential variables and criteria to be included, that is pretty much everything under the sun, but it doesn’t mean that, by the time you approve as a council a template for allocation review that all of these would be included, and that is one thing.

The second thing is, for example, should you as a council consider a tiered allocation review process, some of these reviews would be extremely short. It could be a lengthy process, but nothing near four years, I don’t think.

MR. DYSKOW: Would it be meaningful to put a time constraint in this process, so that we can ensure that it wouldn’t go on forever?

DR. DIAGNE: Absolutely, and that is within your prerogative. Right now, we haven’t really designed, if you would, or presented to you a template, but, when the time comes, it is absolutely within your authority as a council to say that this review must be completed by a date certain that you put on it, absolutely.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Sanchez.

MR. SANCHEZ: I guess, while we’re thinking this through, one of the concerns that I have too is that, rather than be so hung up on a time schedule, some rigid time-target-oriented timeframe, that we make sure -- If we’re going to do something, let’s do it
meaningfully and have all of the data, and, by that, I mean recalibrated numbers for the fisheries where we don’t have that, and put those numbers into an assessment and get the benefit of that, so we really see what the stock looks like, and then maybe do some kind of generic amendment that captures all of those species where we have this data now, and then we could look at some reallocation and not just march this to a timeframe. Let’s wait and get the right numbers.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Mr. Robinson.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you. Assane, this may have been in here and I just glossed over it and I missed it, but, in your discussion about the different elements, landings history and all of those things for consideration, was the discussion of biomass included in those conversations, where the biomass is actually located? I am speaking to the example of red snapper, but there may be other species that have a different distribution.

DR. DIAGNE: Specifically, let’s say which area of the Gulf, I guess, represents which proportion of the biomass, something like that? I don’t recall that being discussed in the workgroup, but, if that is something that, as a committee, you would like to recommend for inclusion, that would certainly be added next time you discuss this issue.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. ROY CRABTREE: Just looking at the idea of not dealing with the allocations between the states for five years, I think, when you get the calibrations and the new assessment and calibrate into common currency kinds of state currencies, I suspect you will find it very difficult to wait that long.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Dr. Diagne.

DR. DIAGNE: I mean, along those lines, one of the -- If we go back to Slide 3, along those lines, even though, on that table, we have expected start dates, and those are a direct result of the policy, essentially, the allocation review policy that you adopted as a council, but those two last bullets here are, at any moment, as the council, you have, of course, the authority to direct us to start an allocation review, as you see fit.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Roy, this would be a question for you. What
you’re speaking to is -- So we have MRIP, and we’re working species-by-species to calibrate that into FES, and you’re talking about a calibration that would then calibrate FES to each one of the state surveys?

DR. CRABTREE: Well, I can just sort of tell you how I sort of suspect this will go. We get a new red snapper assessment using the FES landings and the calibrated landings, and then we’ll get a recreational TAC and a commercial quota out of that, and then the rec quota will be partly allocated to the for-hire guys, and then the private sector will be allocated to each state, but, in the course of giving each state its amount of fish, they will be converted into the state survey currency, using the calibration effect, which is likely to have considerable impact on the amounts of fish.

It’s hard to know if it will, and maybe you guys will be fortunate and everything will come out just the way it is, but I suspect it won’t be that simple and we’ll have to look at it, but I think that’s how it will go when we do a red snapper assessment, but --

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Guyas.

MS. GUYAS: Even before we get there, and we’ll talk about this tomorrow, when we’re moving from old MRIP to FES, I think we’re going to have to have some serious discussions about this, and so we’ll look forward to tomorrow’s red grouper discussion.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I agree. Next on the agenda there is a section for SSC recommendations. Dr. Barbieri.

DR. BARBIERI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I actually don’t have a whole lot. The SSC was very pleased with the presentation and the scheme that was proposed by Dr. Diagne, and so we just, looking into this issue, felt that you should be aware of the fact that some of this reallocation criteria, and the criteria are good criteria, but some of them may not be as easy for you to obtain, and this may not be as available, as readily available, at least for some species, compared to others.

Think about the discussion that we had this afternoon about optimum yield and what data is available to inform those decisions and how that’s going to be highly variable between species, and so it’s just something to plant that seed that the criteria that are outlined in the plan right now are actually very good criteria, and the whole plan is very well structured, but be aware of the fact that there will be difficulties in
actually implementing some of this criteria as you look through.

Based on that, the SSC is highly supportive of a tiered
approach, adoption of a tiered approach, and so species for
which you don’t have that much information to actually inform
the reallocation review can be done in a more simple way, and
others, for which the information is more readily available, you
can use more complex criteria, but, other than that, the
committee was pleased with the plan, and we are available to
continue reviewing as it goes along the way.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Any other comments
about allocation review? Then I think we’ve got a path forward.
Dr. Diagne, if the GAO report comes out, if you would bring that
to us at the next meeting, we would appreciate it.

DR. DIAGNE: Thank you. Yes, Mr. Chair. As soon as it’s
available, we will schedule to bring it before you.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Dr. Barbieri, the very
next agenda item is the Remaining Items from the Scientific and
Statistical Committee Summary Report. That is Tab E, Number 9.

REMAINING ITEMS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE

DR. BARBIERI: Yes, and this is very fast as well. There is
just one slide, and it’s just a list of items under the -- It’s
just for you to see some of the items that the committee
reviewed and discussed and that are not going to be handled
through other committees.

Number 1 is that variability in yield projections from stock
assessments, and you may remember that I mentioned this last
time, and, as you look, since about 2015, as you look at the
projections coming out of stock assessments that are conducted
by our Science Center, there is, more often than not, a spike in
the first year, and sometimes the second year, out of the
projections after the terminal year of data into that
assessment.

The projections are basically shooting your catch for the
following couple of years, or the next year, to be higher than
invariably it is realized after the fact, and so, when you look,
this is a whole variety of species, greater amberjack, gag, gray
triggerfish, red grouper, Spanish mackerel, and cobia.

Ocean Conservancy, Dr. Michael Drexler, actually put together a
nice little white paper, and he came to the SSC meeting and
presented that to us. It generated a lot of discussion, and Dr. Cass-Calay was there, and other people from the Science Center, and we discussed this with them, and they are looking into this issue and trying to identify what may be causing this spike to be coming out of the projections.

This issue is not resolved, and we are not saying that this represents any major problem or concern, but it’s something that needs to be looked at, because it relates to the amount of uncertainty that we are probably being able to account for in our stock assessments, versus gets realized to these yield projections.

It's a work in progress, but, as we move forward with this, we would like to provide you with a report that those projections coming out of the stock assessments are more in line with what we would expect. I will pause there, Mr. Chairman, if there are any questions.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: I am not seeing any. Would you like to proceed?

DR. BARBIERI: Yes. The second one is just to make you aware that we received a presentation from Dr. Dan Holland, who is an economist with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center. He came and gave us a presentation on technical guidance that is coming out of the revisions to NS 1.

You may remember that NS 1 came out -- The first guidance paper came out in 2009, and then eventually, in 2016, it was revised, and there were some changes that were implemented in 2016 to facilitate implementation of NS 1, and those changes came under three main categories of reference points, carryover and phase-in, and data-limited stocks.

NMFS formed some working groups, three different working groups, to work on this, and Dr. Holland came to our meeting to present on this one that deals with implementing carryover and phase-in provisions and how to integrate those within ABC control rules, and so carryover, as you may recall, is when you have leftover yield from a year that could be carried over to the next year if that wasn’t completely fished, removed, and the phase-in is really when you are trying to implement a reduction from OFL to ABC, after a stock assessment for example, and a new ABC recommendation comes out, but, instead of doing that reduction in just one year, you can phase it in over two or three years, just sort of go a little easy on the industry and cause less socioeconomic impacts by implementing the new ABC, or the new buffer between OFL and ABC.
Mr. Rindone, Ryan Rindone, is actually a member of this working
group, and the report, in draft format, was just released this
past August, and Dr. Holland is going around the country and
presenting this to different SSCs. They expect comments to be
sent back to them by the end of this year, with the expectation
that, by next spring, they will have the final report released.

It’s something that is not mandatory for council’s to implement,
carryover and phase-in, but, in case you do, there will be
advantages in looking into those guidelines.

Then Number 3 is just a reminder to you about the ABC Control
Rule Working Group, and I know that this topic is somewhat
boring, somewhat complex, but it’s something that is really,
really important that your SSC has a process in place to really
evaluate the best way to implement and revise, if necessary,
your ABC control rule, and so, based on discussions that we’ve
been having -- You may remember from the last meeting that I
brought this up, and we are moving forward, working with council
staff, in restating the ABC control rule.

We would like this to be composed of SSC members and some
council members that we are hoping will be volunteering to come
and work with us and integrate the council’s perspective into
this working group, as well as Science Center and SERO staff,
and, after that is put in place, we can put together a draft of
new recommendations and revisions of our ABC control rule that
we can come and present to you. That, Mr. Chairman, completes
my report, and I will be glad to address any questions.


MS. BOSARGE: I just have a humorous comment. I hope it’s a big
room that you’re going to put that group in, because everybody’s
hand shot up at the same time at this council table to volunteer
to be on that ABC Control Rule group.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. All right. We are
going to move right into our last agenda item, which is a
committee discussion on allocation issues, and Dr. Frazer is
going to lead that. Dr. Frazer.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION ON ALLOCATION ISSUES

DR. FRAZER: Okay, and so, at the last meeting, we were hoping
to have at least an inkling of what the GAO might provide in
their report, which is, ultimately, due at the end of the year.
We did not get an update on that.

Similarly, we’re working on trying to schedule some economists that deal specifically with resource valuation issues, and we hope to have them in January, and so what I want to talk about is, in the absence of both of those things happening -- It has to do with what Martha alluded to, and I don’t want to get into it yet, because I don’t want to preempt it, but it’s going to be a big issue, because allocation issues aren’t going to wait until 2023.

We’ll see that clearly when we get the red grouper assessment and we’re dealing with our first round of FES information, but, when we do have that discussion tomorrow, I would hope that people will be thinking about allocation issues and how we’re going to deal with them as a council, because, again, they’re not going to wait until 2023, and so I don’t have any other issues to talk about until tomorrow with regard to allocation, unless somebody wants to initiate a conversation.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Just to plan for tomorrow a little bit, I think it’s even more than just an allocation issue with that red grouper stock assessment. I know we’ll get into this tomorrow, but I am throwing it out there, in case there is some data that can be brought to us.

I don’t really even understand the new catch level recommendations, and it’s hard for me to look at those and say if that’s higher than what we had before or lower than what we had before, because our old catches were in an MRIP-type currency, and these new catch level recommendations include an FES-type currency, and so I really don’t know if we’re going up on our quota, on what we’re telling people they can catch, or are we going down, based on this new calibration.

You would think it’s just as simple as looking at the number, but it’s not, and so, if somebody could bring us that information to discuss tomorrow -- To me, the health of the stock is the first and foremost thing, and what we’re going to take out of the water, and that would be informative to understand.

DR. FRAZER: Dr. Porch, are we going to be prepared to have that discussion tomorrow?

DR. PORCH: We are, but I don’t think it’s coming from me. I
think that’s the Regional Office that has a presentation on that.

DR. CRABTREE: We have some information to go over with respect to red grouper that look at how it appears to change things, but it’s just red grouper.

DR. FRAZER: Sorry. I’m not trying to put you on the spot too much, but, again, it’s a real issue, and I think people are trying to understand what those numbers mean.

DR. CRABTREE: What we can show is, if you have the new ABC that’s based on the FES numbers, if you stayed with the same time period that the allocation is now based on, but revise the numbers based on the new landings, then this would be the allocation, and these would be the catch levels.

DR. FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: No, that’s not what I’m wondering. That’s an allocation question. What I am wondering is -- So we have a 4.16 or 4.17-million-pound quota right now, okay?

DR. CRABTREE: Right, and so, if we show you that here’s the new ABC, and here’s how it would be allocated, here’s how much the commercial quota would be, here’s how much the recreational quota can be, you can then look at the commercial quota relative to about what they are catching, and then we’ve looked at what we think this will mean with respect to the recreational fishery, in terms of will they close or not.

MS. BOSARGE: What I want to know is what would that have been in an MRIP number? What would that quota have been if you convert backwards and tell me -- Take that FES and convert it back to MRIP, so that I know, in my mind, are we actually seeing an increase in quota, based on the way we used to measure things, or are we seeing a decrease in quota.

DR. CRABTREE: I think the way to look at that though is the implications in terms of the seasons and when we think it will caught. The commercial quota will come out still a straight number. You can compare the new commercial quota with the old commercial quota, and you will be able to see if it goes up or down. The recreational though, you have to look at it with respect to what they’re catching.

DR. FRAZER: I am going to weigh-in here for just a minute. I expected this to get very complicated tomorrow, and so this is a
preview of where we’re likely to go, and I saw that Martha was about ready to —

MS. GUYAS: I will wait for tomorrow.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. It’s an issue that’s on the agenda, and we will deal with it accordingly tomorrow. Dale.

CHAIRMAN DIAZ: Is there any other business to come before the Sustainable Fisheries Committee? Seeing none, I yield it back to you, Mr. Chair.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 21, 2019.)