

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2
3 MACKEREL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

4
5 Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel Key West, Florida

6
7 June 18, 2018

8
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Tom Frazer.....Florida
11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
12 Susan Gerhart (designee for Roy Crabtree).....NMFS
13 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
14 Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
15 Robin Riechers.....Texas
16 John Sanchez.....Florida
17 Bob Shipp.....Alabama

18
19 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

20 Patrick Banks.....Louisiana
21 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
22 Doug Boyd.....Texas
23 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
24 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
25 Johnny Greene.....Alabama
26 Campo Matens.....Louisiana
27 Paul Mickle (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
28 Greg Stunz.....Texas
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30
31 **STAFF**

32 Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
34 Douglas Gregory.....Executive Director
35 Morgan Kilgour.....Fishery Biologist
36 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
37 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
38 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
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41 Carrie Simmons.....Deputy Director

42
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46 James Bruce.....MS
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12 Bruce Roberts.....NC
13 Lance Robinson.....TX
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15
16 - - -
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PAGE 30: Motion in Action 2 to select Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, Option 3a as preferred alternatives. The motion carried on page 30.

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1 The Mackerel Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Key West Marriott Beachside
3 Hotel, Key West, Florida, Monday morning, June 18, 2018, and was
4 called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** We will go ahead and open the session for
11 the Mackerel Management Committee. That will be Tab C in your
12 briefing materials, and if I could get a motion for adoption of
13 the agenda. We've got a motion by Kevin Anson and a second by
14 Ms. Guyas.

15
16 The next item is Approval of the Minutes, if I can get a motion
17 for approval. There is a motion by Mr. Diaz. Can I get a
18 second? It's seconded by Ms. Guyas. The third item on the
19 agenda is the Action Guide and Next Steps, and, for that, Mr.
20 Rindone is going to help us with that discussion. Mr. Rindone.

21
22 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've got a few items
23 on the agenda today. We'll have a landings update, which is
24 just provided as background for you guys, unless you really want
25 to go through that piece-by-piece.

26
27 We have final action for CMP Amendment 31, which talks about
28 Atlantic cobia management and proposes giving management of
29 Atlantic migratory group cobia to the Atlantic States Marine
30 Fisheries Commission, and then we have CMP Framework Amendment
31 7, which you guys requested at the last council meeting, which
32 looks at size, possession, and vessel limits for Gulf group
33 cobia only, and we have some options in there for you guys to
34 discuss and see which ones you like and don't like before we
35 move forward with further development on that one. Is there any
36 questions on the action guide?

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I see no questions, and we will go ahead and
39 move into the landings update, Ryan.

40
41 **CMP LANDINGS UPDATE**
42

43 **MS. SUSAN GERHART:** I would be glad to go through it with you if
44 you would like, or it can just be in the briefing book for your
45 information, but would you like me to go through it?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will look around at the council. Yes,
48 please.

1
2 **MS. GERHART:** All right. Thank you. The landings that we've
3 given you here -- We've always given you the king mackerel
4 landings by zone for the commercial, and you see that here. We
5 did close three hook-and-line though, and you will see that
6 there is kind of a high landings on the Southern Zone hook-and-
7 line, and that was due to some late reporting by dealers. I
8 believe that's the case, and so we didn't get them closed down
9 as quickly as we should have.

10
11 The gillnet did not close. They got close to their quota, but,
12 the last little bit that was there, they -- If you will recall,
13 they sort of do a lottery to see which boats can go out and
14 catch the last bit of quota that's left, and I guess either the
15 fish left or they were on to doing lobster or stone crab or
16 whatever else they do, and so they didn't catch the rest of that
17 quota.

18
19 Also, below that, if you scroll down, we have last year's
20 landings. Remember these aren't on a calendar year. They are
21 all on a July through June, except for the Northern Zone, which
22 is October through September, and so you see the landings there
23 for last year, and we did not exceed the ACL on either of those
24 quotas.

25
26 Recreational, we have part of the 2017/2018 fishing year, which
27 runs the same as most of the commercial, which is July through
28 June. For this year, we are at below 20 percent of the landings
29 now, and we did not have Wave 1 from this year, from 2018, yet,
30 and so that's not included. Last year, we reached 38 percent,
31 and so the landings have remained low. If you recall, in May of
32 last year, the council put in a three-fish bag limit, up from a
33 two-fish bag limit, and so we really haven't seen any jump in
34 the landings with that increased bag limit that was put out
35 there.

36
37 On the next page, the Spanish mackerel and cobia are stock ACLs,
38 and so there is no allocation between the commercial and
39 recreational sectors, and both of those are well below 50
40 percent of the quota for 2017, and, again, we don't have
41 anything for 2018 yet. The cobia is on a calendar year, and
42 Spanish mackerel is April through March, and so those landings
43 are pretty low on those as well, and that's my report.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Gerhart. Mr. Anson.

46
47 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sue, normally the
48 preliminary landings come out about forty-five days after the

1 end of the wave. Do you know why the Wave 1 landings are not
2 available for 2018?

3
4 **MS. GERHART:** Yes, and so we've had some changes in the MRIP
5 procedures, and so that's taking a little longer to get these
6 things recalibrated and to the numbers that are matching how our
7 ACLs are set, and so that's taking a little longer this year,
8 for that reason.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Anson.

11
12 **MR. ANSON:** Just a follow-up to that, and so that's something
13 that, since it's a new procedure, that, as you go through time,
14 you will get back to that forty-five-day period?

15
16 **MS. GERHART:** I would assume so.

17
18 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Are there any further questions or comments
21 about the landings report? Seeing none, we will go ahead and
22 move on to CMP Amendment 31 and Ryan.

23
24 **FINAL ACTION - CMP AMENDMENT 31: FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR**
25 **COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGIC RESOURCES IN THE GULF OF MEXICO AND**
26 **ATLANTIC REGION**

27
28 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. CMP Amendment 31 is Tab C,
29 Number 5, and, again, this is just for the Atlantic migratory
30 group of cobia. This is not for the Gulf group, and, because
31 the majority of the Atlantic migratory group landings occur in
32 the state waters, and there have been concerns with the speed at
33 which federal management is able to track the recreational
34 landings and the speed at which those fish are coming in, and,
35 again, for the Atlantic group, the recreational sector for the
36 South Atlantic Council has 92 percent of the ACL and the
37 commercial sector has 8 percent, and so being able to track
38 those landings can be somewhat difficult, and timing that
39 appropriately has been a little bit of a struggle.

40
41 In 2016, the Atlantic cobia fisheries closed on July 24, I
42 believe, and they closed in late January in 2017, because the
43 ACL was projected to be met, and so the South Atlantic Council
44 is very interested in trying to find an alternative solution,
45 which is why we have this amendment.

46
47 If you guys want to go straight to the purpose and need, that's
48 on page 2, and the purpose is to reduce the complexity of

1 management and facilitate improved coordination and management
2 of Atlantic cobia in state and federal waters. The need is to
3 provide effective management of Atlantic cobia and fair and
4 equitable access to harvest opportunities without reducing
5 protection to the stock.

6
7 At the last council meeting, we had a lot of discussion about
8 what this actually means to give management to the Atlantic
9 States, and one of the concerns that you guys had expressed was,
10 if we give this management away and at some point we decide, we
11 being the Gulf Council and the South Atlantic Council, since
12 this is a joint FMP, and we decide later that we really need to
13 be managing Atlantic group cobia again, what's the process for
14 that, and the short answer is the process is that we would start
15 a plan amendment with the South Atlantic to reintegrate Atlantic
16 migratory group cobia into the joint Coastal Migratory Pelagic
17 FMP and then submit that to the Secretary.

18
19 Once that's approved, then the Magnuson Act would replace the
20 Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Fisheries Act, and I may be messing
21 that acronym up, but it's basically the management authority
22 under which the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
23 operates, and that would happen pretty seamlessly, and so it
24 would be polite of the councils to let Atlantic States know that
25 that process was going to begin, obviously, and have some
26 communication with them about that.

27
28 Once the councils decided that they needed to manage Atlantic
29 cobia again, they can. They just start the amendment process,
30 and they put it back in, and so are there any questions on that,
31 and we have added the language that you guys had requested at
32 the last meeting into the document. It's in a couple of
33 different places.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ryan, for making those changes.
36 Captain Greene.

37
38 **MR. JOHNNY GREENE:** I am not on your committee, but thank you.
39 Ryan, we talked a bunch about the stock ID on the cobia and the
40 timing of this, but the stock ID workshop is supposed to be
41 coming up, and do we know how that's going to play out and what
42 one is going to have to do with the other, and can you elaborate
43 a little bit?

44
45 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure. We are through the second phase of three
46 phases, if you will, of the stock ID process. We had the data
47 workshop, and then we've had the review, and the data workshop
48 determined that there were not -- The data that were available

1 did not support moving the boundary from where it currently is.

2
3 There is what we'll call a zone of uncertainty, if you will,
4 between approximately Brunswick, Georgia and Cape Canaveral,
5 Florida, and these are approximations, and so don't draw lines,
6 and, within this area, we don't have an awful lot of telemetry
7 data, and we don't have a lot of genetic data. Work needs to be
8 done within this region, but we did see that the cobia from the
9 Gulf migratory group only extremely rarely go north of this zone
10 of uncertainty, and cobia that occur north of this area very
11 rarely go south of this zone.

12
13 The presumption is that there may be some intermingling within
14 this zone, but, again, the data are very much lacking in that
15 area, and so, due to a lack of data, it doesn't justify moving
16 the current boundary from the Florida/Georgia line, where it
17 sits right now.

18
19 The review workshop generally agreed with this, but it did not
20 endorse a specific boundary for stock assessment purposes, and
21 so we have a third phase, which is the joint cooperator
22 technical review, which will have some more SSC members and some
23 more other representatives that will look at the findings from
24 the data workshop and the review workshop and try to provide
25 some guidance for the stock assessment process about what to do
26 about this zone of uncertainty.

27
28 If you will remember, when we contracted the mixing zone for
29 king mackerel, the way that that was done was looking at trip-
30 level commercial data along a month-by-month basis to try to
31 track where the commercial fishermen were landing king mackerel,
32 and that basically showed where the fish are, under the
33 presumption that commercial fishermen will fish where there are
34 fish and not where there are not fish.

35
36 That contracted that mixing zone from all the way halfway up the
37 east coast of Florida and down into the Keys to being just south
38 of U.S. 1 in the wintertime in the Keys, and the issue with
39 trying to apply the same methodology to cobia is that the ACL
40 for the commercial sector in the Atlantic is very small. It's
41 only 8 percent of what they are allowed to catch, and so that
42 may prove more difficult. I am not saying, obviously, that it
43 can't be done, but there is just a lot fewer data to try to use
44 the same method. Does that tell you what you needed to know?

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan, real quick, when is that third phase
47 going to be completed?
48

1 **MR. RINDONE:** We got an email last week from SEDAR trying to
2 schedule that, and I'm thinking late July or early August, and
3 so we should know more about exactly how the findings of the
4 stock ID workshop will affect the stock assessment sometime
5 after that point, or at least hopefully there will be more
6 guidance provided to the analysts.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Guyas.

9
10 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** I saw Leann had her hand up too, but so the
11 stock ID workshop isn't finished yet, is basically what you're
12 telling us, and then it will be on the actual assessment -- Are
13 they going to review again and decide whether this information
14 from the stock ID workshop is what they want to use for the
15 assessment? I am just trying to figure out if -- It seems like
16 we're not quite final with this yet, and yet we're moving
17 forward with this, and so I'm just trying to sequence all the
18 steps.

19
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Of the three phases, the two that we have gone
21 through so far are in agreement with one another, and so the
22 third one is just kind of like the last check, the last box that
23 needs to be checked, before we move forward with this.

24
25 The idea behind the stock ID process, as envisioned by the SEDAR
26 Steering Committee, was to deal with this question prior to the
27 stock assessment, so that the stock assessment just takes the
28 information from the stock ID process and then applies that to
29 how they structure the data and how they run the model, et
30 cetera. It is unlikely that the stock assessment will revisit
31 all of the things that were done in the stock ID process.
32 That's what the stock ID process is supposed to have done.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Chairman Bosarge.

35
36 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** The only thing that's lacking at this point
37 is to draw the line between -- So we've determined there are two
38 stocks, right, and there's a Gulf stock and there is an Atlantic
39 stock, but we haven't figured out -- We know vaguely, pretty
40 much, kind of where the line is, I guess, and you said
41 Fernandina to Brunswick, that that's your cone of uncertainty,
42 as they say in hurricane terms, but, anyway, so the last step is
43 to figure out exactly where that line is, and that's what will
44 happen at the third workshop?

45
46 **MR. RINDONE:** As of right now, both of the components which have
47 been completed have said that there is not enough evidence to
48 change the line from where currently it is, and so, right now,

1 it's still the Florida/Georgia line.
2
3 The joint cooperator review that will be done late next month or
4 early August could just as soon leave it there, unless they
5 determine that it should be anywhere else, but, more than
6 likely, it's just going to stay -- If we're going off of the
7 data workshop and the review workshop, it's not going to change,
8 and so that area of uncertainty though is actually from about
9 Brunswick to about Cape Canaveral, and so it's the northeastern
10 coast of Florida.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so I've got two people. Leann,
13 are you good for right now? Okay. Ms. Levy.
14
15 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Just to say that, ultimately, it's the councils'
16 decision about where the management line is, and so there may be
17 scientific information that weighs where to put the line, but,
18 ultimately, it's the councils' decision. There is a boundary
19 line that both councils have decided on, and so, unless both
20 councils decide to change it, that is what it is, but it's a
21 management decision based on the scientific information. There
22 is no -- It requires council action is just what I want to make
23 clear. It doesn't just happen.
24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Gregory.
26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY:** Clay, correct me if I'm wrong,
28 but it's not in my report for the SEDAR Steering Committee
29 meeting, but I seem to remember discussion where, in the SEDAR
30 Steering Committee, we decided or talked about not changing any
31 boundaries unless there was good, strong scientific evidence to
32 do so, and that certainly does not exist in this case.
33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Gerhart.
35
36 **MS. GERHART:** Just to remind you that we already knew about this
37 cone of uncertainty, as you are calling it, from the previous
38 stock assessment, when they looked at it, and the council did
39 make the selection of the Georgia/Florida boundary for
40 management purposes, based on that information, and so, really,
41 all Ryan was telling you is that nothing has changed since that
42 last time that gives any evidence that it should be moved from
43 where it was determined.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan and then Clay.
46
47 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to expand on what Sue said, that boundary was
48 chosen because of the way the commercial and recreational data

1 are reported and ease of enforcement.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Clay.

4
5 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** I just wanted to confirm what Doug said, and
6 so, generally speaking, the assessment would be conducted
7 according to the decisions that are made at the stock ID
8 workshop, and so, right now, it looks like it's going to be the
9 Florida/Georgia line, and we -- As a general rule, the way we've
10 rewritten the terms of reference for cobia, and we'll try and be
11 consistent with any other species, is that there needs to be
12 compelling evidence to change the lines from what's been used or
13 from the general council jurisdictions. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Clay. Are there any further
16 questions and/or comments on this particular issue? Seeing
17 none, Ryan, carry on.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we have a good idea
20 of why we're doing what we're doing, or why we're proposing to
21 do what we're proposing to do anyway, and so if you guys would
22 like to move on to the action.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, please.

25
26 **MR. RINDONE:** Okay. The action is on page 10 of the document,
27 and it is to revise the management system for the Atlantic
28 migratory group of cobia, and the current preferred alternative
29 is Alternative 2, which would remove Atlantic migratory group
30 cobia from the FMP for CMP resources in the Gulf and the
31 Atlantic.

32
33 By doing so, what will happen is the Atlantic States Marine
34 Fisheries Commission, through the Atlantic Coastal Act, and I am
35 abbreviating that act, will use the management that they are
36 going to apply in state waters for Florida north, and they will
37 apply it in federal waters, if the boundary is at the
38 Florida/Georgia line, from Georgia north.

39
40 It will be applied through cooperation with National Marine
41 Fisheries Service, and, essentially, instead of managing with
42 Magnuson in federal waters, it will manage with the Atlantic
43 Coastal Act, and, again, if, at some point in the future the
44 councils determine federal cobia need federal management again,
45 then the plan amendment process starts again and you guys re-
46 include it in the FMP, and then Magnuson takes over in federal
47 waters, and the Atlantic States will continue to manage in state
48 waters.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I understand. Mr. Diaz.

3
4 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** If Ryan has already said this, I apologize, but
5 I attended the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting
6 last week, and the council approved CMP Amendment 31 for formal
7 review, and they retained Alternative 2 as their preferred,
8 which is to remove the Atlantic cobia from the CMP Fishery
9 Management Plan. Thank you.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Are there any additional
12 questions or comments? Seeing none, Ryan, go ahead.

13
14 **MR. RINDONE:** Well, Mr. Chair, at this point, it's just a matter
15 of if you guys think that you should retain the same preferred
16 alternative as the South Atlantic, and, like Mr. Diaz has said,
17 they have gone final with this amendment and propose that it be
18 put forth to the Secretary. Because this is a joint plan, you
19 guys have to be in concurrence for these things to go forward,
20 and so, if you guys are still in concurrence, then you need not
21 change your preferred alternative, and, if you were inclined to,
22 you could make a motion to also go final, and we also have the
23 codified text for your review, if you would like to look at
24 that, and the public comment.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Guyas.

27
28 **MS. GUYAS:** I didn't want to kick up too much dust about this,
29 but I don't necessarily disagree with the preferred alternative
30 that's here, but I do think we're a little bit ahead of probably
31 where we should be, but the South Atlantic Council approved this
32 last week, and I'm not necessarily trying to stand in their way,
33 but I probably will not support moving this forward, just
34 because we've got to get the stock ID stuff done before we do
35 this, in my opinion.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Martha. Ms. Bosarge.

38
39 **MS. BOSARGE:** Ryan, I have seen these documents laid out in a
40 couple of different ways, but, just to make sure I understand,
41 that Preferred Alternative 2 is the South Atlantic's preferred
42 at this point, and that's also the Gulf Council's preferred, and
43 we have both chosen that as a preferred?

44
45 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan, thinking about what Martha had to say,
48 and so let's say we move into this July/August time period and

1 we get additional information. The most likely output of that
2 is that they're not going to change the boundary and it's still
3 going to be at the Florida/Georgia line, according to Dr. Porch,
4 and so how would that impact us in any way? I guess perhaps I
5 will ask Martha what is the big concern?
6

7 **MS. GUYAS:** Where that line ends up being, of course, affects
8 Florida, and maybe not other -- I would just like the assurance
9 to know what we're really giving away here, and I understand
10 that the councils don't have to change that line, but it's a
11 conversation that we would have to have, potentially, if the
12 mixing part of this -- Or I guess the boundary shifts further
13 south, and that really changes the game, I think, and so that's
14 all.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I appreciate that. Dr. Mickle.

17
18 **MR. PAUL MICKLE:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. I'm not on your
19 committee, but I did want to ask a question, and it really is
20 directed -- I think I know the answer, but I would like to
21 verify it and maybe clear it up for the group.

22
23 If you take it out of the FMP, do we lose any data streams or
24 any ability to do -- Does the light get dimmer on the scientific
25 knowledge of the species and spatial management of this if it
26 comes out of the FMP? Do we lose the ability to get certain
27 data streams? That is my question. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's an excellent question. Ryan.

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Part of the Atlantic Coastal Act provides for NMFS
32 support for data collection and science and scientific
33 priorities for research, et cetera, and so, by the Atlantic
34 States managing the Atlantic migratory group of cobia, there
35 should not be any less prioritization of cobia from what it
36 currently is, as far as research is concerned, and so there will
37 still be funding available, et cetera, for people to apply to do
38 studies, just like there are now.

39
40 NMFS will still be doing the data collection in federal waters,
41 and all of those landings will continue to be reported as they
42 are reported now, but it's just that, instead of it being
43 managed under Magnuson with Magnuson's rules in place for how
44 fisheries are to be managed, it will be done through the
45 Atlantic Coastal Act. The research side of it should remain
46 largely unchanged, and so, when the stock assessment comes
47 about, everything that is available now should be available
48 then.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Mickle, to that point?

3
4 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you. Exactly to that point, and here's my
5 reservation. The research priorities have the possibility of
6 changing from the research side, because they are being targeted
7 by a potentially different area, and is that true or not?

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan.

10
11 **MR. RINDONE:** I don't think so, because it's the same fishermen
12 who are fishing in generally the same way, in terms of gear, and
13 the Atlantic States may change when and how often and whatnot
14 that they actually fish, and so effort might change in some
15 fashion or another, but it largely depends on what they think is
16 the best way to distribute the effort across the area.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I've got two people who I'm going to go
19 with, Dale first and then Jack.

20
21 **MR. DIAZ:** Jack might be fixing to talk about what I'm trying to
22 bring up here, but, at the South Atlantic meeting last week, Mr.
23 Bob Beal, who is the Director of the Atlantic States Marine
24 Fisheries Commission, was there, and I'm just bringing this up
25 so that you all understand the timing of this, and I'm not
26 trying to persuade people which way to vote.

27
28 They are having to work, through their Marine Fisheries
29 Commission, all of the policies and procedures and everything
30 they do to be able to take this on, and so they are kind of
31 working their way through that right now in anticipation that
32 this document might pass.

33
34 I believe it is their intention to try to take this over, if
35 timing was to work out, in 2019, and Jack can correct me if I'm
36 wrong, but I just wanted to kind of give you all an idea that,
37 behind the scenes, they are trying to get everything done in
38 anticipation that they might have the need to manage this
39 fishery, and so thank you, Mr. Chairman.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dale. Jack.

42
43 **DR. JACK MCGOVERN:** Dale is correct that the Atlantic States
44 Commission is planning on amending their interstate FMP, but I
45 wanted to clarify that the Atlantic States Commission plan is
46 only for management in state waters. There will still be
47 management under the authority of the Secretary through the
48 Atlantic Coastal Act in the federal waters, and it will retain

1 the quota. We will monitor the landings, and we will close
2 federal waters for the commercial sector if they reach their
3 ACL. Also, Atlantic cobia will be assessed through the SEDAR
4 process, and so that will be retained as well, and so I guess
5 that's --

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure. Thank you. I am just thinking, again,
8 about what Dale had to say and also what Martha had to say, and,
9 if we kind of put this off, for example, and we get the results
10 of this third phase in July and August and we bring this back at
11 the August council meeting, are we still compatible with the
12 timeline that is running in the background that Dale alluded to?

13
14 **MR. RINDONE:** I think it depends on -- I would say less likely
15 so, because of the public comment period that NMFS goes through
16 once an amendment is submitted for secretarial review, and their
17 staff can talk more about those timelines, but, the later in the
18 year we get, the less likely it is that Atlantic States will be
19 able to just hit the ground running at the beginning of 2019
20 with cobia management.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ryan. Are there any
23 additional questions or comments about this particular
24 amendment? Ms. Bosarge.

25
26 **MS. BOSARGE:** I was just looking at John. He's the one that
27 always wants to get divorced, and I was surprised that he was
28 quiet.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a good move, John. Okay. Ryan, what
31 are you thinking?

32
33 **MR. RINDONE:** If you guys are not comfortable with going final
34 at this time, you could simply say that you wanted to wait until
35 after the joint cooperator technical review and then consider it
36 for final action at that time. If you think the two-thirds of
37 the process that's been completed to this point, which, again,
38 is in -- Two out of the three components are in agreement with
39 one another, and, if you think that that's enough information to
40 go on to move forward with this, then you could make a motion
41 for this to go to the Secretary for implementation.

42
43 Just as an aside, the Gulf Council did not receive any public
44 comments explicitly related to this, but the South Atlantic's
45 public comments are included in the briefing materials.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I am going to go back to a comment that
48 I believe Ms. Levy made. In order to change the boundaries, and

1 was it you that said that, that there needed to be compelling
2 evidence to do that, and who said that? Was it Clay? So, in
3 your view, coming up -- I think I know the answer to this, but
4 after this third phase, what is the likelihood that there might
5 be any compelling evidence to change that boundary?
6

7 **DR. PORCH:** I haven't seen any, and so I suspect it won't be
8 changed, but I did overhear Mara saying -- That's from the
9 science perspective, and so we can assess things differently
10 than they are managed, and so, in this case, how you decide as a
11 council to manage the unit is one thing, and how it ends up
12 being assessed is another, and so, with the stock ID workshop,
13 we would assess the Gulf stock from south of the Florida/Georgia
14 line and around into the Gulf.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I guess I'm going to look over at Martha
17 again. At this point, it's unlikely that this council would opt
18 to try to change the boundary, and, if that's the case, are you
19 good to move forward?
20

21 **MS. GUYAS:** Like I said, I'm not trying to kick up too much
22 dust, and I'm probably not going to support it, but you all do
23 what you want to do. I'm good here, and I'm not trying to
24 necessarily blow up the process, but I'm just putting out where
25 I am.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I appreciate that, and I think everybody else
28 on the council does as well. I don't think we need to make a
29 motion right now. In fact, we might want a little bit of time
30 to think about that and bring it back up at Full Council. Mara.
31

32 **MS. LEVY:** I will just note that the codified text is in the
33 briefing book, and it includes both what would be removed from
34 the 622 regulations as well as what NMFS would put in based on
35 the Atlantic States Act, and so what would be in, for purposes
36 of federal regulations, when the 622 gets removed, and so you
37 have both of them in there, just so you can see what would be
38 added, and it basically takes a lot of what's already in the 622
39 and just moves it over to the other part of the regulations.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you. Jack.
42

43 **DR. MCGOVERN:** It's moving those regulations into Section 697,
44 and what is not in 697 that's in the 622 regulations is the
45 recreational ACL and AMs. It retains the commercial quota of
46 50,000 pounds and the size limits, existing commercial size
47 limits, and bag limits and vessel limits.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Mr. Diaz.

2
3 **MR. DIAZ:** I just want to make sure that I'm clear on something,
4 and, Mara, I'm going to put you on the spot. Being as we're
5 going to retain, like Jack had mentioned, federal waters, would
6 it even hold up the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
7 from moving forward if we put this off? Does it even affect
8 them on their timing?

9
10 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I actually think that NMFS would be better able
11 to answer that. I don't know what the timing is in terms of the
12 South Atlantic, meaning I felt like I have heard that they
13 wanted this implemented, this removal, by the end of the year,
14 so that, for 2019, the states would be able to implement their
15 management measures, or those would apply, I guess, and so I
16 think that's why the timing is June to take final action, but
17 maybe NMFS or Roy could speak to that, when he gets here, in
18 terms of how the timing is going to work, because there is two
19 separate things.

20
21 There is removing it, and then there is putting it in the
22 commission, but then there's the lag time and what the states
23 are going to do during that lag time, and I thought that they
24 were going to implement their management measures, and was that
25 right, for the recreational side. I haven't been super engaged
26 in what's going on with the South Atlantic side.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jack, to that point?

29
30 **DR. MCGOVERN:** The Atlantic States Commission has implemented
31 their interstate FMP. It's in place, and it was effective in
32 April, and it has management measures for the recreational
33 sector, and it has state-by-state allocations, and it has
34 compliance measures, so that if a state goes over its allocation
35 that it looks at a three-year average of the landings and then
36 it does adjustments to stay within that, and so that's in place
37 now.

38
39 There is some timing, in effect, with removing it from the FMP
40 now, because there won't be the recreational ACLs and AMs
41 anymore with removal, and so they wouldn't be effective by the
42 beginning of the next year, and the recreational ACLs and AMs
43 have had an effect on the accessibility of the different states
44 to cobia, and so we have had, as Ryan talked about, in the past
45 couple of years, we've had a federal closure, because the
46 overall ACL has gone over, and so North Carolina and Virginia
47 haven't adopted compatible regulations, but most of the landings
48 in Georgia and South Carolina are in federal waters, and so they

1 haven't had access to it. What this change in removing Atlantic
2 cobia from the CMP FMP does is it allows for equitable access
3 for those other states.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Ms. Guyas.

6
7 **MS. GUYAS:** I think what I heard, when I was listening to the
8 council meeting last week, was that the federal regulations will
9 need to stay in place until the commission is completely done,
10 basically, so that the commission regulations will then -- The
11 new stuff will take effect at the same time the federal stuff
12 goes away, and there was a letter that Atlantic States wrote to
13 the council about that, to the South Atlantic, and their
14 timeline -- I am looking at the email, and it looked like their
15 board would take action in August of 2019, and maybe that has
16 changed since the last meeting. Again, I don't know how that
17 falls into here, but it looks like this is going to be a long
18 process.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Kevin.

21
22 **MR. ANSON:** A question about the process, I guess. Jack, you
23 had mentioned the Atlantic States has this pact that they passed
24 in April, and so, along those lines that Ms. Guyas just talked
25 about, was the timing of when the new Atlantic States provisions
26 or management regulations will be effective, pending council
27 action.

28
29 I mean, if we were to delay this until the August meeting, you
30 obviously have your comment period, but four to six months I
31 think in the past is what has been said, but is that
32 retroactive? On the Atlantic States side, once this has been
33 passed in April, it's automatic amongst all the member states,
34 or do the individual states have to go back to their commissions
35 and get specific cobia regulations passed that would mirror
36 what's been identified in the Atlantic States pact or commission
37 document?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jack.

40
41 **DR. MCGOVERN:** They have done that. They have their interstate
42 FMP in place, and they approved it last November, and it got
43 implemented this April, and so that's in place, and I think this
44 next process is to amend that interstate FMP to take into
45 consideration what's happening with the CMP 31, and that
46 process, Bob Beal said at the last meeting, takes about fourteen
47 months.

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Levy.

2
3 **MS. LEVY:** Really, I think what's happening is this is affecting
4 the recreational side right now, and so you remove cobia from
5 the FMP, the Atlantic cobia from the FMP, and you remove the
6 recreational ACL and closure, which then means that you don't
7 have a federal closure and the states -- People can fish in
8 federal waters recreationally, consistent with what the states
9 have adopted under the state plans, and they have to constrain
10 the harvest.

11
12 If we don't implement this by the beginning of 2019, depending
13 on how long that lags into 2019, the South Atlantic could be
14 looking at a cobia closure in federal waters, because we have to
15 remove that closure from the books, essentially, and so I think
16 that's where the timing came in. Whether final action in August
17 is enough time for the agency to actually implement it in time
18 to avoid a closure, I guess NMFS would have to look at the
19 timeline.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** But, essentially, though the effort is in
22 state waters, right? Okay. Got it. Not all states. At this
23 point, I think that we have some things to chew on, actually,
24 and we will bring it back, unless anybody wants to make a motion
25 at this point, in Full Council. Okay. That's what we're going
26 to do, and so, Ryan, let's move on the framework action.

27
28 **OPTIONS - CMP FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 7: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF COBIA**
29 **SIZE AND POSSESSION LIMITS**
30

31 **MR. RINDONE:** You've got it. All right, and so the framework
32 action for Gulf cobia is Tab C, Number 6, and we have some extra
33 things for you guys this time, or an extra thing for you guys.
34 We have Tab C, Number 6(a), which is something that was
35 requested the last time, which is just kind of a one-pager about
36 cobia in the Gulf, and you guys can go through it at your
37 leisure, but it just provides a little bit of biological and
38 fishing background.

39
40 This is a takeoff on another similar product that the Southeast
41 Fisheries Science Center has been working on, and we're going to
42 try to provide things like this, as well as a brief
43 presentation, to our stock assessment meetings as well, to help
44 folks that especially are reviewers that may be unfamiliar with
45 the species and give them a little bit of background
46 information, and so we would definitely appreciate some feedback
47 from you guys, when you get a chance, for Tab B, Number 6(a).
48 Mr. Boyd.

1
2 **MR. DOUG BOYD:** Thank you. I'm not on the committee, but I do
3 have a question. In looking at -- I can't remember the table
4 number, but it shows the two stocks, and, in this amendment,
5 we're talking about that commission managing just the east
6 coast, and is that correct, and not the Gulf of Mexico stock?

7
8 **MR. RINDONE:** No, sir, we're not talking about the commission's
9 management with this document. This one is just for the Gulf
10 stock, which, at this point, goes up to the Florida/Georgia
11 line, and so the South Atlantic Council would still be
12 recommending management in federal waters off the State of
13 Florida, and so our status quo would be, in the event that CMP
14 31, which was the previous document, in the event that that did
15 go through, and in the event that the line was still at the
16 Florida/Georgia line, north of the Florida/Georgia line, the
17 federal waters would be managed by NMFS with management from the
18 Atlantic Coastal Act. South of that, it would still be Magnuson
19 in federal waters off the State of Florida for the Gulf stock.
20 Does that make sense? Okay. This document is just the Gulf
21 migratory group. It has nothing at all to do with the Atlantic
22 migratory group.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Ryan, go ahead. Excuse me. Mr. Diaz.

25
26 **MR. DIAZ:** Ryan said he would like some comments on these
27 handouts, and I can tell you that I like these handouts and fact
28 sheets, and it was very helpful for me, before we even started
29 this, to look at just some quick things that are important, like
30 knowing when they are sexually mature and what weights they are
31 at different lengths and things like that, and so, in the
32 future, I would welcome these any time that you all can provide
33 them. Thank you.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Chairman Bosarge.

36
37 **MS. BOSARGE:** I found it very helpful as well. Thank you. It
38 was extremely helpful.

39
40 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, guys, for that, and this information is
41 also available on our portal in a whole lot more detail, but we
42 tried to just digest the highlights of the highlights down onto
43 one page for you guys, to make this kind of short and sweet, but
44 there is a lot more information about each of the species that
45 the council manages available on the council's portal.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ryan. Before we get going, I just
48 want to make sure that Kevin is good.

1
2 **MR. ANSON:** Just one other comment, Ryan. I know you want to
3 keep this to one page, but maybe one more graph in there that
4 depicts recent fishing effort levels or harvest levels over a
5 typical year, like January to December, just to kind of give a
6 relative sense as to the level of effort and harvest,
7 potentially.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Kevin, for those comments. Are there
10 any additional comments before Ryan continues? Go ahead, Ryan.

11
12 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. Great, and thank you, guys, for that
13 feedback. Tab C, Number 6 is our framework amendment, and this
14 is something that you guys requested that staff work up at the
15 last meeting, after hearing public testimony from fishermen
16 saying that there is something wrong with cobia.

17
18 At the last meeting, the preliminary landings that we had showed
19 about a 50 percent drop in landings in 2017 compared to 2016.
20 The revised preliminary landings that we have now, it looks like
21 it's a little over 700,000 pounds instead of just under 500,000
22 pounds, and so still landing considerably less than the ACT, and
23 still landing less than 2016, just as a comparison to what the
24 fishermen were telling us.

25
26 For this document, and, again, this is kind of like a preemptive
27 action, and, if you look at -- If we go to Table 1.1.1, which is
28 on page 3, you can see the landings from 2012 through 2017, and
29 we can provide a longer time series of landings, and we will in
30 a future draft of this document, but it just gives you an idea
31 of what the recent landings are like.

32
33 Cobia in the Gulf don't live as long as cobia in the Atlantic,
34 and, granted, that may be due to sample sizes in the Gulf, or it
35 may just be what it is, but they only live about nine to eleven
36 years, and eleven years is about the most, and so we can go back
37 as far though as you guys want, but, historically, in the Gulf,
38 we're not landing our ACL, is the take-away.

39
40 The purpose of this document is to consider proactive management
41 measures to reduce Gulf cobia harvest by increasing the minimum
42 size limit and reducing the possession limit. The need is to
43 prevent potential overfishing of Gulf cobia until more
44 information on the stock status becomes available, and we do
45 have a stock assessment on the schedule for 2019, and so any
46 questions at this point? All right. Then I will cruise on
47 along.

1 We have three actions in this document, and the first is on page
2 6, and it's to modify the minimum size limit for Gulf group
3 cobia. Right now, Alternative 1, our current commercial and
4 recreational minimum size limit is thirty-three inches fork
5 length.

6
7 This corresponds about to the size at which 50 percent of the
8 fish are mature, and that is the sexes combined perspective, and
9 so the females do grow larger and faster than the males do, but
10 that thirty-three inches at which 50 percent of them are mature,
11 that is both sexes combined.

12
13 Alternative 2 would increase the recreational and commercial
14 minimum size limit to thirty-six inches. Alternative 3 is to
15 thirty-nine inches, and Alternative 4 is to forty-two inches.

16
17 Now, cobia is one of those species that we don't know nearly as
18 much about as we do some of our other say reef fish species, and
19 so there is no specific rationale for changing the minimum size
20 limit as presented, and it's just the general operation of, if
21 we wait until the fish are larger, the probability that that
22 fish has reproduced is increased, and perhaps it has contributed
23 more to recruitment in following years. Is there any questions
24 on Action 1?

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Chairman Bosarge and then Ms. Gerhart.

27
28 **MS. BOSARGE:** I know I asked you this offline, but I would like
29 to ask you on the record, too. We don't have any information,
30 really, like we do for other species, where we could say, at X
31 length, they are 85 percent sexually mature and things like
32 that, and we can't get that deep into this particular species?

33
34 **MR. RINDONE:** Once they're about -- Based on the research that
35 we have, once they're about three years old, better than 90
36 percent of them are thought to be sexually mature, and, if you
37 look at Figure 2.1.1, if you guys just scroll down a little bit
38 to the bottom of page 7, you can see those male and female
39 growth curves, and so age-three is a little bit of a hike in the
40 minimum size limit from where we are, again remembering that our
41 current minimum size limit is assuming the sexes combined.

42
43 We lack the data though to be that precise, to say that at
44 exactly this age they're going to be approximately 85 percent
45 mature, and we think that better than 90 percent of them at age-
46 three are sexually mature, but there is a wide range of sizes of
47 fish at age-three, and I didn't put the error bars in here,
48 because I didn't want to cloud it up for you guys, but we don't

1 know as much about cobia, and so we hope to know more in the
2 future, but, generally, the bigger a fish is, the more likely it
3 is to have reproduced once you are beyond that 50 percent size.
4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** A follow-up?
6
7 **MS. BOSARGE:** Just to follow-up, if I look at that chart right
8 there, a female that has just hit our minimum size limit may
9 actually only be two years old, because they grow faster
10 quicker?
11
12 **MR. RINDONE:** Potentially.
13
14 **MS. BOSARGE:** So we could be harvesting females that are much
15 less than the 50 percent sexually mature status?
16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** It's possible.
18
19 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Clay.
22
23 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. I just wanted to point out too that it's
24 not really the age at first maturity or even full maturity that
25 matters. The larger females just produce proportionally far
26 more eggs, and usually more than their weight would suggest, and
27 so just protecting them to age-two or three isn't really
28 contributing all that much. The main thing is how much fishing
29 mortality there is up until that point.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you for that. Ms. Gerhart.
32
33 **MS. GERHART:** This is on a different point entirely, and so
34 that's why I wanted to defer. Relative to Mr. Boyd's question a
35 little while ago and Ryan's response, this action, and the rest
36 of the actions in this document, are intended for just the group
37 that is in the Gulf of Mexico and not the east coast of Florida?
38
39 **MR. RINDONE:** That is correct. If the South Atlantic Council
40 wanted to implement similar management measures off the east
41 coast of Florida, they would be more than welcome to take this
42 document and modify it to their needs and use it off the east
43 coast of Florida.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Gerhart, to that point?
46
47 **MS. GERHART:** Yes, and so I think, if that's the case, then we
48 need to clarify that in the title of this action, that it's for

1 the Gulf zone of the Gulf migratory group and not the entire
2 Gulf migratory group, because the east coast zone is -- We have
3 given the South Atlantic the ability to set the management
4 measures there, and so this would only be the Gulf zone.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a good point. Thank you. All right.
7 Is there any more discussion? Mr. Diaz.

8
9 **MR. DIAZ:** I have tried to talk to a few fishermen since our
10 last meeting, because, at public testimony at the last meeting,
11 we had charter boat captain after charter boat captain come up
12 and say they were seeing almost none, and so I've been talking
13 to a few fishermen in Mississippi, and I haven't got the
14 impression that it's quite as bad as the public testimony that
15 we had at the last meeting, although I am not discounting that
16 testimony at all.

17
18 The fishermen that I talked to tell me that it's off, and it
19 seems to be not as good this year as it was last year, by a
20 substantial amount, but it wasn't where they weren't catching
21 any, and so they're seeing a few, and it's worse than it has
22 been, but it's not quite as bad as what we had before, and so I
23 kind of feel like we need to do something, but I don't know
24 that, based off of the conversations that we had and what we
25 read so far, I have good scientific reasons for recommending one
26 size over another, or even a reduction in bag limits, but I do
27 feel like we need to do something, and so thank you, Mr. Chair.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dale. I'm going to go ahead with
30 Dr. Shipp and then Kevin Anson.

31
32 **DR. BOB SHIPP:** Something a little anecdotal here. I do a lot
33 of fishing tournaments, the Alabama Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo and
34 the Flora-Bama Tournament, and I think what we've been hearing
35 from the fishermen is reflected in the tournament landings. We
36 had a two-day tournament the first of June, and I think only two
37 cobia were landed. Normally, we would see fifteen or twenty,
38 and it's anecdotal, and it's not very scientific, but it goes
39 along with what we're hearing from the fishermen.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Bob. Kevin and then Martha.

42
43 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To carry on the conversation
44 about age or size at maturity, I am wondering -- Johnny, you
45 might want to weigh-in on this, but there is not any information
46 in the document, and carrying on with what Ryan said, we don't
47 have a lot of information about cobia in general, and so maybe
48 that's why it's not in here, but I am curious as to the makeup

1 or size distribution of fish and whether or not a slot limit
2 might also be something that we ought to consider, too.

3
4 I don't know what the magic number would be, but, Johnny, most
5 of the effort probably is fish that are on the surface, or near
6 the surface, and so barotrauma may not be an issue with those
7 larger fish, and I know temperature, water temperature, might
8 play a factor in release survival, but I'm just wondering if
9 maybe we ought to look at that and see if there's enough
10 information that that might be able to get us to a point that,
11 as, Dale, you said that you're comfortable in trying to make
12 some recommendation.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Johnny.

15
16 **MR. GREENE:** To that point, Kevin, I think it's something to
17 look at. I mean, a slot limit would be an interesting way to go
18 about it. The thing that concerns me about the upper end of the
19 slot limit is, with a cobia, when you get ready to gaff that
20 fish or land that fish or somehow release him, they go a little
21 ballistic at the boat, if you're not careful.

22
23 Now, if you can work it to where, through some type of
24 regulation, where you're using a specific type of circle hook
25 that the line could simply be cut, that's one of those things,
26 and it's going to have to be a variable, because it's really
27 hard to get a length estimate on a cobia swimming alongside the
28 boat, but, I mean, obviously, if he's way over the size, you
29 want to let him go, and so that's certainly something to look
30 at. I think that -- I would be very interested in that.

31
32 Now, back to Dale's point for just a second, if I may. There is
33 a difference in the way the fishery is conducted from Panama
34 City to Mobile Bay. The way that we fish for them is we will
35 fish within a mile or two of shore, riding down the beach sight
36 fishing, and we'll see a pod of fish, and we'll maneuver the
37 boat and cast to them, and that is some of the most exciting
38 fishing you will ever do.

39
40 However, once they get west of Mobile Bay, there is a change, as
41 Dr. Shipp has always talked about. There is some type of a
42 change that happens right there. You have the white, sandy
43 beaches east, and you have the marsh to the west, and the fish
44 move offshore at that point, and the fish will aggregate around
45 the rigs, and that's where they are more susceptible to chumming
46 and different types of techniques, and so the fishery is
47 somewhat different.

48

1 Then, as you go further into the western Gulf, it's kind of a
2 similar deal around the rigs and that sort of thing, and so,
3 when you hear the guys from Panama City to Orange Beach not
4 seeing any, it's because they are fishing up on the beach sight
5 fishing and there's not a bunch of oil rigs. The bottom
6 structure, the composition of the bottom, is way different.
7 It's a flat, white sandy bottom, and it's a different type of
8 deal, but normally -- As a kid, I can remember seeing pods of
9 thirty or forty or fifty cobia swim by, and you might catch one
10 or two. I personally have not caught a cobia this year yet, and
11 so it's one of those things that I think we need to look at.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I've got Martha waiting.

14

15 **MS. GUYAS:** To follow-up even to what Johnny said, we went
16 through this exercise in Florida earlier, I guess last year at
17 this point, and, Johnny, you're dead on. I mean, the fishery is
18 prosecuted in different ways in different places even within
19 Florida, like you're saying. In the Panhandle, it's sight
20 fishing, and other places not so much, or not as much, and so
21 the commission considered this question of whether to change the
22 size limit, and they ultimately left it alone, at least for now,
23 until we have a new assessment to give us some more information.

24

25 The biology is a little bit fuzzy at this point, and, because
26 the fishery is prosecuted in different ways and people are
27 fishing differently, and people are seeing different size
28 classes of fish when they are harvesting in different areas too,
29 and so one of the things we heard from anglers, more along the
30 peninsula, is that they are not necessarily seeing -- They are
31 not fishing those giants and sight fishing for them, and so they
32 are catching fish that are closer to the minimum size.

33

34 They have not been seeing the -- I guess they have not been
35 seeing the declines that folks in the Panhandle have, and so the
36 commission just ended up leaving this alone and addressing their
37 concerns with cobia more with bag and vessel limits, and so just
38 to give you all an idea of the discussion we've had in Florida
39 on this issue.

40

41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Martha, for sharing that information.
42 Ryan, to that point, and then Dale.

43

44 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to let you guys know, we were trying to get
45 the size limit analysis and possession limit analysis prepared
46 for this document, but it was just one of those things that we
47 ran out of time, and so we'll have that for you at the next
48 meeting.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ryan. I know we put you on the
3 spot and asked you to do a lot in a really short period of time,
4 and so we appreciate that. Dale and then Dr. Mickle.
5
6 **MR. DIAZ:** Before I make my comment, Martha, what is you all's
7 boat possession limit? I was thinking it was two per boat.
8
9 **MS. GUYAS:** That's right. Yes, it's one per person and two per
10 boat.
11
12 **MR. DIAZ:** I just wanted to bring up something that one of the
13 fishermen that I talked to brought up that was something that I
14 hadn't considered until he brought it up. He had told me that
15 the thirty-three, thirty-four, and thirty-five-inch cobia, that
16 they regularly net those. He said once you get up into the
17 bigger cobia, if we go with a bigger minimum size limit, the
18 bigger the fish get, they start gaffing them and bringing them
19 aboard, and so the netting them is a lot less trauma on the fish
20 than the gaffing would be, and he asked us to consider that
21 whenever we talked about this, and so I wanted to make sure and
22 bring it up. Thank you.
23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dale. That's a good comment. Dr.
25 Mickle.
26
27 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you. I'm not on the committee, but I did
28 want to just weigh-in real quick, and we're staying on schedule
29 pretty good, and so I will jump in, but I do want to put Ryan on
30 the spot. This is an easy question, but I do want to -- I don't
31 know the answer, but I would like to share it with the group.
32
33 It's gone through a lot of size changes, cobia, and we've done a
34 lot to cobia in the Gulf. We have changed a lot, and we've gone
35 from twenty-nine to thirty-three, and what's the history of the
36 minimum size? Do you know, Ryan?
37
38 **MR. RINDONE:** We didn't have one and then we set it at thirty-
39 three inches fork length, and it's been that way since 1990.
40
41 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you for that. We need to identify -- We
42 don't have a lot of biological understanding yet on the species,
43 and we don't really truly know if it's a harvest issue or an
44 ecological issue or a temporal thing that may just come back on
45 its own.
46
47 We have seen, in Mississippi, and we have a big cobia shoot-out,
48 and it seems like the fish are showing up later and later, and

1 now the shoot-out is not even in the right window when they show
2 up, and I think the other Gulf states have seen a little bit of
3 that too, that the tournaments fall on the weekends that people
4 are used to, but there is some indication there, at least from
5 my little region, but you do have data for discards from the
6 MRIP, from the recreational side, and so there is some
7 information there.

8
9 It's not great. It gives you an indication of whether that size
10 limit adjustment had an effect on the discards, and so, when a
11 size change does occur, and it seems like we're very insecure
12 about what we're seeing here and what -- We have no idea of
13 doing a projection of what a size change would do, as far as
14 discards, but, again, we have that tracking method, and I would
15 like to see if there is any indication of discard data being
16 presented to show, when that size change occurred, did that
17 actually have an effect on discards, because thirty-three is
18 hard to catch. I go through a lot of minimum size, and it's a
19 hard thing, but does that have -- Is there a way to present that
20 of when that size change occurred and then the discards that
21 happened, because I think that data is there.

22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** We can look into that, and, if those data are
24 there, we can present it along with the size limit analysis that
25 we're going to show you guys the next time. That seems like a
26 nice, cohesive package to present all together.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan. I think, to keep us on
29 schedule, we're going to go ahead and move on. We had some
30 really nice discussion about this, but let's move on to the
31 second action item.

32
33 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. Action 2 starts on page 9, and it
34 would modify the possession limit for Gulf cobia in the Gulf
35 Council's jurisdictional zone. We will change it everywhere
36 that it's appropriate to change it.

37
38 Alternative 1 would keep our current two fish per person daily
39 recreational and commercial possession limit. Alternative 2
40 would decrease the possession limit for both sectors to one fish
41 per day, and Alternative 3 would create a recreational and
42 commercial daily vessel limit for Gulf cobia. Anglers would not
43 be able to exceed the per person possession limit, and we have
44 vessel limits proposed of two fish, four fish, and six fish, and
45 we included Alternative 3 in light of Florida's change in
46 management to also have a vessel limit.

47
48 Again, we don't have a possession limit analysis yet to show you

1 guys at this point. It's just the appropriateness of the action
2 or, if you guys don't want to consider one of these things, just
3 let us know, and we'll remove it.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, I really appreciate you putting this
6 together in a relatively short timeframe, and so I guess, Ryan,
7 at this point, or Doug, what's the timeline for moving this
8 forward? What is the next step actually with this particular
9 document?

10
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** If the council chooses preferred
12 alternatives, we could probably go final at the next meeting,
13 but the next step is for the council to decide what they want to
14 do.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan and then Dale.

17
18 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to expand on that, you guys could select
19 preferred alternatives after reviewing the analyses that we have
20 promised you at the next meeting and go final at that meeting.
21 That is kind of the nice thing to be able to do with framework
22 actions like this, and so you don't have to prefer anything now.
23 You can wait until you see those analyses that we have promised
24 you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Dale.

27
28 **MR. DIAZ:** I like the fact that we can do what Ryan is saying,
29 but I hate not to have something for people to comment on at
30 public comment, and so we're going to have probably a lot of
31 fishermen here and get some good comments.

32
33 **I am going to put a motion out there that we pick Alternative 2
34 and Alternative 3a as the preferreds, and that will be matching
35 what the State of Florida is doing, if I get a second.**

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. We've got a motion on the board. Is
38 there a second? Second by Ms. Guyas. We will get that up on
39 the board. The motion on the board is, in Action 2, to select
40 Alternatives 2 and 3a as the preferreds. Is there any further
41 discussion on the motion on the board? **Is there anybody opposed
42 to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Simmons.

43
44 **DR. CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to
45 tell you that we did put in a request to the Science Center
46 asking for CPUE indices for this stock, for the Gulf stock, for
47 cobia, and so hopefully we'll get that information for the
48 July/August SSC meeting, and that would be similar to what was

1 provided I think for red grouper. There is not as many indices,
2 but I think that will help inform really what's going on out
3 there instead of just landings, and so hopefully we'll have that
4 information as well by the August council meeting.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. That will really help at the August
7 meeting for sure, and so, at this point, we've got preferreds
8 for Action 2. I think that we'll come back to Action 1 at Full
9 Council, unless we have something else. Johnny.

10
11 **MR. GREENE:** Well, I'm not on your committee, but, going back to
12 Action 1, and it's a pretty good segue, and I have talked to
13 several of the big cobia fishermen, and there are a number of
14 big cobia tournaments throughout the Gulf, some of which Dr.
15 Shipp spoke to, but there is one in particular that I know of,
16 and I believe it's out of Pensacola, and it's called the Outcast
17 Cobia Tournament, and their minimum size fish to be weighed-in
18 for their tournament is forty-five inches. They will not weigh-
19 in a fish less than forty-five inches in that tournament, and so
20 there has already been some acceptance by the fishing community
21 of a larger size limit, and I just point this out for a
22 reference.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you very much. Okay. I think at this
25 point, to keep us on schedule, unless there is any further
26 discussion about this framework amendment, we will go ahead and
27 end this particular committee session, and so I'm looking
28 around. Does anybody else have something to contribute?
29 Chairman Bosarge.

30
31 **MS. BOSARGE:** The Chairman is going to keep us off the schedule,
32 but I was just -- When I look at Ryan's fact sheet, his snapshot
33 sheet, I noticed that, at the bottom, he tells us that size
34 limit cobia weigh approximately seventeen pounds, and, up at the
35 top of the page, the maximum weight, which I will grant you is a
36 maximum, but, still, is 150 pounds, and so we're landing fish
37 that are 11 percent of their maximum weight, and it just seems
38 like that's a pretty small fish, and, if the big, fat females
39 are where you get your best bang for your buck, as far as
40 reproduction, it sure does seem like we're landing some -- We
41 are legally allowing people to kill some pretty small fish and
42 not let them get very big and get the bang for your buck with
43 that reproduction.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you for that comment. Any
46 further comments and/or discussion? Seeing none, anything else,
47 Ryan?

1 **MR. RINDONE:** No, sir.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we'll conclude the Mackerel
4 Committee. Thank you.

5

6 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 18, 2018.)

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